Review Essays
On the Margin: The Power of Mary in Lived Religious Experience

MOVED BY MARY: THE POWER OF PILGRIMAGE IN THE MODERN WORLD
Edited by Anna-Karina Hermkens, Willy Jansen, and Catrien Notermans

MARY, THE DEVIL, AND TARO: CATHOLICISM AND WOMEN’S WORK IN A MICRONESIAN SOCIETY
By Juliana Flinn
Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press
Pp. v + 200. Hardcover, $47.00.

REVIEWER: Hisako Omori
McMaster University
Hamilton, ON, L8S 4K1

Despite the decline of church attendance in the West, Mary, the mother of Jesus, continues to be popular, attracting millions of people to her shrines across the Catholic world. For the feast day of Our Lady of Guadeloupe in 2010, the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadeloupe in Mexico announced that it received six million pilgrims over one weekend. In addition to officially recognized Marian shrines such as Lourdes and Fatima, people continue to sight Mary spontaneously in unpredictable places—in a desert, on a window of a house, and on the wall of a highway underpass. The two books under review make valuable contributions to the study of religion by showing the diverse ways in which people interact with Mary in different parts of the world. Using ethnographic and historical data, both books reveal the extraordinary extent to which this religious figure plays an important role in women’s and men’s lives in contemporary world.

Moved by Mary: The Power of Pilgrimage in the Modern World is an excellent collection of essays that are both ethnographically rich and theoretically stimulating. It collects papers from an international conference “The Power of Marian Pilgrimage: Objects, Gestures and Performances” held in the Netherlands, February 1-3, 2007. Its thirteen chapters are written by anthropologists, historians, a geographer, and religious studies scholars shedding light on the lived experience of today’s Marian devotees and pilgrims. The case studies are from Europe, the Middle East, the Americas, and the Pacific. As the editors of the volume make explicit in their introduction, this book is concerned with the lived religious expressions of the people—religion as practiced, as opposed to religion as prescribed (3). The book is thematically divided into four sections, each having three to four articles.

The first section, entitled “Negotiating Power through Mary’s Imagery,” discusses the several ways in which people engage with the unseen through the imagery. The first article, by Simon Coleman, deals with Walsingham in England, a pilgrimage site for both Roman Catholics and Anglicans. Bringing in also ethnographic stories of sighting of ghosts, Coleman asserts that the power of the Walsingham pilgrimage lies, for at least some of the visitors, in their engagement with the imagery of figures such as saints and ghosts. Coleman skillfully weaves his story of Walsingham, narrating various snippets of people’s lived experience with mystical and religious presence. This theme of “religious presence” is also discussed by others in this collection of essays (e.g., Orsi and Turner).

Tracing the history of Walsingham from its inception in 1061 through the English Reformation of the sixteenth century and to the twentieth century, Coleman identifies a recurring theme of mimesis in Walsingham, which takes the form of a revival of the past. Most importantly, in this pattern of mimesis, individual figures play key roles. Describing Mary as a “spiritual […] , highly complex, often contested, semiotic resource” (20), Coleman situates her in the center of “representational economies” (20) in Walsingham. Using this term of Webb Keane’s, Coleman argues that it is useful to see such things as visions, narratives, material cultures, and embodied practices “echo, distort, and translate each other” (20) in the process of sorting out “proper relations.” This representational economy is fraught with moral implications. The figure of Mary was one of the central motifs which were razed by the iconoclastic forces of the Reformation. In the 1920s, however, a controversial Anglican priest, Fr. Patten, created a statue of Mary using an image that he found on an old seal of an Anglican priory. This statue soon
became the center of devotion among pilgrims in Walsingham. Coleman presents the complexities of the site in this article with his theoretical vigor and witty writing.

In Chapter Two, Willy Jansen takes issue with two icons in Jordan: a statue of St. Mary of the Rosary whose design was based on a vision seen by Sr. Marie Alphonsine in Palestine, and a pieta made by a Dutch artist, Piet Gerrits. Jansen narrates multifaceted stories of the reception of these icons by situating them in the context of different power relationships such as between Catholics and other Christians, minority Christians and majority Muslims, and Middle Eastern and European countries. Jansen successfully argues that economic, social, religious, and political power processes constantly affect people’s relationship to a particular icon and the meanings assigned to it.

