OPEN ACCESS
perspektywy kultury / *perspectives* on culture
No. 53 (2/2026)

Anna Markowska
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8694-906X
University of Wroclaw
anna.kutaj-markowska@uwr.edu.pl
https://doi.org/10.35765/pk.2026.5302.12

"Images Going Deep" to Support Faith and Identity. Nuns in Lower Silesia, Heterochrony and the Changing Visuality of Religious Art*

ABSTRACT

Some of the present convents in Lower Silesia are located in premises that once belonged to German nuns who had to leave them after World War II. The newly arrived Polish nuns, on the one hand, took care of the precious heritage of their predecessors and, on the other hand, tried to domesticate the unfamiliar space and adapt it to the specific spirituality of a particular order through slight spatial changes and the introduction of new artworks. Images accompanied the sisters throughout their many moves. Answering how images influenced their piety and why their form provided spiritual support is difficult, if only because it requires transcending history and entering the sisters' inexpressible intimacy. To what degree can a researcher contextualize and historicize the perception of a sacred image, and to what extent must they acknowledge that the intention to transcend history places them in a realm of mystery? The small gestures and decisions made by the sisters often serve as valuable clues for tracing the shifting dynamics of images within a historical process shaped by numerous transformations in both the Church and the country. For these reasons, the methods employed in this research integrate oral history, visual theology, classical methods of analysis and comparison from art history, and the anthropology of the image. Additionally, in recognition of moments of uncertainty, epistemologies of ignorance are embraced in line with contemporary feminist concepts that priorities knowledge grounded in trust.

KEYWORDS: contemporary convents, transcending historical time, heterochrony, female spirituality, Lower Silesia, power of images

* This research was funded in whole by the National Science Centre, Poland, grant number: 2021/41/B/HS2/03148.

Suggested citation: Markowska, A. (2026). "Images Going Deep" to Support Faith and Identity. Nuns in Lower Silesia, Heterochrony and the Changing Visuality of Religious Art. *Perspectives on Culture*, *2*(53), pp. 177–197. https://doi.org/10.35765/pk.2026.5302.12
Submitted: 20.12.2023 Accepted: 04.06.2024

STRESZCZENIE

„Obrazy sięgające głęboko" jako wsparcie wiary i tożsamości. Zakonnice na Dolnym Śląsku, heterochronia i zmieniająca się wizualność sztuki sakralnej

Niektóre z obecnych klasztorów na Dolnym Śląsku znajdują się w budynkach niegdyś należących do niemieckich zakonnic, które musiały je opuścić po II wojnie światowej. Nowo przybyłe polskie zakonnice z jednej strony dbały o cenne dziedzictwo swoich poprzedniczek, a z drugiej starały się oswoić nieznaną przestrzeń i dostosować ją do specyficznej duchowości danego zakonu, poprzez niewielkie zmiany przestrzenne i wprowadzenie nowych dzieł sztuki. Obrazy towarzyszyły siostrom podczas ich licznych przeprowadzek. Odpowiedź na pytanie, w jaki sposób obrazy te wpływały na ich pobożność i dlaczego ich forma stanowiła duchowe wsparcie, jest trudna, choćby dlatego, że wymaga wyjścia poza historię i wejścia w niewyrażalną intymność sióstr. W jakim stopniu badacz może osadzić w kontekście i ująć w ramy historyczne postrzeganie świętego obrazu, a w jakim stopniu musi uznać, że dążenie do przekroczenia historii przenosi go w sferę tajemnicy? Drobne gesty i decyzje, podejmowane przez siostry, często stanowią cenne wskazówki pozwalające prześledzić zmieniającą się dynamikę obrazów w ramach procesu historycznego, na który wpływ miały liczne przemiany zarówno w Kościele, jak i w kraju. Z tych powodów metody zastosowane w niniejszym badaniu łączą historię mówioną, teologię wizualną, klasyczne metody analizy i porównania z historii sztuki oraz antropologię obrazu. Ponadto, uznając momenty niepewności, przyjęto perspektywę tzw. epistemologii niewiedzy, zgodnie ze współczesnymi koncepcjami feministycznymi, które priorytetowo traktują wiedzę opartą na zaufaniu.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: współczesne klasztory, wykraczanie poza czas historyczny, heterochronia, duchowość kobiet, Dolny Śląsk, siła obrazów

Introduction

Praying to God, who exists before time itself, transcends history. Even His interventions that have already taken place do not belong solely to the past. They are renewed each time as present in the act of faith. Karl Jaspers wrote about overcoming history by entering the realm of timeless values. What matters here in his arguments is the following:

> We overstep history when man becomes present to us in his most exalted works, through which he has been able, as it were, to catch Being in motion, and has rendered it communicable (Jaspers, 1953, p. 275).

Wiesław Juszczak, in his commentary on these words, rightly pointed out that this way of overcoming history is inherent in art and is connected with the

