Journal of Global Catholicism

Manuscript 1074

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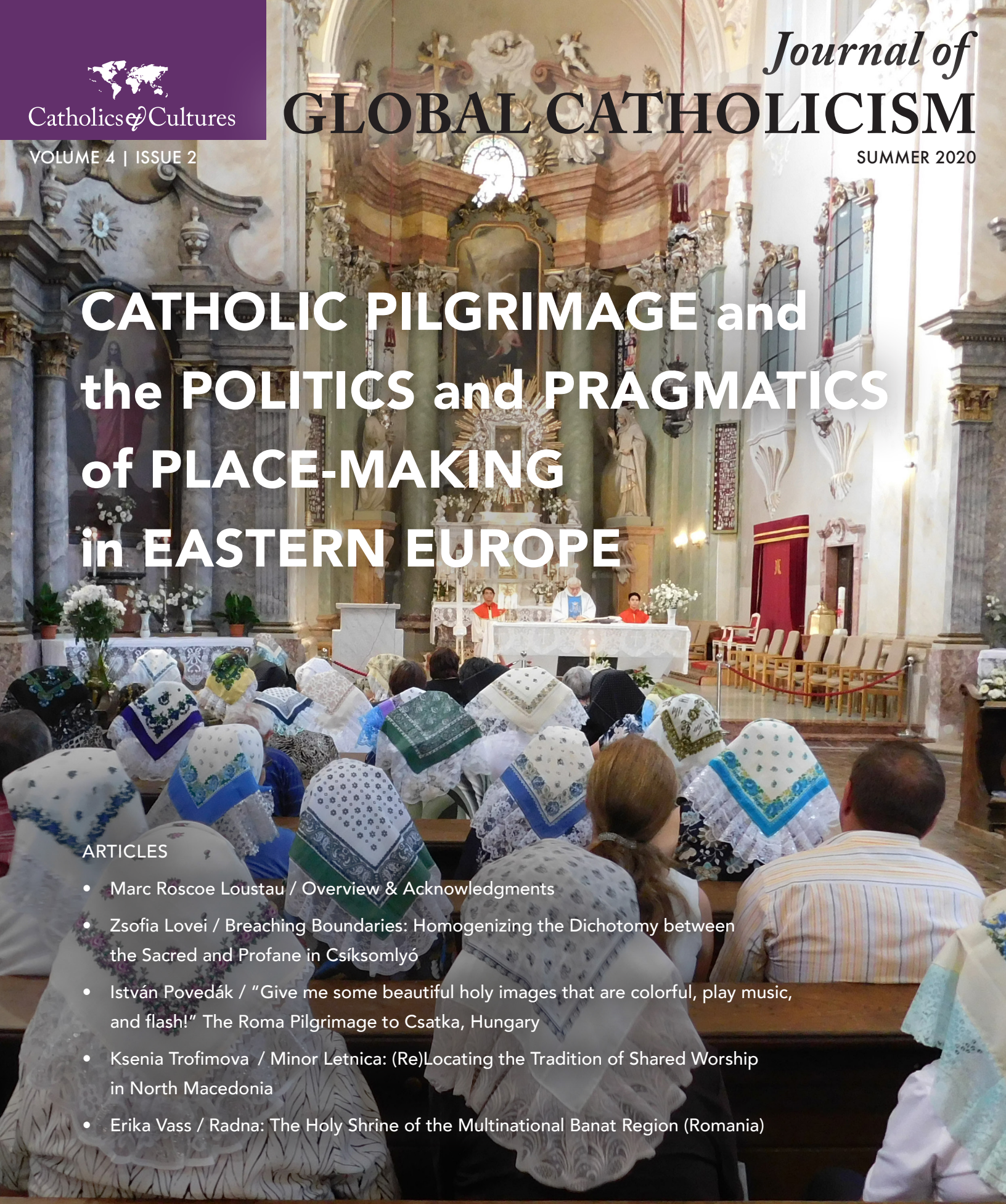
Catholics & Cultures

VOLUME 4 | ISSUE 2

Journal of GLOBAL CATHOLICISM

SUMMER 2020

CATHOLIC PILGRIMAGE and the POLITICS and PRAGMATICS of PLACE-MAKING in EASTERN EUROPE



ARTICLES

COLLEGE OF THE Holy Cross

Photo by Erika Vass

ZSOFIA LOVEI

Breaching Boundaries: Homogenizing the Dichotomy between the Sacred and Profane in Csíksomlyó

Zsofia Lovei is an art historian and recent graduate of the University of Toronto. Her research interests lie within the realms of Hungarian ethnography, most notably, with a pronounced focus on Marian pilgrimage sites within the Carpathian Basin. Lovei evaluates concepts of space, place-making, as well as individual, and group identity formation, utilizing Geertzian methodologies geared toward efforts of auto-ethnography.

Figure 6. Saturday, May 23, 2015, 2 p.m.: Conclusion of the High Mass at Csíksomlyó. Photo by Zsofia Lovei.

Mary of Csíksomlyó, serves as the locus of sacrality at a Franciscan Roman Catholic shrine in Transylvania, Romania.[1] Hundreds of thousands flock to the site annually at Pentecost in the form of a mass pilgrimage. Magyars, both from the motherland and from the wider diaspora, journey to Csíksomlyó, a village alongside the city of Csíkszereda in the county Harghita, in order to take part in a High Mass in the undulating Nyereg valley above the village every year, on the Saturday that precedes Pentecost Sunday. Locals, pilgrims and tourists amalgamate to form a whole that is both homogeneous, and heterogeneous at once. An allegedly miracle-working statue of Mary as the Woman Clothed in the Sun with roots in the Renaissance period and also, linked with the invasion of the Turks, functions as the single most important point of the site. Those who journey to this Marian site of devotion will oftentimes do so on foot, horseback, wagons, or by cycling, on motor bikes, in personal cars, taxis, small buses, coach buses, and finally, by air. Ever still, those who cannot be present in the