Among Arab Christians, Mary resides in contradiction. Although locating the statue of Mary in the Middle East places it in the same geographical context as the historical Mary, the majority of Muslims, who despise iconographic representation of holy figures, cast suspicious eyes on the statues of Mary. Yet, Mary is a favored woman in the Quran; Mary is depicted as a model of pious womanhood, and she is more frequently mentioned in the Quran than in the Bible (38). Jansen points out that positions on the statues of Mary vary among Christian groups. A quote from a Catholic nun highlights the point: “Muslims respect Our Lady more than Protestants do” (41). For example, local Anglican and Baptist churches in Husn are devoid of images (46). Lastly, Jansen observes that the global, Church-endorsed images of Mary are gaining more popularity in Jordan than the one which is local and without official approval by the Church. Using the example of St. Mary of the Rosary, Jansen shows that Our Lady of Fatima or statuettes of Lourdes are gaining more popularity in the area. Jansen’s sensitive treatment of various power dynamics surrounding Mary contributes to the volume by presenting an interesting case study of Mary in the context of a Muslim-dominated society.

David Morgan, who is interested in religious visual culture, has a different approach to the study of Mary’s iconography in Chapter Three. Unlike Coleman and Jansen, Morgan discusses the culture of the theology of Roman Catholicism, namely that of suffering. Marian devotion, according to Morgan, is “an economy or system of interaction with the divine inasmuch as it operates according to a set of practices that regulate giving and receiving of divine favor through the intermediary office of the Virgin” (49). He further points out that this economy is penitential in nature: suffering is often the most appropriate offering on the part of the devout. This suffering may take the form of kneeling, fasting, or abstinence. In this article, Morgan discusses this economy of reparation using the statue of the International Pilgrim of Our Lady of Fatima as an example.

This life-size statue, as the name suggests, is made to travel around the world to deliver the message of Fatima—including the message that praying with a rosary is a major request from Mary to alleviate the ire of God the Father. Investigating the gaze of this icon of Mary, Morgan argues that her gaze evokes in the pious the presence of Mary and elicits their dedication to her. Calling the act of seeing as a “medium of revelation and grace,” Morgan emphasizes the power that her gaze embodies. While other works with ethnographic wealth in this volume illuminate different aspects of Marian devotion, this work makes a unique contribution dealing directly with the culture of suffering, which is one of the central themes of Roman Catholicism.

The next section, which consists of four chapters, is concerned with Mary’s involvement in political, religious, and economic struggles. In Chapter Four, Anna-Karina Hermkens discusses two pilgrimages that Marian statues made in a war-torn province of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea. One of the statues is International Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Our Lady of Fatima, which Morgan has discussed in the previous chapter, and the other is of local origin, the Miracle Statue of Tunuru. Calling a landscape ravaged by a decade of civil warfare a “warscape,” Hermkens argues that two statues’ journeys shaped “moral geographies” of Bougainville. Building on the insights of Nancy Frey (1998, 75) and Ian Reader (2005, 40) that it is pilgrims themselves who give meanings to a particular landscape and its sacred objects and holy sites by their own performances and narratives (70), Hermkens relates the movements of these two statues in 1997 to ensuing positive transformation of social and political situations and an eventual end to the civil war (84).