mystery of being as an ontological value. The mystery of being, in turn, should be distinguished, Juszczak continued, from the problem of being considered from an axiological perspective. Distanced evaluation can then replace participation in values (Juszczak, 2009, pp. 71–83). Unfortunately, this is tantamount to killing life under the pretext of analysis. It is within the framework of such evaluation and analysis that art historians studying paintings generally operate. However, people have never completely freed themselves from the great power of images, as Hans Belting justly claimed (Belting, 1994, p. 16), and, as David Freedberg underscored, art historians retreat from engaging with them (Freedberg, 1989, p. XXI). In this text, this power is shown through the way it remains present in convents. Yet the mystery of faith and prayer can only be analyzed to a certain extent. If we transform the mysterious into the unknowable, then contemporary feminist epistemologies of ignorance (as described, for example, by Cynthia Townley) may help us consider relations that do not confine us within the art historian's vicious circle of knowledge, with its inherent reproduction of patterns of domination (Townley, 2006, pp. 37–55). The researcher in the convent is often confronted with women who are often perfectly content with their lives and finds themselves unable to understand this contentment merely by pointing out analyzable facts and details. A margin of incomprehension must be left, as—as already had been noted in feminist writings—there exists a non-synchronicity between the discourse of language and the pleasure of the female body (Weigel, 1996, p. 73), and it is not certain that pleasure imparts meaning to human life. Assuming that certain knowledge cannot be attained through analytic and judicious means is therefore a limitation of the present paper, one consciously inscribed within in the hope that imbuing knowledge with a feminist sensibility is more important than avoiding the risk of failure.

Using the examples of the present-day Polish monasteries of the Ursulines of the Roman Union and the Franciscan nuns in Wrocław, as well as the Borromean nuns in Trzebnica, where I conducted field research on contemporary spirituality, my goal is to show the transformation of piety as far as images go. In these old monasteries, the sisters reside in rooms adorned with works spanning centuries. The arrangement of space defies the logic of a museum-like linear progression through time; instead, it is a multi-temporal composition. The essence here is not progress. Modernity introduced the notion of universal, standardized time, devoid of God as a reference point. Yet the luminosity of the artworks, emanating from their actual presence, transcends both the time of their creation and modernist temporal homogeneity, exerting a formative influence on their own personal reception. Thus, their anachronistic power "shines through" (Moxey, 2013, p. 3). Instead of the harsh Chronos leading to death, the unpredictable Kairos emerges, infusing both the contemplation of art and the life of the beholder with deep meaning.

The nuns' testimonies have been anonymized, and, where no reference is given, the information was obtained orally in the convents.[1]

Historical Framework

In the lives of Lower Silesian nuns over the last two centuries, two dates were particularly traumatic: 1810 and 1945. First, an edict issued by King Frederick William III abolished most Catholic convents. Then, as a result of the outbreak of World War II, many premises were requisitioned for hospitals, and only at the end of the war did the forced migration of German nuns take place (including Silesian women—autochthons), followed by communist repressions (Mirek 2009). The X2 Action of 1954 sent many nuns to labor camps (Kaczmarek, 2006, pp. 120–134). The Ursulines and Borromeans, who had no knowledge of Polish, were forced to leave their homes. They were replaced, in the cases discussed below, by Polish Ursulines, Borromean nuns, and Franciscan nuns.

As a result of the Yalta Conference and the shifting of borders, the Silesian lands, formerly part of the Third Reich, came under the Polish-Soviet administration. The Polish authorities referred to these areas as the Recovered Territories, as throughout their turbulent history they had also formed part of the Polish state since the tenth century. For a long time, relations with Germany were extremely complicated (Kiwerska, 2001). Today, however, it is debated whether these territories were truly "recovered" or whether they were merely a "gift from Stalin" or even Soviet war loot (Strauchold, 2006, pp. 6–10). It should be noted, however, that these gains came at a significant cost: Poland was simultaneously stripped of its vast eastern territories, most notably the cities of Lwów and Wilno, which were incorporated into the Soviet Union.

Forced migration and vast cultural diversity hindered social integration in the Western Lands, and Pius XII's policy toward the countries of the Eastern Bloc put the Polish episcopate "in a difficult position" because it had to respond simultaneously to the strategies of the Vatican and the Communists (Kądziela, 1990, pp. 35–37). With the Cold War underway and the Iron Curtain dividing Europe, the Ministry of the Recovered Territories, established in 1945, called for the obliteration of the traces of the German culture. As early as June 1945, Polish was introduced into worship services. The use of the German language was banned, and the removal of German inscriptions, shrines, and paintings with religious content was ordered (Kołtan, 2016, pp. 98–104; Nitschke, 2001,

1 Interviews with the Franciscan Sisters in Wrocław were conducted from January to March 2022, with the Ursuline Sisters in Wrocław from June 2022 to May 2024, and with the Borromean Sisters in Trzebnica in March 2024. Interviews with the Carmelite Sisters in Krakow, who were fortunate enough not to be subject to either cassation or migration, took place in March 2024.

pp. 117–125). Although the Polonization of these territories involved a radical rejection of centuries of cultural heritage, the process of domesticating the new territories unfolded somewhat differently within the Catholic Church than in the policies of the Polish state. While the state fostered resentment, the Church called for reconciliation and mercy. The spirit of Christian reconciliation permeated the famous 1965 letter from the Polish bishops to the German bishops ("... we grant forgiveness and ask for it in return" [Kądziela, 1990, p. 76]), which was considered by the Polish government as an act of high treason. Overall, the Catholic Church had a significant impact on cultural integration in the Western Territories (Krucina, 1996, pp. 12–20; Sokołowski, 2020). Yet while the longevity of the Christian tradition fostered integration, the beauty of churches and images did not always facilitate the process. This was evident in the abandoned Ursuline convent in Liebenthal (now Lubomierz), Lower Silesia, which remains uninhabited to this day. As Zdzisław Mach noted, the dominance of the monastery was a characteristic feature of German Liebenthal. Although it was a Catholic monastery, the settlers perceived German Catholicism as different from Polish Catholicism, which contributed to their sense of alienation. For the rural population arriving from the East, theological issues were less important than images, the names of saints, and various symbolic and aesthetic details. As Mach wrote (1998, p. 97):

> The saints were unknown, their images foreign, and the inscriptions in German unreadable. ... As a result, all the exceptional historical and artistic richness of Lubomierz paradoxically constituted an obstacle to the settlers' adaptation process.