1 Csíksomlyó (Şumuleu Ciuc) is located 3 km northeast of Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc), which is the capital of Harghita county in Transylvania, Romania. From this point forward, all settlement names and terms will be accounted for in Hungarian. This site is linked with a popular folk legend dated to 1567 (at Pentecost), when an alleged battle occurred between the army of János Zsigmond, Prince of Transylvania and local Catholics in the mountain region near Csíksomlyó. According to the legend, the battle turned favorably for the Catholics of Gyergyó, Csík, and Kászon. The victory was attributed to Mary of Csíksomlyó: Id. Cserey Farkas: Geographia Mariana Regni Hungariae, 1780.

physical, tangible sense will "attend" the High Mass, and other Masses throughout the year as witnessed in the Basilica Minor church of Csíksomlyó, virtually, via the Internet on the YouTube channel of the site (Csíksomlyó Élő), through public broadcasting on Bonum TV, or *Mária Rádió* (Radio Maria). Serving as the most prodigious site of worship for the Magyar peoples, Csíksomlyó unites the masses, notwithstanding historical, political, religious, cultural and national tenets, events of life, and ways of being. This paper seeks to speak to this unfolding, and re-folding of layers, whereby the past becomes intimately connected once more with the present and indeed with the future for Hungarian Roman Catholics in, around, and in relation to Csíksomlyó.

In contouring the silhouette of the past, Hungarian pilgrims at Csíksomlyó collect, protect and appropriate remnants of cultural relics, both on site and off site in order to stimulate and nourish the myth-making process of the reunification of displaced Hungarian territories and inhabitants during the feast of Pentecost. Rituals, rites, performances and gestures implemented and enacted in relation to the miracle-working statue of Csíksomlyó provide an avenue for the sacred and profane to co-exist naturally alongside one another in order to accommodate and account for the geographical and spatial disparity between contemporary Hungarian settlements. The pilgrimage at Pentecost unifies an otherwise now heterogeneous community through the fabrication of quasi-Utopian fictions that seek to render the boundary of collective historical memory malleable and fluid. The pilgrimage site itself, and in particular the Nyereg valley between the Kis Somlyó and Nagy Somlyó mountains, acts as a temporal, transient liminal state where participants and pilgrims crystallize their allegiance to their Hungarian roots and ties, by dynamically engaging with the flow of tangible relics, and intangible conceptualizations of the Divine. During the triad of Pentecost, the entirety of this sacred topography blooms, metaphorically and literally into a pulsating body of shared symbols that act as adhesives to unite the multitudes in a provisional heterotopia. What makes this space quintessentially sacred for Hungarians is that it yields the capacity to become a storehouse of dreams where fueling fantasies of a reunified Hungarian state becomes possible—albeit only temporarily. Only the Divine could be capable of such a feat in the eyes of the displaced Hungarians, many of whom still consider

this land to be ethnographically, historically, and conceptually Magyar.[2]

Thus, during the Pentecost pilgrimage to Csíksomlyó the Nyereg valley where the High Mass takes place serves as an othered space, a heterotopia, which stands apart from other spaces very near to it—however, this only happens to this degree once a year. That is what makes the Pentecost pilgrimage so very peculiar.

Pilgrims have a one-time-a-year chance to unite with one another in a space that is open to everyone yet is capable to being wholly different on one weekend, and most significantly on one day of the year. Hungarians from all around the world, from Trianon-effected regions and from mainland Hungary can finally meet with one another—as a homogeneous whole that is at once also heterogeneous. This site becomes othered temporarily on the day of the Feast. It is different. The land becomes different. The united presence of the pilgrims, who otherwise form a heterogeneous mix, changes the site for a short while. And remembering how that site changes within those days, and indeed hours, can change the way you view sacred topography. That memory of togetherness, in a site that is distinct and othered from all other sites around it, is incredibly captivating, regardless of religious affiliations.

It is worthwhile to consider that the annual journey and return to Csíksomlyó also acts as a festival of grieving and rejoicing, of cognitively purifying the perils of the past, of accepting the somber reality of divorce and alienation from the Motherland, as per the Act of Trianon following World War I. Journeying, setting forth on the pilgrimage is thus an act of making peace with the past, in some sense, rectifying the intergenerational pain of the descendants of all those witness to the Act of Trianon in 1920—on all ends of the spectrum. This crystallizes before, during and directly after the annual pilgrimage to Csíksomlyó, at the most sacred feast of Pentecost, which occurs 50 days after Easter. Pilgrims weave their way onto the web of Hungarian sacred history by stepping out of the known of the profane, and into the unknown territory of the sacred. The sacred begins at multiple conjecture

2 *Magyar* is the Hungarian word for the language and culture of those individuals who now reside in the Carpathian basin. The Magyar peoples are the descendants of Árpád, the Great Prince of the Hungarians (845-907 CE), who was the great grandfather of the first Roman Catholic king of the nation, Stephen I (975-1038 CE).

Figure 9. View of the Basilica Minor church of Csíksomlyó. Photo by Zsofia Lovei.

points, predominantly from the localized origin of the pilgrim, to the transportation mode they chose to utilize in order to gain access to the site, from the Hargita mountains of Szeklerland, to the border of the city of Csíkszereda, to the village Csíksomlyó, to the 5 km road that leads to the Basilica Minor church, to the pews, onwards toward the miracle-working statue and ultimately, to the physical space of the Nyereg valley. Much like Mircea Eliade's pervasive concept of mythical and sacred time, each of these boundary lines peels away a layer of profanity, where pilgrims essentially parade their way deeper and deeper into a host of myths, and away from reality.

It is my incentive to formulate a functionalist, ethnographic, and anthropologically based application of methodologies found in the relevant literature pronounced and proliferated by Clifford Geertz, Simon Coleman, John Eade, Michael J. Sallnow, Arnold van Gennep, and Victor Turner, after which I will turn to the work of Michel Foucault. I will seek to address the need for the bodily materialization of the ethereal, the pliable nature of the boundary between the sacred and the profane, the harmonious disparity of ethnic Hungarian groups and the heterotopic qualities of the site through a case study of my own fieldwork on site in May of 2015.

I will examine and expand upon the rise, apex, and denouement of the process pilgrims embark on in order to purify their pasts, materialize their delusions, participate in collective flow, and ultimately to physically touch the Divine by paying homage to the miracle-working statue of the Virgin. My main claim thus is that the pilgrimage to Csíksomlyó at Pentecost, and thereby the Nyereg valley and church where this gathering occurs, acts as an othered space—a heterotopia—which is distinct from other spaces around it, because it is temporary but also has the capacity to "re-birth" in a sense, year upon year.