Hermkens conducted her fieldwork in 2005, collecting oral and visual materials about two pilgrimages which took place in 1997. The people of Bougainville, whose majority (69 percent) is Roman Catholic, faced civil war from 1989 to the late 1990s. There were several factions involved in this conflict, but one of the goals of the visit of the International Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Our Lady of Fatima was to convince the leader of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, Francis Ona, to come to the negotiation table for a truce. Although this goal was attained, Hermkens argues that Ona used the visit of the Virgin to attain his political ambition, which upset some Catholics. The journey of Our Lady of Tunuru was also arranged to deliver the message of peace. This was also successful, changing people’s attitude toward drinking, feuds, abuse, and violence for the duration of Mary’s visit. Hermkens notes that the power of Mary is “constructing the sacred” through the journeys she made, and this is not so much pilgrimage as what Eade and Salway (2000) have called “contesting the sacred.”
In Chapter Five, Cathelijne de Busser and Anna Niedźwiedz discuss Mary as the “master symbol” of Poland. The authors document both individual and political levels of Marian devotion and their interactions in Poland. By using the word “master symbol,” de Busser and Niedźwiedz are pointing to a symbol which “enshrine[s] the major hopes and aspirations of an entire society” (quoted by the authors; the original is in Wolf 1958). Throughout Polish history, the authors argue, Mary served as a “consoler, divine patron, and merciful protector” (91). People conceived of Mary as a mother with whom one can talk about one’s personal problems, and also as a queen with whom one can aspire for and imagine a society in which political justice prevails. The authors trace her history from Poland’s Christianization in 966 to the present day, placing a special emphasis on the national importance as a symbol. This was clearly seen through Mary’s role as a symbol of resistance against the Communist regime. The authors, however, also acknowledge the ambiguity of symbols. After the fall of Communism, Our Lady of Częstochowa also changed her appeal. Different interest groups have held varied views on “Catholic Poland” and its position within the EU, and as a result they also negotiated the meaning assigned to Our Lady of Częstochowa. In many ways, the authors’ claim that Mary is a “master symbol” of Poland is well supported.

In Chapter Six, Ien Courtens discusses the oldest and largest Marian pilgrimage site in Indonesia: Sendagsono. According to Courtens, Sendagsono is often called the “Lourdes of Indonesia,” attracting not only Catholics but also Protestants, Hindus, and the country’s Muslim majority. Pointing out that this Marian site was built on an existing Indonesian sacred site of healing, Courtens emphasizes Sendagsono’s appeal to Indonesians at large. Referring to the Virgin as “Mother Mary,” Courtens places the stress on Mary as mother for those who come to worship her at this site. Based on her observation of this site as “Indonesian” and Mary’s appeal to Muslims, Courtens argues that Sendagsono exists as a site where Muslims and Christians come together, overcoming religious boundaries. She further attributes this peaceful coexistence of two otherwise conflicting religious groups in Indonesia to the role of Mary who is conceived of as “Mother of all.”

Although the conclusion that Courtens draws from the data may be sound, the reader is left with little evidence for the “peaceful coexistence” that Courtens mentions in this article. As one example, she uses the founding story of the site, in which the protagonist underwent physical and spiritual healing and a conversion to Catholicism. The reader cannot find, however, how this story relates to her thesis. It appears that there are interesting things occurring at the site to support her claim, but Courtens does not provide much analysis. For instance, she writes that the difference between Christian and Muslim pilgrims is that Christians come to this site as soon as their problems arise, while most Muslim pilgrims come only when they have exhausted other options. The reader finds no example or sources for this assertion. As a result, Courtens’s claim remains unsupported by ethnographic details. This is also the case with her claim for the universality of the epithet “Mother Mary.” She gives few examples of the use of this name by non-Catholic groups of people. As the site presents an interesting case involving many religious groups, I wish more data had been presented in this article.

Sanne Derks’s article in Chapter Seven, on the other hand, strikes a reasonable balance between ethnographic data and theorizing. Derks documents the ways in which a neoliberal political economy is reproduced at a pilgrimage site of the Virgin of Urkupiña in Quillacollo, Bolivia. Focusing on the life history of a poverty-stricken 58-year-old woman, Virginia, who offers a service of prayers for the pilgrims for a small fee, Derks argues that Mary is actually involved in, and became part of, the neoliberal economy at this Bolivian site. Virginia came to offer this service to her “clients” only after the state withdrew many services that it used to offer. Virginia’s family had been directly affected when her husband was fired from a mining company when it was privatized. As a consequence, he and his family lost access to many social services which came along with his affiliation to a state-run company.