It should be noted that, in the case of Lubomierz, the population was deprived of a spiritual guide. Father Bernard Pyclik, who had arrived with a group of settlers from across the Bug River and was, as Mach emphasized, a stabilizing factor in the town, was arrested and subsequently forced to leave. Such a situation did not occur during the takeover of German property by Polish nuns. The cultivation of their own conventual charism and the memory of their founders overlapped with a long process of not only familiarizing themselves with a foreign tradition but even developing a sense of pride and responsibility from continuing it.

My aim is to answer the question of whether it is possible to distinguish the nuns' imaginary (understood here only as referring to particularly supportive images) within the framework of the fundamental transformations of visual concepts that have dominated the Catholic Church. These concepts are historical in nature. They have been linked both to the teachings of the Church and to changes in artistic styles and conventions. They are present in the convents under study: firstly, the transgressive visuality of affective mysticism (seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries); secondly, the restrained historicist-idealist visuality (which dominated the nineteenth and twentieth centuries), connected with the rise of photography and other forms of mechanical reproduction; and thirdly, the modernist visuality influenced by abstract art (second half of the twentieth century). The ideas of the Second Vatican Council had a significant impact on the latter two types of visuality. However, these influences were not particularly evident within the historical spaces of centuries-old churches. As a complement and continuation of the second type, I also examine the quasi-veristic visuality based on scientific computer reconstructions (twenty-first century). In the convents, these different visual concepts intermingle seamlessly, as the juxtaposition of images is not governed by chronology. The sisters therefore have a unique opportunity to become bearers of different forms of cultural memory. The rearrangement, rehanging, and commissioning of new paintings formed part of broader changes in devotional practices and contemplative prayer. Yet within these universal transformations, I would like to draw attention to the agency and individuality of the sisters, as expressed in their different—usually small—gestures, decisions, and choices. Over time, some images gained importance for the nuns, while others lost relevance. To describe the sisters' subtle marking of their own identity, the old concept of bricolage may prove useful. According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, the bricoleur is a person who constructs their heterogeneous and finite world from whatever is at hand, taking every opportunity to renew or enrich available resources (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17). The "bricoleur" nuns, through their sometimes minor interventions, attempted to adapt convent interiors to their spiritual needs. In this way, what I seek in the visuality of convents is what Mindy Nancarrow Taggard called "a unique and valuable record of a female prayer" that emerged alongside the official devotion of the Church (Nancarrow Taggard, 2000, p. 99), and what Sigrid Weigel meant by providing "the premises for a representation and contemplation of the history of the female subject beyond the illusions created by emancipatory discourse or the refusal of history" (Weigel, 1996, p. 73).

As I will attempt to show, the general transformation in ways of expressing piety—resulting from the changes brought about by *aggiornamento*—together with the ambivalent attitude towards the German culture caused by the trauma of war, the adjustment to the new socialist reality (Musialik, 2006, pp. 188–193), and the individual choices of the sisters shaped by the charismatic formation specific to each congregation, was compounded in Lower Silesia by the fact that the settlers "were initially struck by a strong sense of foreignness" (Thum, 2011, p. 173). As Thum noted: "It was a bizarre world that had been torn from its foundations; it was anything but welcoming" (Thum, 2011, p. 174). In this strange and incomprehensible world, the sisters sought solace in their faith and piety. The images they chose became anchors that helped them establish roots and transform their provisional shelter into a home. To underscore the contrast

between the situations in Lower Silesia and Małopolska (which remained unaffected by border shifts following Yalta), research was also conducted at the Carmelite convent in Krakow. Oral research proved invaluable, as a careful examination of monastic archives revealed—as expected—a lack of documentation concerning minor changes in the placement of paintings, and particularly, the emotional significance attached to them.

From the Poor Clares to the Ursulines: The Image for the Comfort in Anticipation

The Ursulines, the so-called Black Nuns in Silesia, supported the great re-Catholicization campaign after the Tridentine Reformation and the Thirty Years' War from the very beginning. They moved into the monastery at Ritterplatz (today 16 Nankiera Square) in Breslau one year after the abolition of the Order of the Poor Clares in 1810 (Eysymontt & Ilkosz, 2011, p. 257). They treated the Poor Clares' heritage as a relic (Klich, 2016, p. 70), yet the monastery, which did not meet their needs, required reconstruction and expansion. The Baroque decoration, a reminder of the reconstruction period during the reign of Abbess Brygida Dąbrowska (1696–1701), included valuable paintings by Michael Willmann, who played an important role in the promotion of Silesian affective mystical piety (Eysymont & Ilkosz, 2011, p. 258). On the other hand, the nineteenth-century expansion had a historicizing character (Harasimowicz, 1997, p. 23). The two churches of Saint Clare and Saint Hedwig, situated next to each other on the ground floor, were restored in the 19th century, and the former was furnished with a magnificent neo-Gothic altar-piece. In 1857, the sisters opened the medieval tomb of the convent's founder, Anne of Bohemia, Duchess of Silesia, in the St. Hedwig Church. Her remains were placed in a glass sarcophagus in the crypt, making her body visible. This gesture of revealing the physical body made an extraordinary journey through time seem plausible. Since then, Princess Anne's body has existed contemporaneously—here and now—subject to visual inspection, making the familial ties between the Poor Clares and the Ursulines more tangible. The reburial of the duchess formed only a part of a broader visual spectacle aimed at making history visible and strengthening the roots of the Ursuline congregation. The collection of paintings also expanded: new religious and historical works were added to those inherited from the Poor Clares.