CHANNELING METHODOLOGY AND COMPOSITION

Clifford Geertz, whose ethnographic stance on cultural semiotics shifted the paradigm of previous discourse within anthropological academia, consciously sought to breed and dispense his contention that "culture is public because meaning is."[3] Within the field of anthropology Geertz adamantly vouched for the application of a more "descriptive analysis" of these meanings, rather than conducting tentative scientific data to account for matters that should not be subjugated or limited by numerical empirical conditions that are subject to change. Geertz claimed that:

> Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of "construct a reading of') a manuscript—foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior.[4]

These shaped behaviors are best reflected in Geertz' proficient, engaging and highly detailed use of thick description, which he uses to show that social events, behaviors, institutions and processes should be translated contextually as opposed to formulating research from the outside in.[5]

3 Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 6.

4 Geertz, "Thick Description," 5.

5 Geertz, "Thick Description," 7. Here, it is particularly clamant to mention Carlo Ginzburg's and Giovanni Levi's conceptualization of micro-history, which is a late 20th century form of historical methodology that seeks to account for the macrocosm through case-study like ventures into the microcosm of a smaller unit of specialization.

Geertz also maintains that one who conducts ethnography must be able to engage in conversation with their subjects in order to adequately inscribe social discourse, accounting for what is seen, and not what is hypothetically known.[6] Most salient is Geertz' assertion that, "culture grows in spurts" where analysis "breaks up into a disconnected yet coherent sequence of bolder and bolder sorts."[7] The main corpus of this discussion will employ Geertz' methodology of *thick description* through a series and succession of recollections on events formulated based on emic analysis and participant observation.

The following dialogue on the *raison d'être* of boundaries and space in Csíksomlyó draws on fieldwork conducted on site by Hungarian scholar Tamás Mohay who is an ethnographer at Eötvös Loránd University, in Budapest. Mohay's research on Csíksomlyó is characterized by evocative and imagery-dense thick descriptions on various aspects of the site. He remains the leading authority on the pilgrimage site of Csíksomlyó. In his field work, Mohay expands upon a broad range of firsthand experiences he has with village dwellers who live in close proximity to the site.[8] Rather than translating and transcribing these highly detailed avenues of discourse, I will, in Geertz' terms, seek to "plunge more deeply into the same thing" using the ethnographic coverage of Hungarian scholars in the field, as tools for devising a schematic conglomeration of cultural "spurts" that speak to address the function of space in and around Csíksomlyó.

Now let us turn to a thick description to set the stage for a more detailed analysis of the site, afterward.

6 Geertz, "Thick Description," 10.
7 Geertz, "Thick Description," 13.
8 The main highlights of Mohay's research are meticulously accounted for in the form of a host of Hungarian publications. Vilmos Tanczos' *Csíksomlyó a népi vallásosságban* (2016) is also of note, among several other publications he has published on the site. Hungarian scholars such as Lehel Peti, Károly Gaál, Krisztina Frauhammer, Éva Pócs, Sándor Soós, Ildikó Asztalos, Gyula Perger and most notably Gábor Barna have also sought to elucidate and unravel the apotheosis of the pagan female goddess and the Blessed Virgin as accounted for in the Carpathian basin from historical and ethnographical standpoints, in recent years.

Figure 2.
Saturday May 23, 2015: Pilgrims rise with the dawn and travel by foot through the Hargita mountains. Photo by Zsofia Lovei.

TOWARD A THICK DESCRIPTION: EN ROUTE TO THE FATHERLAND

In the early morning hours on Thursday, May 21, 2015 at around 6:55 a.m., I hastily made my way to Népliget Bus Terminal which is located on the southeast side of Budapest, adjacent to the Danube by approximately two kilometers. I was instructed to bring two separate bags, one of which was a small suitcase and the other, an oversized travel backpack with my sleeping bag and other essentials. I scrambled to find the coach bus where my fellow pilgrims were waiting under the discretion of the middle-aged spiritual director of the journey who was waving a red flag in welcoming participants, who numbered around 40. I did not know anyone prior to my participation in this pilgrimage, which was run and coordinated by the Jesuits of the *Párbeszéd Háza* (The House of Dialogue) in Pest. The cost of the entirety of this four-day leaving, arriving and returning schema was 11,000 forints, which is around 35 Euros. The age, sex, occupation, and level of attachment to the church were greatly varied amongst my fellow pilgrims. The youngest participant was a timid little elementary school boy who came with his aged grandmother from out of town. Many pilgrims were not based in Budapest and traveled from various city centers neighboring the capital. The pilgrimage commenced with a joint recitation of a prayer that we read off of a Jesuit prayer card with a highly idiosyncratic image of a smiling crucified Christ. This prayer was followed by a five-minute period of

silence when pilgrims were asked to try to formulate sound intentions for embarking on the journey to Csíksomlyó. After which, a brief consultation of need-to-know facts was relayed in order to persuade and encourage pilgrims to obedience and compliance with all rules, especially with regards to meeting time constraints. Recital of the morning Lauds hours of the Divine Office concluded this introduction while we drove toward the northeastern border of Hungary and Romania. We arrived at our destination around 7 p.m. that night, to Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc) in Romania, where we stayed in a Protestant school gymnasium across from the main square of the town. Mass was held on the rough cement of the schoolyard around 9 p.m. under the stars. We slept on old mattresses and thin poly-foam sheets on the hard floor of the gymnasium and were awakened early in the morning on Friday to begin our 50 km walking pilgrimage to Csíksomlyó. This was fundamentally the point of no return. Our supplementary bags were tagged and thrown onto gigantic trucks in haphazard fashion, in the courtyard of the Roman Catholic church in Székelyudvarhely where other traveling groups had gathered to take part in a Mass to start the journey. The weather was unbearable, and the sun was scorching hot on our backs. Many pilgrims were completely sunburned by the end of the day when we finally got to a remote barn in the middle of the forests of the Hargita mountains. Other pilgrimage assemblies joined us at this point, where every square meter of the barn was covered in backpacks, provisions, sleeping bags and tired pilgrims. Lights were out by 10 p.m., and the barn gate was shut tight in fear of brown bears and other predators. At 3 in the morning, we were asked to start getting dressed and to prepare ourselves for the culmination of our walking pilgrimage, which began at around 4 a.m. Flashlights and radiating night lights guided our way as close to 1,000 pilgrims accounting for merely a portion of the pilgrims traveling from Székelyudvarhely alone, formed a thin line of two pilgrims per row, on the right edge of the curving, twisting road leading directly to Csíksomlyó. (Figure 2) As dawn refracted into day, the bitter cold of the forest air gave way to a wide sweeping green valley that overlooks Csíkszereda and Csíksomlyó. In order to enter the city, pilgrims must go directly down on the mountain road leading from the Hargitas and from that point forward proceed eastward on a five-kilometer road that leads to the Basilica Minor church of Our Lady of