One aspect of Mary which is discussed by Derks but not by many others in this volume is her violence. According to Derks, the figure of Mary is conflated with Pachamama, an Andean female deity who can be either violent or benevolent. Bolivian pilgrims often believe that Mary is powerful enough to grant one’s wishes, but she is also capable of punishing one if the supplicant does not return his or her debt by showing gratitude. Mary, in this context, is conceived as an independent deity whose power can destroy humans. Furthermore, Derks describes how pilgrims take stones from this site as a sign of contract with Mary; stones are to be returned when their wishes are granted. Pointing out that the relationship between Mary and supplicants is understood in capitalist
terms such as capital, debt, and interest, Derks questions if this relationship with the volatile supernatural power can actually empower her devotees. Derks’s treatment of Mary as a collaborator with the neoliberal economy seems valid for this site, and Derks makes a good case.

The next three chapters emphasize Marian pilgrimage and family relations. In Chapter Eight, Catrien Notermans boldly states that “Marian devotion, in my argument, is all about the family” (145). Notermans has studied ailing and mostly elderly Roman Catholics in the Netherlands by accompanying them to the pilgrimage site of Lourdes in 2004 and subsequently conducting interviews in their homes in 2006. Studying reactions of her respondents to various Marian images, she locates the power of Mary in her ability to evoke family memories and to make connections between the living and the dead. Notermans further argues that “while local images of Mary assist in constructing a localized belonging and family history, the globalized images simultaneously assist in going beyond the local level and constructing a monolocalized belonging to a global community of ailing, marginalized Marian devotees worldwide” (136).

Compiling the ethnographic data which shows the various ways in which Mary evokes the memories of their kin—Mary’s life history as a mother and wife conflates with those of respondents—Notermans’s contention about the strong ties between the image of Mary and family relations is powerful. Her argument about the local and global images of Mary is perhaps tenable, but readers are left without much ethnographic detail. Overall, however, Notermans discussions are welcome, as the issue of family and icons in both global and local forms is relevant to many other studies of popular Catholicism and global Christianity (cf. Jansen in this volume; Margry in this volume; Tweed 1997).

In Chapter Nine, Lena Gemzöe treats a rather common yet puzzling phenomenon at many Roman Catholic churches worldwide: the feminization of religion. Paying particular attention to death-related practices and the cult of Mary, Gemzöe discusses interlaced relationships between gender, power, and religious symbolism in her study of lived religious experience in a Portuguese fishing village. Gemzöe discusses several aspects of church life such as festivals, pilgrimages, daily assistance provided for priests, time of death, and practices at cemeteries. Confining her discussions to “religion on the ground,” Gemzöe acknowledges the division of labor between two genders among the laity. For example, a male civil organization takes care of the organizational part of the festival, whereas women are more active in devotional aspects of the festivals, dominating the candlelit processions and oftentimes making religious vows with Mary.

Gemzöe also studies various interpretations of Mary by lay women. One of the valuable observations that she makes is that Mary is conceived by many as mother, and not as virgin (152). Building on other scholars’ contention that these lay parishioners are active agents in shaping Roman Catholic traditions (Badone 1990; Brown 1981), Gemzöe firmly situates women as active participants in shaping the tradition in this Portuguese village. She ends the article with an image of the religious sphere as a magnetic field. Women are strongly attracted to the center of sacredness, but they are always repelled from its core, as women are not allowed into the priesthood. Although I must wonder about Gemzöe’s assumption that priesthood is the most sacred aspect of religion for these women, overall, Gemzöe exhibits her sensitivities in dealing with this universal topic of religion and women.

The last article in this section on family is that by Janine Klungel on Marian pilgrimage and family relations in Guadeloupe, a Caribbean island of French territory. Central to her thesis is the notion of matrifocality. Quoting Smith (1956), who initially introduced this term into Caribbean studies, she notes matrifocality is “a property of kinship systems where the complex of affective ties among mother and children assumes a structural prominence because of the diminution (but not disappearance) of male authority in domestic relations” (quoted by Klungel, 165; the original is in Smith 2001 [9418]). By situating matrifocality within the context of the French legal system which privileges the notion of nuclear family and the sons and daughters of “legitimate relationships,” Klungel labels matrifocality in Guadeloupe as a form of resistance to French domination.