Under the rule of the Kingdom of Prussia and later during the Second and the Third Reichs, the most important painting in the convent was a copy of *Maria Hilf* (Our Lady, Help of Christians) by Lucas Cranach the Younger. The Ursulines arrived in Breslau from Pressburg (today Bratislava) in 1686, bringing this image with them. It was placed in the high altar of Saint

Clare's Church. According to tradition, the painting soon became renowned as a miraculous image associated with healings. The nuns called their convent "Maria Hilf," a name reflected in the convent's seals. In addition to this painting, the convent obtained other copies of the image objects inspired by it. In the eighteenth century, the Ursulines placed a bas-relief of *Maria Hilf* over the convent gate, entrusting the Virgin with protection against the Lutherans. A nineteenth-century photograph of the dormitory, in turn, shows an image of *Maria Hilf* attached to the curtain separating the beds. Evidently, *Maria Hilf*'s presence was also important before falling asleep and immediately after waking. Today, the image is located in the sisters' upper private chapel. Hanging on a side wall, it is no longer the central focus of devotion for the Polish congregation.

Besides the veneration of the Lord Jesus and the Virgin Mary, the devotion to Saint Ursula and Saint Angela Merici (the founder of the *Compagnia di Sant'Orsola* in Brescia in 1535) was of great importance for both German and Polish Ursulines. The statues of the two saints from the refectory, along with numerous other images, including nineteenth-century representations, have been preserved by Polish nuns as part of their shared heritage. In fact, the buildings of the Ursuline convent and school were not damaged in World War II, while the two adjacent churches—St Clare's and Saint Hedwig's—were bombed. Difficult relations with the post-war communist authorities and the seizure of Church property meant that the sisters were not fully in control of their convent and had to rely on state assistance. Yet since the Partitions of Poland in the eighteenth century and through the *Kulturkampf* of the nineteenth century, during which the suppression of the Catholic Church and the policy of Germanisation went hand in hand, the Church in Poland had functioned as an institution closely related to the Polish nation. After 1945, within the so-called Recovered Territories, this role took on a more nuanced form, as it entailed a measure of collaboration with the communist state (Thum, 2011, p. 203). The post-war reconstruction of the destroyed part of the monastery did not take place until 1968–1970, according to the designs of Edmund Małachowicz, the municipal conservator of monuments in Wrocław (Klich, 2015, pp. 163–195). The reconstruction was carried out in the spirit of modernism, introducing changes that reinforced the rhetoric of the Polish authorities and their policy toward the so-called Recovered Territories. As Gregor Thum observed, the paradox of the communist authorities allocating substantial funds to rebuilding Wrocław's churches lay in the fact that the new Poland's western borders were legitimized by the medieval Piast dynasty, whose representatives had ruled the Kingdom of Poland. For this reason, the ancient Piast tradition and the Gothic churches became the principal symbols of Poland's historical rights to the Western lands (Thum, 2011, pp. 204–205). Accordingly, although Małachowicz designed a simple altar mensa in Saint Clare's

Church, thereby preserving the sacred character of the space, he also relocated the medieval Piast tombstones to the church and made them its dominant spatial elements. The austere interior, with its concrete ceiling, was visibly stripped not only of painted images of saints, but also of the wooden altars (including the one containing the image of *Maria Hilf*). Together, these changes gave the church a more secular character compared to the pre-war period. The mausoleum of the Silesian Piasts was created and conceived "as a museum display" (Małachowicz, 1973, p. 16), and the message conveying the superiority of the modern state over the Church becomes unmistakable.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the stained-glass window in the presbytery of Saint Hedwig's Church designed by Sister Małgorzata Bogucka (1918–1995), an Ursuline nun and professional artist. Here, the impact of *aggiornamento* is discernible. Sister Bogucka employed Małachowicz's modernist language, albeit with a modified message. The date of the project remains unknown, but archival research indicates that the stained-glass window was not completed until 1989, thanks to the support of the Diering family stained-glass studio in Überlingen.[2] The window is highly visible, as the Baroque altarpiece that had dominated the space before World War II no longer exists. At first glance, the imagery of the stained glass, spread across three arched windows, appears abstract. The composition exerts an affective impact through its luminous and nuanced colors. Over time, however, it becomes clear that the forms are arranged into a recognizable motif: a chalice and a Communion wafer. Sister Bogucka apparently intended the celebration of the Eucharist at the altar to be preceded by a sense of affective anticipation. The stained-glass window was therefore conceived as an energetic and luminous background to the service. It establishes and atmosphere without aesthetically overwhelming the viewer. In Lévi-Strauss's terminology, Małachowicz played the role of an engineer in the reconstruction of the Ursuline churches: he critically examined the available resources and redefined the hierarchy between Church and state. Bogucka, in contrast, within this highly constrained situation, subtly emphasized the sensual and religious needs of the nuns.

The painting of *Maria Hilf*, so important to the German Ursulines, did not regain its prominent position after World War II and was instead replaced by a semi-abstract stained-glass window depicting a Communion wafer. The trauma of the German occupation may have contributed to this shift. Interestingly, although the painting of *Maria Hilf* now hangs on a side wall in the sisters' private chapel, the important ceremony of making vows to Our Lady as the convent's founder, intercessor and mother, takes place in front of a contemporary statue of Our Lady of Fatima. The sisters pledge to her acts of mercy and care for

2 I sincerely thank Sr. Daria Klich, OSU, for her assistance in accessing the archival materials of the Ursuline Sisters.

poor families. They place a meal before the statue, which is later given to a family in need. In addition, they place the monastery keys under the feet of the Virgin Mary as a sign that she is to ensure the safety of the congregation. When asked which image of the Virgin Mary they hold particularly dear, the sisters gave no definite answer. Conceivably, in the era of modernist ocular centrism and the omnipotence of the communist state and its propaganda, the sisters avoided strong visual attractions, preferring instead suggestions of spiritual nourishment and the conviction that what matters most cannot be fully represented visually.