Figure 5.
Saturday May 23, 2015, 1:30 p.m.: Recitation of the ancient Szekel anthem in the Nyereg valley. Photo by Zsofia Lovei.

Csíksomlyó. The threshold of the sacred thus became quite clear at this point, as all individuals on that road were going toward the same *loca sancta*, driven in the exact same direction. Swept with the crowd, I lost contact with my pilgrim peers and proceeded to make my way through the bazaar like madness that erupts on the road to Csíksomlyó every year at Pentecost. The street sharply turns towards the right behind the church to several dirt paths that lead up to the valley between the Kis Somlyó and Nagy Somlyó, where the most difficult is designated as a Calvary, where the Stations of the Cross are laid out in vertical formation up the side of the Kis Somlyó mountain. At this point, I should have felt incalculably dismayed at the prospect of being lost in a crowd of the 250,000 other Hungarians walking up the side of the mountain at exactly the same time. However, I knew that if I followed the crowds up the mountain, make my way past the Roma groups on the periphery of the circle of pilgrims, and on to the main field of the congregational space, I would be able to see the waving flag representing the town of Székelyudvarhely and somehow find the rest of my pilgrim peers. And so it came to pass.

The High Mass at 12:30 p.m. was celebrated by György Jakubini, who was the Hungarian archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia) at the time. Eucharistic stations marked the sidelines of the congregational space in the Nyereg valley, where ample opportunity for Holy Communion was continually given to the pilgrims on site in little white tents. This is wholly

unconventional, as the consecrated Blessed Sacrament was made accessible prior to the official communion rite of the Eucharist. The Mass was followed by a series of nationalistic anthems, concluding with the ancient Szekel anthem that seeks to supplicate Our Lady of Csíksomlyó. This anthem acts as the summit to the Mass, and the pilgrimage itself, where nationhood and cultural ties mesh with folk piety and the undeniably human nature of the site.[9] (Figure 5)

That crowds eventually dispersed and returned to their respective dwellings, hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, tents or campsites, at which point half of my pilgrimage group chose to go back to the barn we had slept in the night prior, and the other half chose to remain on site.[10] Some pilgrims from my group slept outside in the valley, some in the Salvator chapel on the north side of the Kis Somlyó mountainside and others, like myself, slept inside the Basilica Minor church in order to witness the night vigil unofficially led by a Csángo woman who eerily sang invocations to the Virgin until 7 a.m. the next morning. (Figure 8) Responses, hymns and prayers were sung by the pilgrims lying on the floor and in the pews, as a means of giving thanks to the Virgin and resting in her motherly care throughout the bitter

9 The Ancient Szekel Anthem. Also, further research beckons scholars to wed Mihály Csíkszentmihályi's sonorous concept of flow with the temporal ecstasy of the pilgrims during the High Mass at Pentecost. Please see the anthem (in Hungarian) below. The English translation is the work of the author:

Ó, én édes jó Istenem oltalmazóm, segedelmem.
Vándorlásban reménységem, ínségemben lágy kenyerem.
Vándorfecske sebes szárnyát, vándorlegény vándorbotját,
Vándor székely reménységét, Jézus áldd meg Erdély földjét.
Vándorfecske hazatalált, édesanyja fészkére szállt.
Hazajöttét megáldotta Csíksomlyói Szűz Mária.

Oh, my sweet and gracious Lord, have mercy on me,
You are the light of my refuge, the warm bread of my hunger.
Heal the wing of the wounded stray swallow, staff of the stray youth,
Stray Szekel Hope, Jesus, we implore, bless the earth of Erdély.
For the stray swallow has found its way home, its mother has landed on the nest,
Its homecoming is blessed by the Virgin Mary of Csíksomlyó.

10 Many groups that journey to Csíksomlyó focus on tourism, more so than on spiritual renewal. After the Mass in the afternoon, many pilgrim-tourists will enjoy Szekler delights with their fellow group members and take part in great feasting after returning to their respective accommodations.

Figure 8. Saturday, May 23, 2015, 9 p.m.-7 a.m.: Resting with Christ and the Virgin: A contemporary Gethsemane. Photo by Zsofia Lovei.

night. The following morning, which I began with a Mass inside the church I had slept in, we embarked on our journey back to the barn we had slept in on Friday night in our coach bus. Group members either walked or took the bus back to Székelyudvarhely, where pilgrims participated in a final Mass and finally began the journey back to Budapest.

MATERIALIZING THE SACRED

Let us now consider these events in light of the following theoretical conjectures. Simon Coleman asserts that there are three major themes in cogitating the "materialization of Mary" throughout sacred history in the Roman Catholic Church.[11] Firstly, Coleman addresses the divine presence that surfaces in images of Mary, where the representation is likened to the prototype.[12] This raises the issue of presence. As there are no first grade primary relics from the body or clothing of the Virgin, where does one adequately locate the prototype of these subsequent

11 Simon Coleman, "Mary: Images and Objects," in *Mary: the complete resource*, ed. Sarah Jane Boss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 398.