In the family Klungel studied, the mother calls for a family pilgrimage to the sea when strict obedience to the matriarch was not observed by her family members. Utilizing the ethnographically rich materials about these trips to the sea, Klungel argues that the pilgrimages that mothers make to the sea need to be understood within the context of the structural inequity in which women live. Mary is considered to reside in the sea, and the trips to the sea are often commanded by the mothers. Klungel also sees these pilgrimages as creating a kind of communitas (Turner 1969) in which the usual mother-centered hierarchy is temporarily suspended. As the participants return to their homes, the orderly hierarchy resumes, in which mothers take back their authority. Klungel further argues that in broken families without mothers, Mary becomes the deceased mother by proxy.

The next and last section, entitled “Lived Religion in the Context of the Official Church,” contains three thought-provoking articles. Peter Jan Margry’s chapter on the apparition of the Lady of All Nations in Amsterdam traces an ironic twist of the history regarding this vision. The initial apparition of this Mary occurred to a woman named Ida
Peerdeman in 1945, and apparitions continued until 1959. The figure identified herself as the Lady, and left many messages including several instructions to the visionary. This Mary is called the Lady of All Nations, and is represented by an icon of a young woman standing on the globe, having a cross on her back (186). The most contentious part of her messages is that she was brought to the world as a co-redempress of Christ, and she further claimed that “this will be the new and final Marian dogma” (187).

Margry traces the Church’s historical opposition to the cult of this Lady, subsequent networking of the cult in Amsterdam with other apparitional sites, births of other branch cultic sites, and finally the acceptance of the Lady of All Nations by the local bishop. Most notably, a small female lay organization in Japan made a wooden statue of this Lady, and this site had apparitions of its own. Eventually, these apparitions in Japan were approved by its local bishop (Yasuda 2001). Coupled with the appointment of a bishop in Amsterdam who took interest in the cult of the Lady, a tide had turned to a positive treatment of the original Lady of All Nations by the Church. Margry’s treatment of this historical narrative is theoretically informed by Herview-Leger’s (2000) idea of religion as the chain of memory and Castells’s (1996) network society, among others.

In Chapter Twelve, Edith Turner discusses her own pilgrimage experience to Knock, Ireland where a Marian apparition happened in 1879. According to an account based on fifteen eyewitnesses, Mary, Joseph, and John the Evangelist appeared along with an altar with a large cross and a lamb on it in the background, all in the form of dazzling light behind a church. All figures were floating on the ground in rain. Since then, Knock has become the Irish national pilgrimage site. In this article, Turner discusses her own pilgrimage experience to Knock in 1971, and subsequent visits in 1972, 1995, 1996, 1999, and 2000. She traces the significant shift of the material representation at Knock, and argues that this shift clearly reflects the view of the Church and not of the people who come to this shrine. The Lamb of God has taken central stage in recent years, replacing the prominent position Mary used to occupy in the 1970s.

Turner’s charm permeates her narrative. While her writing is personal, she raises a question of power, gender, and the sacred through narrating stories. She weaves a story of a resident priest, pilgrims’ success stories in transforming themselves, and women’s involvement in this site. She touches on the issue of the “mystical reversal of authority” (212) which we often witness at these apparition sites. I will turn to this topic later. Turner further raises a question about a new genre of ethnographic writing by those who became practitioners and write about their stories. Turner blurs oft-drawn boundaries between the observer and the subject, and she also goes on to break the social scientific convention according to which scholars circumvent the experiences of the sacred (cf. Turner 2005).

This direct presence of the sacred in the mundane is also the theme that Robert Orsi engages in Chapter Thirteen. He does this in a quite dissimilar way from that of Turner. Orsi takes issue with the excesses, such as the copies of pilgrimage sites like Lourdes all over the world, and questions: what categories, languages, and concepts are there to explain the abundance of experiences, shops, people, and pilgrimage sites?