From the Cistercians to the Borromeans: The Image to Overcome the Melancholy of Passing Time

At the end of 1810, the royal commissioners announced that all the property of the Cistercian nuns in Trebnitz (modern-day Trzebnica) was to become state property, and the nuns were released from their vows and given four weeks to leave the monastery. The Cistercian convent of Trebnitz had been founded by the ducal couple of Henry the Bearded and Hedwig von Andechs (canonized in 1267 as Saint Hedwig) at the beginning of the thirteenth century. In the eighteenth century, thanks to Abbess Wostrowska, outstanding artists who had previously worked for the Cistercian abbey in Leubus (Polish: Lubiąż), were commissioned there. Particularly spectacular are the paintings in the large late-Baroque altar (c. 1750), covered with gilding and stucco carvings, created by Philip Christian Bentum, the successor of Michael Willmann in Leubus (Lejman, 2008, pp. 91–92). They are accompanied by figures of saints by Franz Joseph Mangoldt (Kalinowski, 1986, p. 141). The visual transformation of the monastery was spectacular: the splendor of light, the glitter of gold, and the lush, flowing forms appealed to the senses in accordance with post-Tridentine piety. "Bentum's painting had nothing in common with the world seen through an open window," wrote Beata Lejman about this painter of the *pittura tenebrosa* movement, inspired by Rubens and Willmann, summarizing the visionary and wondrous imagery that dominated the Trebnitz Basilica (Lejman, 2008, p. 191; Houszka, 2009, p. 324). This sensual and transgressive visuality supported the prayers of many nuns during the final wave of affective mysticism in Europe, revived after the Middle Ages. The images encouraged the greatest possible intensity of feeling and openness to repressed fantasies. One of the most remarkable works preserved in the Trebnitz basilica is a silver Baroque cradle—predating the works of Bentum and Mangoldt by nearly century—containing a Gothic clay figure of the Infant Jesus. Wrapped in embroidered swaddling clothes decorated with pearls, the Christ Child lies beneath a quilt. His right hand, emerging from beneath the covering, rests on his mouth. This is the so-called Saint Hedwig's Child, associated with the miracle of the revelation

to Saint Hedwig of the exact moment of Christ's birth. According to legend, when Saint Hedwig was praying before his sculpture, the Infant Jesus unexpectedly wept, revealing the precise moment of the Nativity, and then put his finger upon his lips as a sign that the mystery should remain secret (Miske, 1724, pp. 253–261). The cradle (as well as the dolls displayed in the Borromean sisters' museum) refers to the vivid adoration of the Infant Jesus and to affective mysticism seeking union with God. Herbert Moller explained the strong wave in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Germany, France, and the Netherlands as a consequence of wars and emigration that caused gender imbalance. According to the researcher, men's participation in this movement—rooted in the psychological needs of young women—resulted from interactions between men and women within a specific cultural complex (Moller, 1971, pp. 305–338). The affective mysticism associated with Christmas found expression in many other works in Lower Silesia, including those of Willmann, among others (Kozieł, 2006, pp. 215–259; Kaczmarek, 2021, pp. 90–94). As Silvia Evangelisti wrote: "Through the rituals associated with these dolls nuns, although dedicated to virginity for life, could ever experience a kind of symbolic motherhood" (Evangelisti, 2007, p. 156). The figures were used in rituals of symbolic care: nuns dressed them, sewed clothes for them, and embraced them during holiday ceremonies.

In 1861 the Borromean nuns came to the ruined Trebnitz monastery and in 1889 they purchased the monastery and moved their general house there. A period of renovation began. In newly commissioned paintings the temporality of the depicted scenes changed, in accordance with the historicism that was embedded in the past. Conventionalizing the encounter with the sacred distanced it from the roughness and sweetness of the miracle of becoming one with God. A good example of the new aesthetics is followers of the Nazarene painters, very popular in Trebnitz and Lower Silesia (Łukasiewicz, 2012). With the new images a new form of piety was introduced in the congregation in the nineteenth century. Modernity considered the radical affectivity of the previous era inappropriate and ill-suited. However, the Borromean sisters never forgot Saint Hedwig's encounter with the Child. Nowadays, every Christmas Eve, twelve Borromean nuns carrying lighted candles proceed solemnly from the sacristy of the basilica to the convent chapel, where the Infant Jesus is venerated. On February 2, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, which is also the Day of Consecrated Life, the cradle is returned to the Basilica in a similar procession. According to tradition, this continues the custom established by the Cistercian nuns. Today, however, Saint Hedwig's maternal joy, care, and her devotion to Jesus has less mystical and more practical implications. If the Borromean sisters speak privately to Jesus, they do not reveal this to others. Time has altered the way in which piety is expressed and spiritual exaltation is sought. Increasingly, its translation into everyday activity takes the form of practical service, such as

running the "Maciejki" day-care center, where children can come after school. The immobilization of images, and the peculiar manner in which the faithful themselves become fixed before them, accompanied the rapid advancement of technology and the principle that "faith is stationary, science progressive" (Chadwick, 1975, p. 162). Yet if the replacement of "unproductive visions" inspired by emotional devotion to the Infant Jesus with hands-on care work for children can be linked to the growing emphasis on rationality and empiricism that emerged in the wake of the Enlightenment and continues to shape the present day, this also suggests that images still provoke a powerful response. That response is just simply expressed differently, not only through prayer, but also through work.