12 Coleman, "Mary: Images and Objects," 398-399.

Figure 1. Prayer card with an invocation to Our Lady of Csíksomlyó

images?[13] For Hungarians, and in specific for the Szekler people, the miracle-working statue at Csíksomlyó has essentially become a kind of prototype, one of the closest material links to the Virgin, who is unanimously known to be the *Patrona Hungarai*, Our Lady Queen of Hungary.[14] This is communicated visually and spatially within the confines of the placement of the statue within the Basilica Minor church. The second theorem raised by Coleman is the process by which a human-made object becomes sacred where he expands upon the medieval tendency to ascribe authorship to miracle-working relics to St. Luke or other saints through an archeiropoietic progression.[15] The fact that there is no recorded artist or patron responsible for the production of the miracle-working statue is significant in light of these conjectures. Here, anonymity, allows room for personalized and collective myth-making, which is what in turn renders the statue, at the very least ostensibly holy. The third premise proposed by Coleman, is that each duplication and imitation of the image of the sacred morphs the source with its copy based on similarity of forms or through direct, physical contact with the original relic or image.[16] Secondary images which are laced onto souvenirs such as prayer cards, rosaries, statuettes, key chains, books, newspapers, magazines such as *Csíksomlyó Magazin* and *Csíksomlyó Üzenete*, framed pictures of the statue, liturgical calendars, inscribed clothing, mugs, cutlery, jewelry, wood carvings and postcards act as direct continuations of the miracle-working statue.[17]

13 Coleman, "Mary: Images and Objects," 397.
14 Zsofia Lovei, "The Vehicle of Pilgrimage: Spanning the Geographical and Ideological Horizons of the Way of Mary through Mariazell to Csíksomlyó," *Saeculum* 10, no. 1 (2015): 49.
15 Coleman, "Mary: Images and Objects," 399. *Archeiropoietic* is a term utilized to describe images or objects that are untouched by the hand.
16 Coleman, "Mary: Images and Objects," 399.
17 Please see Figure 1. The prayer to the Virgin Mary of Csíksomlyó is found on souvenirs, such as prayer cards.

Thus, Mary of Csíksomlyó exuberates a divine presence because she acts as the ultimate Hungarian prototype of the Virgin—she is divine for believers even though her statue was fashioned by a mortal. Ultimately, her image serves as the origin of a plethora of images that now circulate globally, through literary sources, physical objects, and the World Wide Web, where the localization of ethnic Szekler Mariology has now been translated and transcribed into modern avenues. Here, it is imperative to relay the residency of the statue and what strategic theological function this precise placement entails for pilgrims, priests and clerics. The impression of voyeurism in place when one waits for their turn to approach the statue, when sitting in the pews or when viewing the daily online video Mass on the site's YouTube channel[18], shakes this momentary sense of confinement and safety when viewed from the outside, gazing inward.

TEMPORAL *COMMUNITAS*: WELDING DISPARATE FORMS

Building on this train of thought, let us now consider the four distinct variants of pilgrimage types outlined by Victor Turner, defined as historical, syncretistic/archaic, medieval and post-medieval or post-Tridentine.[19] The latter is characterized by an apologetic stance that denotes an exceedingly devotional tone, which acts as an unswerving response against the progressive secularization and de-Christianization of the Post-Darwinian world."[20] Turner frames pilgrimage as an anti-structural phenomenon that is conducive to creating pockets of *communitas*, a state of unabridged, unmediated union or solidarity with individuals who gather communally, notwithstanding their societal roles and social classes.[21]The reason for this temporary surge of normative communitas, as described by Anne-Marie

18 Csíksomlyó Élő is a live stream of daily Mass at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChrk-bh0y4ut-mELoCTRPR_Q. Sigmund Freud's notion of the scopic drive outlines this phenomenon, where the viewer as well as the pilgrim are forced to see one another and worship with the knowledge that the union with the statue is in reality, not entirely closed off.

19 Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2011), 18.

20 Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, 18.

21 John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 4. Here, anti-structural refers to a state of being where conventional societal rules and statuses are thwarted for the purpose of achieving a higher state of being through ascent to the Divine.

Losonczy, is because of an increasing fervor of patriotism that followed the fall of Communism in Romania under Nicolae Ceausescu and the end to the Romanian Revolution in 1989.[22] Losonczy, who also utilizes *thick description* in illustrating her field work on site, describes Csíksomlyó as an imaginary "fatherland" that is a border-free "patriotic space" where language is the main force of association and not religion per say.[23] It is this potent force of common language that supersedes all other forces.

In essence, during the annual triad of the Pentecostal pilgrimage, being Hungarian, having Hungarian roots, or rather, knowing how to speak Hungarian overrides being Roman Catholic or religious. Conceptually and physically, albeit temporarily, re-filling the land with Hungarian voices and presence—being together once a year—is more important for pilgrims, tourists and nationalists than debating over theological, cultural or political disparities. This yearning stems from intergenerational wounds and trauma that have not been completely mended. It is imperative to note that these intergenerational wounds are experienced by all who reside in the area, regardless of ethnicity or religion. This is precisely what convolutes this space. Nevertheless, for Hungarians, the annual pilgrimage to Csíksomlyó at Pentecost acts as temporary bandage over this wound. It calls to be addressed annually in order for the *mythos* of the unified Hungary nation and state to live on. Many of those who attend the pilgrimage are not even remotely religious or of the Roman Catholic faith. Even though these individuals might have been baptized, their current practices denote that they do not wish to align themselves with the Catholic Church. However, many such individuals who are baptized but no longer believe (or consider these rituals dated) still attend the pilgrimage. They take part in the rituals because it is the proper, acceptable thing to do as a Szekler and as a Hungarian. Moreover, some merely consider it as an exciting weekend program because of the inexhaustible spectrum of market vendors who line the street leading up to the church. (See Figure 3) There is absolutely no breathing space, there are lines every-

22 Anne-Marie Losonczy, "Pilgrims of the 'Fatherland': Emblems and Religious Rituals in the Construction of an Inter-Patriotic Space between Hungary and Transylvania," *History and Anthropology* 20, no. 3 (2009): 265. Victor Turner, "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology," *Rice University Studies*, 60, no. 3 (1974): 80.

23 Anne-Marie Losonczy, "Pilgrims of the 'Fatherland,'" 266, 273.

where, and the entire 5 km road is packed with these stands and those who sell their merchandise. There are vendors who sell Hungarian touristic objects, musical instruments, pottery, folk costumes, hats, and all manner of memorabilia.