He answers these questions by analyzing the problem of current scholarship in dealing with the “problem of presence.” Quoting subaltern historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, Orsi points out two underlying assumptions in modern historiography which prohibit facing what is happening at a place like Lourdes where miracles are reported every day and where “the transcendent broke into time” (215). Chakrabarty argues that the first problem is that human existence is conceived within a “frame of single and secular historical time that envelopes other kinds of time” (217), and the other problem is that humans are conceived as “ontologically singular” and that deities and spirits are treated as “social facts.” In this scheme, the social exists prior to the gods and spirits (217). Orsi then goes on to suggest an alternative historiography in studying such phenomena as Lourdes which goes beyond existing interpretive frameworks.

As I hope I have shown, Moved by Mary is a superb collection of essays on Marian pilgrimage, covering such topics as gender, power, visual piety, religious symbolism, political economy, and globalization all in the context of the cult of Mary. Before I discuss this book thematically, I turn to the review of Flinn’s book.

In Mary, the Devil, and Taro: Catholicism and Women’s Work in a Micronesian Society, Juliana Flinn presents the interlacing of women’s gender, work, personhood, and Catholicism in the context of Pollap Atoll, located in Chuuk State in the Federated States of Micronesia. By focusing on Pollap residents’ celebration of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Flinn depicts Pollapese celebration of women’s roles as mothers, nurturers, and food providers. On the day of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, women bring in their best crops of taros to the church and compete with each other to determine who brought the best crops. On this island, women typically cultivate taros and men fish. Flinn argues that Mary’s strength as mother and vanquisher of evil are celebrated in this feast, as opposed to her conception without sin or her status as a virgin. Flinn further observes that Catholicism provides a legitimate environment in which women can speak up in the community, although tradition prohibits them from doing so in other contexts.
Flinn depicts a Catholic community of Micronesia where missionaries arrived relatively recently, and as a result parishioners continue their traditional way of living. Missionaries did not stop people from keeping their traditional attire, women remaining topless and men continuing to expose their buttocks (165). Flinn depicts Pollapese womanhood as being strongly defined by motherhood, which is not necessarily merely biological but encompasses food production and mutual support of kinswomen. The author contextualizes Pollap Catholicism in a region in which their way of living is characterized by strong matrilineal kinship and uxorilocal residence.

In analyzing Pollapese womanhood and its relationship to Mary, Flinn tends to juxtapose Pollap Catholicism to the “Western tradition.” Flinn states, “[i]n the Western tradition, it is chastity, virginity, and purity that provide strength and are seen to have power over evil [...], whereas for Pollapese it is motherhood” (168). As Moved by Mary has amply shown, however, the “Western” conceptions of Mary also vary significantly, from a suffering mother (Norterman, Gemzöe) to a symbol of military might (de Busser and Niedźwiedź). In England (Coleman), the Netherland (Notermans), and Portugal (Gemzöe), Mary is most often first conceived as mother. As Jill Dubsch articulates in her Epilogue to the aforementioned book, “in popular practice, the Virgin Mary is anything but the passive, Church-controlled, submissive female figure” (228). It should be noted that Flinn discusses the images of Mary in Western theological discourses and not in the anthropological literature of Mary. Overall, however, the volume is a significant addition not only to the knowledge of Christianity in Oceania but also to the growing literature on the anthropology of Roman Catholicism.

The chapters of Moved by Mary and the monograph Mary, the Devil, and Taro attest to Mary’s continuous relevance to the day-to-day lives of her devotees. Despite the popularity of Mary, what emerged out of the reading of these two books for me is a notion of marginality. Here, in place of conclusion, I will discuss three things at the margin: people involved in the cult of Mary, the Virgin herself in the theological discourse of the Church, and theoretical discussion of the direct experience of the presence of the divine in scholarship.