The last interesting artistic realization related to Saint Hedwig in Trzebnica is a work by Artur Łobuś. His painting Saint *Hedwig of Silesia with a Benedictine Rosary* (2020) was donated to the Borromean sisters, and some of them hold it in high esteem. The painting has been placed in the convent cafe; many of the sisters keep an image of it on their phones, and some carry holy cards with it in their prayer books. One of the sisters had a reproduction framed and placed it on the bedside table in her cell. Łobuś's image of Saint Hedwig is based on the results of anthropological research carried out in 1990 on the relics of the duchess's skull, preserved in Trzebnica and kept in a reliquary, by scholars from the University of Wrocław (Krupiński, Kwiatkowska, & Rajchel, 1995, pp. 126–134). In this case, not only photography and other forms of mechanical reproduction but scientific reconstruction techniques influenced the style of religious art. Although neither the painting nor the reconstruction was commissioned by the nuns, the image of the elderly Saint Hedwig became deeply meaningful to them, partly because most of the sisters themselves are elderly. It presents a version of Saint Hedwig previously unknown in her iconography. "I like her beauty very much, because she is the same age as I am," one of the sisters told me. Holding a reproduction of the painting in her hand, she said that she wished to kiss it, just as she kissed her habit every morning in gratitude to God for her in forty-three years in the convent. The physiognomy of Saint Hedwig, as reconstructed by the scholars and later interpreted in Łobuś's painting, differs markedly from the beautiful idealized image found in many earlier artworks. For many consecrated people and believers, attachment to this idealized beauty initially made the depiction of Hedwig as an elderly woman unappealing. Her aged likeness appeared ugly in their eyes, although not in the eyes of the nuns. One sister remarked that Saint Hedwig in Łobuś's painting reminded her of her grandmother, while another said that she resembled her mother. The sisters emphasized that they were moved by the modesty and simplicity of the image, as well as by the fact that the saint's high social standing could not be inferred from the painting. Some felt that the modest clothing was meant to show that holiness emerges from everyday life, although one sister missed the presence of a halo in the depiction of Saint Hedwig. All of them

appreciated the saint's work-worn hands, her gaze directed into the distance, and the fact that she was portrayed in a moment of silent prayer. They perceived anguish and concern in her face, combined, however, with the serenity that comes from faith. "I remember one time when I was so sick that I was unable to pray and I could only hold the cross, exactly like her in the painting," one nun recalled. Another remarked: "I can tell from her face that she is intelligent, probably because she has one eyebrow raised. People who are not very intelligent raise their voices; intelligent people only need to raise an eyebrow." One of the sisters also observed that the image changes depending on the light. In the midday light, she said, it becomes visible that the saint is permeated by light. And then "you literally get goosebumps." At the same time, some of the sisters felt that the painting was too dark and too distant from the traditional image of Saint Hedwig.

Following the threat of "ugliness" combined with vulnerability, weakness, and the arousal of empathy, it is worth considering these elements as part of piety. Mindy Nancarrow Taggard is particularly helpful in this regard. In discussing depictions of Christ, the scholar notes that, thanks to the imperfect portrayal of the body painted on canvas, the relationship between nuns and Christ becomes imbued with mutual tenderness and vulnerability (Nancarrow Taggard, 2000, pp. 97–111). The same may initially be said of the aged face of Saint Hedwig. In his depiction, Łobuś appears to have had a living person in mind rather than a mere symbol. At the same time, however, a certain idealization, the stiffness of the figure, the composition's strong emphasis on the luminous cross in the rosary held in the saint's hands, and the pronounced contours bring the work closer to the historicizing aesthetics of the nineteenth century. This documentary and scientific element of contemporary visuality thus complements nineteenth-century historicism. Vestiges of mystical and transgressive piety, exemplified by the cradle, are no longer seen as invitations to express personal emotion. The contemporary procession with the cradle is peaceful and no longer evokes visions. Historicity, scientific evidence, and symbolic unambiguity discipline the imagination, even when the depiction of an elderly woman would offer the opportunity to portray tenderness and vulnerability.

From the Ursulines to the Franciscans: The Image for Immersion in Soothing Atemporality

In addition to the former Poor Clares' convent in Breslau's Old Town, the pre-war Ursulines possessed an extensive architectural complex at what is now 64–66 Jana Kasprowicza Street in Wrocław's Karłowice district. The entire building, which served as an educational institution for girls, was designed in the neo-Gothic style by Joseph Ebers (1896–1898; Harasimowicz, 1997, p. 231).

In 1941, it was taken over by the German army, converted into a hospital, and retained this function even after 1945, when German Breslau became Polish Wrocław. The complex was never fully returned to the congregation. As a result, the sisters now possess only one wing of the convent (Przywecka-Samecka, 1996, pp. 48–50). The last German sisters departed for their house in Bielefeld in 1957. This convent possesses one principal characteristic that distinguishes it from the others: its interior is entirely nineteenth century and therefore contains no "fragments" of the mystical piety of the Baroque or medieval periods. When speaking with the nuns, I noticed that they referred with some embarrassment to people who express their piety in overly demonstrative ways.