There are also stands that sell cheap toys, there is sometimes a small carnival halfway to the site, there are balloon stands, cotton candy bars, book stands, bungee jumping, free water bottle stands, and all manner of food and drink opportunities. This ultimately leads to a very strange conglomeration of pray and play, where pilgrims sing with trembling lips as they march toward the miracle-working statue alongside young and old, who are merely happy to finally have a day off to hike in the valley. The ultimate consequence is that at the end of the Saturday that precedes Pentecost when the major ritual Mass takes place in the valley, drunks line the street alongside a mass of disabled, homeless, oftentimes Roma people who beg their way through the crowds. Even here, there is no divide. These individuals co-mingle with the pilgrims and there is a brief, illusionary idealistic sense of harmony in this dismembering of time, space, nationhood and geographical boundaries.

Figure 3.
Saturday, May 23, 2015, 11 a.m.: Market vendors and the crowd of pilgrims. Photo by Zsofia Lovei.

OPULENCE AND PROFUSION

John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow's contestation model, which portrays the locale of pilgrimage sites as a "realm of competing discourses" lurches this Turnerian model, but does not necessarily negate it.[24] Eade and Sallnow defend that ritual spaces, and thus pilgrimage sites, are capable of "accommodating diverse meanings and practices" where the multiplicity of discourses that frame the meaning of a site allow for

24 Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred*, 5.

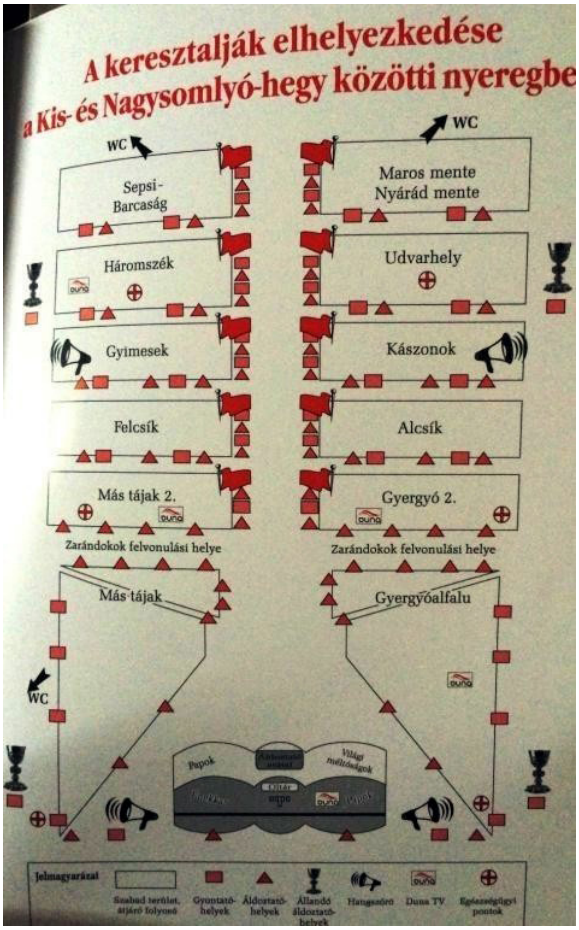


Figure 4. Strategic placement of heterogeneous Hungarian groups in the Nyereg valley.

a "variety of clients" to receive what they need.[25] Here, the emphasis is placed on the capacity of those responsible for orchestrating rituals in sacred spaces, of being able to accommodate a plurality of pilgrims and believers.[26] This throng of forms, people, places, ideologies and objects is widely accounted for in Csíksomlyó and is visually, physically palpable through a close examination of boundary lines on site and through a relay of the discrepancies between pilgrims and attendees.

The spatial field of the Nyereg valley is compartmentalized and sectioned off with loose string barriers that slice the congregation into twelve major sections that divide the arena by various regions in and near Szeklerland. Beginning on the west side, which is the first barrier the pilgrim is faced with upon arrival in the valley, the groupings are as follows: Mainland Hungarians, Felcsík, Gyímesek, Háromszék, Sepsi-Barcaság, the last of which extends into the forest that protects the valley on the south end. (Figure 4) The groupings on the east end of the valley are dedicated to pilgrims from Gyergyóalfalu, Gyergyó, Alcsík, Kászonok, Udvarhely, Maros and Nyárad. These labels do not account for the fact that many non-Szekler pilgrimage assemblies such as Calvinists and Lutherans from Hungary; Unitarians from Transylvania; Orthodox and Roman Catholics from Croatia, Hungary, Austrian Burgenland and Slovakia; Greek Catholics from Serbia; and tourists from the Hungarian diaspora join various sections based on predetermined and organic choices made on the part of the pastor, priest or religious leader responsible for his/her assembly.[27]

I personally sought to not only witness, but more so to experience the implication, repercussions and connotations of the following factors while on site in May of 2015: average age, financial status, sale of souvenirs, dress code, presence of Roma,

25 Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred*, 14-15.
26 Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred*, 14-15.
27 Anne-Marie Losonczy, "Pilgrims of the 'Fatherland,'" 272-273.

presence of Romanians, potentiality for alcohol/drug overconsumption, crime/theft, police attendance, wheelchair accessibility, use of technology, opportunities for cleansing, and the placement of lavatories. My conclusions posited that there was vast diversity between pilgrims, tourists, beggars, clergy, vendors, citizens, village dwellers, and nationalists who attended the pilgrimage.

My findings suggested that there was no average age or class as both ends of the spectrum were represented prodigiously and profusely. The market vendors were predominantly youth and young adults (14-30), many of whom were wearing traditional Szekel red and white folk clothing. Many of these vendors come back on an annual basis in order to profit off the site and have never actually been to the Mass in the valley because of their work obligations. Roma presence was customary, few people spoke Romanian, casual dress was favored, police attendance only occurred at the periphery of the site and at major intersections, there was no wheelchair accessibility, there was moderate use of technology, portable lavatories were used, and one indoor station for cleansing was noted. There was considerable alcohol over-usage, predominantly in the evening hours of Saturday, May 23, 2015.