The first marginality that I would like to draw attention to is related to the social location of the people who are involved in the cult of Mary. The majority of the studies discussed in these two books are concerned with structurally marginalized people. The most notable such group is, not surprisingly, women (Derks, Notermans, Gemzöe, Klungel, and Flinn). Derks discusses a poverty-stricken woman who is pushed around by the neoliberal economy in Bolivia, and Klungel illustrates the matrilocial family whose matriarchs have to rely on sons who are “legitimately born” in order to secure their landownership. Women, however, are not the only group structurally marginalized. Jansen and Courtens discuss minority Christians in the context of the Muslim majority in Jordan and Indonesia, respectively. Turner, on her part, locates the Irish themselves at the time of the apparition of Our Lady of Knock in 1879 at the margins. According to Turner, the apparition occurred in the period following the Great Hunger of 1845 in which more than a million people died and in the midst of the second potato famine of 1877 as a result of which two million eventually died (204).

Second, many scholars locate Mary herself at the margin of Church-led male-centered discourse. As much as Mary is a celebrated figure in the Roman Catholic Church, when she comes to assume a comparable position with Jesus or God the Father her authority is scaled down. The most typical such pattern is seen in the case of the Lady of All Nations in Amsterdam as discussed by Margry. The message delivered by this Lady is that she is not only the mother but also the co-redempress with Christ. For the Roman Catholic Church, this doctrine of Mary as the co-redempress with Christ may have a severe implication for the Christian dogma of the Trinity. Under this scheme, Mary can appear as the fourth element, and hence the message has to be treated with caution. Initially, both the local bishop of Amsterdam and the Vatican took a safe measure by denying the authenticity of this apparition. This question of the authority and power of Mary also underpins the case of Knock as discussed by Turner. The official church insists that the Lamb of God stands right in the middle of the pilgrimage shrine, pushing the Mary who is to be crowned to the side of the altar.

This authority of Mary is even more fragile in other churches when compared to the Roman Catholic Church. Coleman has discussed the volatile climate in which Mary has to live in England and the ways in which people transgress many boundaries in interacting with Mary at Walsingham. Coleman reminds his reader that the cult of Mary was suspect, and that she was one of the main figures that had to be razed by iconoclastic forces during the Reformation Period. Although her figure saw resurgence through the revival of pilgrimage at Walsingham in the twentieth century, both Protestants and “low” Anglicans continue to cast suspicious eyes to the Virgin.

While the notion of marginality abounds, the other side of the coin of this marginality of Mary is a mysterious reversal of authority, which, in a sense, Mary embodies. As famously proclaimed in Mary’s hymn the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), she affirms that God “has put down the mighty from the thrones, and has exalted the lowly.” This notion of redemptive justice, in which the lowly will be lifted to the high, is also expressed in the Bible as “the last shall be first” (cf. Matt 20:16). This reversal of authority is a theme abun-
dantly witnessed at Marian shrines. Turner introduces her conversation with a priest, Fr. Riordan of Knock, who admitted that he had experienced nothing like what lay people have experienced at Knock (212). He said that his theological training did not prepare him for the kind of transformation that people go through at Knock. With no sign of resentment, this priest embraced the fact that the laity alone encounters some mystical knowledge at Knock from which he himself was practically excluded.

In Poland, too, a quiet yet resilient image of Mary has been exploited by the Poles, especially during the Communist era as a form of resistance. De Busser and Niedźwiedź document an illustrative case of Mary’s power as a symbol of resistance. During the Communist era, in which religious authority was severely curtailed, the Polish Episcopate organized a peregrination of a replica of Our Lady of Częstochowa to visit every parish in Poland. In reaction to the immense success of this peregrination, the authority “arrested” this Mary by ordering the replica to stay in the monastery where the original of Our Lady of Częstochowa is housed. To the astonishment of the state authority, the successful peregrination continued with an empty frame, amply showing the extreme popularity of this Mary. This can be an example of the reversal of authority that Mary can affect: she is under “house arrest” yet she unleashed her power even without the physical presence of an icon.