The center of the space occupied by the sisters is undoubtedly the chapel, designed as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* according to the nineteenth-century concept of stylistic unity, which functioned as a kind of substitute for the former stylistic orders and as a consolation for the loss of ideological unity. The chapel is built on a rectangular plan, with a polygonally closed chancel and a side aisle to the east. Colorful geometric, floral, and figural paintings cover all the walls, including the ceiling. It is the only nineteenth-century sacred building in Wrocław with a fully preserved decoration and polychrome (Harasimowicz, 1997, p. 71). A surviving building in a city that became one of the most devastated places in Europe as a result of World War II must have seemed extraordinary. For political reasons, Wrocław's inhabitants suffered for a long time from the syndrome of uncertainty regarding their state affiliation, as well as what Gregor Thum called "rubble sickness" (Thum, 2011, p. 177). For all these reasons, this beautiful chapel, untouched by the war, has always remained a special place for the nuns — a source of joy and comfort. The muted yet rich color scheme conveys, on the one hand, a sense of completeness and, on the other, a feeling of being embedded and rooted in a multifarious and lush space. The decoration is subordinated to the architecture and to the overall impression of peace and harmony. In accordance with the post-Enlightenment tradition, the idea of beauty was elevated to the level of truth (Dupré, 2004, p. 78), which in this case resulted in a certain stiffening and hardening of form.

Neo-Gothic architecture was associated with Romanticism's reevaluation of the Middle Ages and with the belief that Gothic art, understood as an expression of the German nation and spirit, would unite faith, feeling, and sacred art (Zabłocka-Kos, 1996, pp. 208–209). The entire interior should therefore be understood as a confession of faith. A stained-glass window in the presbytery is decorated with a depiction of Christ with a burning heart (linked to the Ursuline Veneration of the Sacred Heart), while the side windows are dominated by floral motifs such as acanthus, vine, and oak leaves. The monumental scale of the image of Christ contrasts with the small retable containing painted images of Saint Angela Merici and Saint Ursula. The holistically created world of sacred art affirms the divine origin of the human being. Time runs differently

here than in the secular, scientific, or historical narratives. The sense of unity among all forms—both geometric and biological—derives from a single source, and art preserves and affirms this act of connectedness and divine integrity. It is therefore not entirely surprising that the Polish Franciscan nuns retained the images of Saint Angela Merici and Saint Ursula at the high altar, even neither saint defines Franciscan spirituality. The sisters apparently did not want to disturb the intricate and soothingly composed whole that brought them comfort. The present-day sisters likewise appreciate the harmony of the interior and its vertical proportions. "That's where God is; that's where I can find the strength to help someone, or to cry when I'm in pain. As nuns, we seek strength in God, not in the world, we also seek it in the sisterhood environment," one sister told me, adding: "The high space lifts you up." The interviews clearly show that the chapel remains a constant source of joy and spiritual uplift for the sisters. It also brought relief to patients and their parents during the time when a hospital operated in the adjacent wing (until 2012). The "bricolage" intervention of the nuns began in the side aisle and consisted in placing a copy of Our Lady of Perpetual Help (itself a copy of the miraculous icon from the Church of Saint Alphonsus Liguori in Rome) within the altar setting, as well as in positioning contemporary reliquaries on the mensa with the relics of Saint Faustina, Saint Brother Albert, John XXIII, Francis of Assisi, Cardinal Wyszyński and John Paul II, among others. Later, likenesses of Mother Anna Brunner, (1851–1911), the founder of the congregation, were introduced into the common areas. The entire congregation derives its name and identity from this very image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Through the presence of the Mother of God evoked by the icon, the nuns find the strength to remain at the side of the sick and dying. They keep copies of the image in their breviaries, and an embroidered version—a gift from one of their grateful patients—hangs on the wall of the parlor. Numerous stories circulate about miraculous interventions and healings attributed to Our Lady's help. Such miracles were said to occur especially often when the nuns brought seriously ill children into the chapel. These miracles involved not only physical healing, but also peaceful acceptance of death and the removal of fear from terminally ill children. As one sister explained to me, the falling sandal of Jesus on the icon symbolizes that He is on His way—and this awareness helped the children cope with their illness.

A Congregation of Unbroken Continuity: 400 Years between Jesus and Mary

It is worth noting, by way of comparison, that in monasteries that have continued uninterruptedly within the borders of present-day Poland—such as those in Małopolska—prayer images are simply part of the tradition accepted upon

entering the order. In such cases, it is far more difficult to perceive the changes brought about by time. This is especially true in the case of cloistered monasteries. Since the opening of the Discalced Carmelite monastery in Kraków (in the Wesoła district, today on Kopernika Street) in 1725, relatively little has changed there, as the monastery fortunately escaped liquidation. The monastery remains strictly enclosed. Among the artworks preserved there, most date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From the very beginning, the central image before which the nuns pray has been the representation of Christ on the Cross. The most important carved image is located in the nuns' chancel, where the sisters spend a total of five hours each day in prayer and contemplation. Another crucifix hangs in the refectory, where the sisters take their meals. Large antique crosses are also placed in the garden and in the inner courtyard. Significantly, an empty cross—without the figure of Christ—hangs in every nun's cell. The idea behind this is that every nun is called to become like Jesus. As one sister explained to me in the parlor with regard to the empty cross: "There is room for me there." This theological truth is expressed particularly strikingly in one of the paintings preserved in the monastery, which could be seen outside the enclosure in 2012 during the exhibition *I Have a Treasure, I Do... Four Centuries of the Discalced Carmelites in Poland* at the Archaeological Museum in Kraków. Created by an anonymous painter, *The Perfect Nun* (1635, [Daranowska-Łukaszewska, 2012, p. 33]) depicts a Carmelite nun nailed to a cross. Above her, Jesus emerges from a cloud and places a crown upon her head. In the background of the Crucifixion are various scenes representing the dangers awaiting the nuns, depicted in the form of a dragon, snakes, and a fire- breathing dog, among other symbols. The sisters also explained that what matters to them is the "dialogue between Mary and Jesus," which is why images of the Crucified are often accompanied by representations of the Virgin Mary. The church's collection includes images of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Lady of the Scapular, and Our Lady of the Snows, among others. As the sisters themselves expressed it, "we also sigh" before the painting of Saint Elijah—both because the saint is considered as the founder of the order and because the canvas is beautiful and monumental—as well as before the image of Saint Joseph. In general, the Carmelite sisters have lived continuously for four hundred years "in the space between Our Lady and Jesus." Consequently, if they make any changes, these are less noticeable than in convents where tradition has been interrupted. At the same time, because the Discalced Carmelites are a contemplative congregation, the importance of images as aids to prayer seems significantly greater than in active convents, such as those in Lower Silesia discussed above, where the sisters leave the monastery daily in order to work.