IN LIMBO: PAINTING AND PEELING CURTAINS OF HETEROTOPIA

Delving deeper into these theoretical trajectories, let us now consider Arnold van Gennep's tripartite model for rites of passage. This model consists of three phases: separation, transition and incorporation.[28] The first phase incorporates an inversion of the profane where those taking part step out of the known in order to detach themselves from their previous social statues.[29] During the second phase, which van Gennep coined as the "limen" stage, participants step over a threshold into a period of limbo, a descent or rise to an in-between state that is wholly ambiguous.[30] The third phase, re-aggregation or incorporation represents the return to society where subjects are allocated new positions based on their experiences.[31] Turner's re-contextualization of the liminal phase outlined by van Gennep relies heavily on

28 Turner, "Liminal to Liminoid," 56.
29 Turner, "Liminal to Liminoid," 57.
30 Turner, "Liminal to Liminoid," 57
31 Turner, "Liminal to Liminoid," 57

the discourse pronounced by Mircea Eliade on the nature of the raison d'être of pilgrimage and the nature of the sacred space.[32]

Turner establishes that the in-between stage of a pilgrimage is marked by a release from structure, the deconstruction of statuses, simplicity of behavior and dress, communitas, ordeal, reflection and rituals.[33] As a point of departure from van Gennep's liminality, Turner addresses the nature of obligation and how the voluntary aspect of modern religious pilgrimages indicate the need for a new category, which he defines as the anergic-ludic liminoid.[34] Correspondingly, Michel Foucault's digression on heterotopias fits within this paradigm in which he delineates five major points of departure in defining such "counter-sites" that are akin to utopias in ideology but differ in that these are places that do in fact exist in geographical space and measured time.[35]

Foucault's first supposition is that all cultures have heterotopias, which can be categorized as either crisis-based or geared toward spaces designated for individuals involved in deviance.[36] Csíksomlyó is a heterotopia of the former, which Foucault describes as a privileged, sacred or forbidden place that is reserved for individuals in crisis.[37] The Act of Trianon in 1920, and the Treaty of Paris in 1947 stripped Hungary of 232,000 square kilometers and 13,370,000 inhabitants whose descendants now make up the Magyar diaspora in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Austria, the Ukraine, Serbia, and most significantly, Romania.[38] This essentially forced 62% of the population under foreign rule and rid the country of 72% of her geographical territory.[39] 5,265,000 ethnic Hungarians were displaced into what now constitutes Romania in 1920.[40] These displaced Hungarians, who live in the region surrounding Csíksomlyó, in Szeklerland, are still in a state of crisis because of forced

32 Eade and Sallnow, Contesting the Sacred, 6.
33 Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, 34-35.
34 Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, 34-35.
35 Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias," *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5 (1984).
36 Foucault, "Of Other Spaces."
37 Foucault, "Of Other Spaces."
38 Ottó Légrady and Gusztáv Lenkey, *Justice for Hungary!: The cruel errors of Trianon* (Budapest: Nyomatott Légrady Testvérek , 1930), 6.
39 Légrady and Lenkey, *Justice for Hungary*, 14.
40 Légrady and Lenkey, *Justice for Hungary*, 14.

assimilation, prejudice, injustice, further displacement within Transylvania due to efforts on the part of the Romanian government to homogenize the vast disparities in population demographics, and post-generational trauma.

Foucault's second conjecture is that existing heterotopias, like Csíksomlyó, can function in a myriad ways in different periods of time and history.[41] Subsequent to the fall of Communism in 1989, Csíksomlyó has witnessed an absolute revival and proliferation in terms of size, organization and involvement of secular forces that have consequently propelled the local tourism industry exponentially. Prior to this, the pilgrimage at Pentecost was mainly attended by and arranged by locals who lived in Csíkszereda and Csíksomlyó.[42] Thus, the site, and thereby the miracle-working statue have histories, and must be viewed in light of these discrepancies. This is an existing heterotopia that is organic, fluid, malleable, and subject to change because it is witness to different time periods, and different pilgrims who have multifaceted agendas.

Foucault's third premise is that heterotopias bridge several spaces that would otherwise not be equated or aligned with one another.[43] The co-mingling of the sacred and profane in Csíksomlyó addresses this precisely, architecturally and socially. The markets and the consumer-ridden road lead to the sacred basilica minor church and the sacred valley is left in the evening for relaxation in accommodations nearby. Foucault's fourth allegation is that heterotopias are linked to moments in chronologies, when members of society arrive at a point where they must break with traditional time.[44] At Csíksomlyó, pilgrims are continually trying to build on the bank of time, that is to say, extend the historical memory of the time before the Treaty of Trianon through the guise of the myth-making process. Here, language and semiotic symbols pervade this enactment of re-appropriation, which in Foucault's terms is like gathering materials for a museum of everything that was and remains Hungarian in order to preserve it efficiently and make it readily available for use in the future.

41 Foucault, "Of Other Spaces."
42 Anne-Marie Losonczy, "Pilgrims of the 'Fatherland,'" 272.
43 Foucault, "Of Other Spaces."
44 Foucault, "Of Other Spaces."

The final proposition Foucault raises is that heterotopias presuppose a series of openings and closings, and moreover that these sites of limbo are not freely accessible. Csíksomlyó is predominantly attended by those who understand Hungarian, albeit to varying degrees. The ritualized opening and closing ceremonies both within my own pilgrimage group and within the broader community of those gathered speak to Foucault's notion of going in and coming out. These rituals are oftentimes characterized by the recitation of prayers or participation in a Mass rite. These formulaic spurts demonstrate that the Pentecostal feast at Csíksomlyó currently acts as a transitory, liminoid, heterotopic state that is fueled by surges of myth-making, rituals and rites drawn from the repository of memory on the part of nationalists and pilgrims alike.

HEMMING THE MARGIN OF THE SACRED: MICROCOSM VS. MACROCOSM

Delving deeper into the layers of this state, I sought to find the sacred within the sacred, the ultimate *locus amoenus* in Csíksomlyó that propels the manifestation of this currency of flow pervading the Pentecostal heterotopia every spring. I found that the binary between the valley and the space between the Blessed Sacrament and the statue conflate the material, with the natural, the compact with the grandiose, the singular to the plural, the confrontational to the experiential, all of which position the pilgrim directly within the Divine.

Through a brief formal analysis, I will endeavor to elucidate these parallel themes. The miracle-working statue in the Basilica Minor church in Csíksomlyó is notoriously known for answering prayers that are vocalized audibly and or written down with tremendous thought in a book with lined pages beside the right stairway leading up to the statue on the south side of the apse in front of a set of doors that lead into the sacristy on the south wing.