The third and the last marginality to be discussed is in our own field: the limited theoretical framework for the study of the presence of the sacred. Orsi has problematized the study of the presence of the sacred in modernity. As previously discussed, Orsi brings up the discussions of Chakrabarty that contemporary scholarship often frames various human experiences within “a single and secular historical time that envelopes other kinds of time” (217) and that scholars tend to assume “human is ontologically singular, that gods and spirits are in the end ‘social facts’” (217). Orsi continues to claim that because of these assumptions, the interpretive frameworks for Marian apparition can be polarized between functionalist and antimodernist (218).

What Orsi calls for is not a denial of existing theoretical frameworks based on the analysis of gender, political economy, and such other useful concepts but to go beyond existing frameworks. Implicitly, perhaps, he situates his perspectives on Marian cult as a relationship with the divine as an example of such new generation of theory. Orsi argues that what is real at Lourdes and other pilgrimage sites is the “presence of the supernatural in relationship with humans and the power of the needs, fears, desires, and imaginings [...] that this exchange unlocks” (222). In this analysis, Orsi does not necessarily reside in the ontological singular, and simultaneously he gives space to the divine for its own historical framework.

As briefly seen, these two books on Marian devotion are valuable additions to the study of popular Catholicism, lived religious experience, and women and religion. The books not only illustrate different ways in which religion is practiced, interpreted, and eventually lived but also suggest a new methodology through which to study humanity’s interactions with the divine. I can imagine that Moved by Mary in particular can serve as a useful resource as an undergraduate textbook for a course on pilgrimage encompassing various theoretical approaches to the study of religion.

REFERENCES

Badone, Ellen

Brown, Peter

Castells, Manuel

Eade, John, and Michael J. Sallnow (eds.)

Frey, Nancy

Hervieux-Leger, Danièle

Reader, Ian

Smith, Raymond

Smith, Raymond

Turner, Edith
Turner, Victor

Tweed, Thomas A.

Wolf, Eric Robert

Yasuda, Teiji
The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature is a book by Harvard University psychologist and philosopher William James. It comprises his edited Gifford Lectures on natural theology, which were delivered at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland between 1901 and 1902. The lectures concerned the psychological study of individual private religious experiences and mysticism, and used a range of examples to identify commonalities in religious experiences across traditions. The varieties of religious experience: a study in human nature: being the Gifford lectures on natural religion delivered at Edinburgh in 1901-1902. by. James, William, 1842-1910. This section covers the different forms of Religious experience covering visions and voices for A-level Religious Studies. Imaginative visions are those who occur in dreams such as when Joseph, while engaged to Mary, had a dream telling him not to be afraid of marrying Mary, even though she was pregnant and he was not the father. Voices. Hearing God’s voice or, in Prophet Muhammad’s case, the angel. The voices carry authority and have a profound affect. Hearing in this sense means more than an audible voice but also the communication of knowledge and is often one aspect of the religious experience: it could also be a mystical experience. So why is Mary’s name linked with religious persecution? Being burned at the stake was typical punishment for heresy. The idea behind the different crimes was that, while people could dispute religious belief, no one could ever possibly agree that treason was permissible. If one person can be held responsible for Mary’s reputation, however, it is the Protestant martyrrologist, John Foxe. The power of Foxe’s work arose also because of the intensely poignant way in which those martyrs were alleged to have gone to their fates. Whether his sources were accurate or not (and many believe they were not always entirely accurate), it is hard to not feel emotion at this typical account of some of the early Marian martyrs, the bishops Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley. To us Americans, the experience of receiving instruction from the living voice, as well as from the books, of European scholars, is very familiar. At my own University of Harvard, not a winter passes without its harvest, large or small, of lectures from Scottish, English, French, or German representatives of the science or literature of their respective countries whom we have either induced to cross the ocean to address us, or captured on the wing as they were visiting our land. But if, on the other hand, our theory should allow that a book may well be a revelation in spite of errors and passions and deliberate human composition, if only it be a true record of the inner experiences of great-souled persons wrestling with the crises of their fate, then the verdict would be much more favorable.