Making the inanimate animate renders the relationship between the pilgrim and the Divine more accessible, more tangible and thus, corporeal enough to become temporarily potent. The statue is located directly behind and above the Blessed Sacrament majestically affixed and encapsulated between the periphery of the most

Figure 10. Interior of the Basilica Minor Church of Csíksomlyó altar and statue. Photo by Zsofia Lovei.

sacred space of the Holy Eucharist and the back wall of church, which marks the material boundary of the unknown, and the potentially profane. Above the statue is an image of the Holy Spirit, anthropomorphized in the shape of a dove amidst an array of golden beams protruding in circular formation mirroring the rays that project forward from the body of the Virgin. God the Father rests regally on a superfluous bundle of looping clouds that rise above the Holy Spirit. His burly arms open in welcoming on either side of his robed torso. A thick sash on his right side flies behind his face, which is set against a gold triangle, symbolizing the interconnectedness of the Trinity. Upon approaching the podium placed under the Virgin, the pilgrim becomes markedly shorter and smaller, in height and proportion to these figures.

The statue of the Virgin is the vision of the Woman Clothed in the Sun (Rev. 12:1). Adorned with a majestic three-tiered crown and long curly hair, she gently holds the infant Jesus on her arm, the moon before her feet, a halo of twelve stars above her head, and a scepter in her other hand. Customarily, the pilgrim will

kneel before the statue, recite the invocation to Our Lady of Csíksomlyó either to themselves or softly under their breath and will consequently rise and to the best of their ability reach for the statue's feet which stands on top of the head of Nestorius, the 5th century Archbishop of Constantinople who was condemned for the crime of heresy for his nefarious renunciation of the term *Theotokos*. Here, pilgrims will oftentimes touch the statue with objects, including handkerchiefs, prayer cards, rosaries or even cellphones.

Scholar Marc Loustau considers how such items, which have been touched or grazed by the Holy at Csíksomlyó, are oftentimes also connected to other sanctified objects from other Marian pilgrimage sites, such as holy water from Lourdes.[45] These sacred items that have been touched by the statue are consequently taken home and used by the pilgrim, or given to family members and friends who were not able to visit the statue in person. These objects are used as healing tools, memories, spiritual reminders, and as touristic tokens. These objects' material reality is on the same level as humanity. Thus, the pilgrim, with his earthly objects, looks up to the divine.

This succession of power leading from the kneeling pilgrim to his rise up toward the Virgin, who can only be touched if temptation vis-à-vis the head of a sinner is averted, proves to be mesmerizing and remarkably symbolic. The Virgin, here holding the naked Christ child in her left arm, bows her head slightly to the left and stares off toward the south end of the church. The Holy Spirit follows, and ultimately the gaze is led to the Father who looks directly downward and into the eyes of the pilgrim. The statue of the Virgin is flanked by Saint Stephen of Hungary and Saint Ladislaw of the late medieval period on either end of the stairs leading up and down the podium. The minute space between the corporeal body and blood of Christ and the miracle-working statue compresses and condenses the area around the pilgrim. This notion of feeling trapped between the living Bread of Life and the tangible, miracle-working Mother of God allows for a brief moment of solitude and peace. Some pilgrims feel so protected in this stance, that they stay

45 Marc Loustau, "Substituting Stories: Narrative Arcs and Pilgrimage Material Culture Between Lourdes and Csíksomlyó," *Journal of Global Catholicism*, 3, no. 1 (2019): 102.

in the niche for up to 10-15 minutes at a time when it is not a Feast Day or the annual Pentecost pilgrimage, regardless of the continual lines that wait to approach the statue. This delimitating of excess space can provisionally pacify the pilgrim, which enables them to feel temporarily safe because there is so little room between these two surges of sacredness.

In contrast, the breadth and spaciousness of the organic Nyereg valley allows for communication with the Divine in a superlative way, on a macrocosmic level that pushes for collective flow that is both emotional and experiential. Most compelling is that the twelve grid sections are enclosed and bound by dense forests on the north and south ends, roped wires on the east and west sides and the three curved alter at the north end. Encircling the crowd on mid-east, mid-west, and north-east, northwest, and central boundary lines of the site are stations for receiving the consecrated Eucharist throughout the entire duration of the noon Mass on the Saturday that precedes Pentecost.

Read theologically, these pockets of the Divine form a clear circle around the congregation in a physically, tangible, human way that in interim acts as a safeguard against disruption to this quasi-euphoric heterotopic state. Here, the microcosm of the space in front of the Virgin, and the macrocosm of the Nyereg valley slice through political, geographical, ideological, and human boundaries and weave conditional heterotopias onto one another, within the cosmic, pulsating whole of the site. Both microcosm and macrocosm place the pilgrim within the very heart of the sacred and onto the breathing map of social and sacred history. This all begs the questions: Which time is the authentic time, in light of this sacred history? Is there perhaps a moment when the site was more sacred than it is today? Does a site get more sacred with time, or does this diminish? Is this intrinsically linked with nationalism and contemporaneous socio-cultural expectations, norms and ways of being? How does the physical visibility of the Virgin hearken back to the past, and slice into the present through materiality and presence? These questions might perhaps lead to further considerations, when examined in light of how the site changes year by year, and will presumably continue to do so, most especially in considering the digital realm. Further research might also consider how the

coronavirus pandemic of 2020 has pushed this sacred space into the digital sphere. How do pilgrims, with the memory of past pilgrimages in mind, turn to this sacred site that is—albeit temporarily—closed off? The space inside the YouTube streams of the Franciscans at Csíksomlyó may very well serve as yet another heterotopia—an othered space which is distinct from the space evaluated in this article, and from other spaces in the area.

In essence, through the prolific rise and chimerical evanescence of the triad of Pentecost, pilgrims and tourists establish themselves within the body of sacred salvation as witnessed through the niche of the Hungarian shared cultural past. This temporal alcove of conflating forms allows for the unification of the wavering Hungarian diaspora in a way that is spatially organized in an encyclopedic assemblage of heterogeneous geographical groups. Breaching geographical, political, religious, cultural, societal, and personal boundaries allows pilgrims to transitorily bask in euphoria and witness the metaphysical yet wholly tangible materialization of the Divine.

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