Conclusions

Just as Christianity is both a spiritual and a historical religion, and its foundation is both an event of eternal significance and a historical moment (Chadwick, 1975, p. 191), so religious art functions in both ways. Today—and, as I have shown, for more than two hundred years—the overcoming of history through images is achieved by means of apparently contradictory strategies: the preservation of iconography in its historical forms and adaptation to science. This results in a condition of multi-temporality, combining universal standardization that appears atemporal with an effort to keep pace with the latest scientific developments.

"The experience of the image is distinct from the time that surrounds it," wrote Keith Moxey in *Visual Time. The Image in History* (Moxey, 2013, p. 5). He referred to the anachronistic experience of artworks having the power to create their own time horizons. Thus, when one of the sisters confessed to me, "The images penetrate deeply," I understood this precisely as a moment of *Kairos*—a rupture within linear historical time. By recognizing this, the researcher should activate what Cynthia Townley calls "understanding trust" and empathy (Townley, 2006, pp. 41–42).

This article explores local "visual theology," a term drawn from several scholarly works. Bernard Lightman uses the term to describe the quest for a new language capable of conveying meaning amidst rapid modernization (Lightman, 2000, pp. 651–680). Edwin Greenlee extends its usage by referring to Foucault and highlighting the tension between popular and erudite theology. He suggests that visual theology holds particular significance for women and other marginalized members of society (Greenlee, 2016, pp. 75–104). Wright, in turn, discusses visual theology within the framework of "the changing sensibilities in Marian devotion," acknowledging that its study could help tell

> a sociological story of the ways in which displaced communities of persons whose identities are tied to home localities and religious customs continue to maintain identity and hope while navigating unfamiliar shoals along the difficult foreign channels onto which life has launched them (Wright, 2013, p. 105).

These objectives also guided my work, in line with recent publications in Poland that not only depict the contemporary lives of nuns but also amplify their voices (Hurlak, 2018; Juraczko, 2018; Tondys, 2017; Wolska, 2019). A significant contribution in this realm comes from Sister Małgorzata Borkowska, a Benedictine nun and eminent historian of monastic life, who, at the age of 79, decided to publish *Oślica Balaama* (*Balaam's Donkey*). Subtitled *An Appeal to Clergymen*, the book unveils the surprising story of self-confidence behind the silence of nuns. Sister Małgorzata candidly acknowledges that nuns were instructed to listen humbly to male clergy, even when misguided views were expressed "by boys

who, having memorized bits from Tanquerey in seminary and forgotten even that after passing the exam, believed they had something to teach their female audience ..." (Borkowska, 2018, p. 7). Taciturnity, she emphasizes, did not imply that the nuns accepted everything unquestioningly, and her own voice "may, in the eyes of many esteemed gentlemen of the clergy, provoke a reaction akin to Balaam's response to the donkey's rebuke" (Borkowska, 2018, p. 10). In a similar, albeit less humorous, vein, Jarosław Makowski discussed the opening of the Church to feminist theologians in his book *Kobiety uczą Kościół* (*Women Teach the Church*). He noted that feminist reinterpretations of history and theological heritage present "an opportunity to reconsider the nature of religious and ecclesiastical experience, which we are perhaps confronting for the first time since the inception of Christianity" (Makowski, 2007, p. 18). What, then, can be learned from the perspective of visual theology through the lens of the Lower Silesian sisters? Undoubtedly, the subtlety of adaptive change, coupled with a clear reverence for tradition, resonates profoundly within such a framework.

The sisters speak about the figures depicted in the paintings in the present tense. Jesus and the saints are constantly at work and influence their lives. Some paintings are described as overly sweet, candy-colored, or even cartoonish—examples of what they call "artificial beauty." Other paintings, by contrast, are regarded as interesting but requiring contemplation. Some images, they admit, are simply "hard to pray before" at all. In all the monasteries discussed here, there is an abundance of images, and within this multiplicity each sister chooses those that are most helpful to her personal prayer. When it comes to arranging the altar space, however, there must be collective agreement, because the altar constitutes the keystone binding their lives together. For this reason, the image of Saint Hedwig hanging in the café was considered particularly important only by some of the sisters. By contrast, the images of Our Lady of Perpetual Help at the Franciscan Sisters' and the stained-glass window depicting the Communion wafer at the Ursuline Sisters' are representations that shape the identity of the whole community. Our Lady of Perpetual Help is perceived as truly sustaining both the congregation as a whole and each individual nun, as well as the faithful who seek her aid in everyday life. Meanwhile, the extraordinary light of the stained-glass window in the Ursuline convent in Wrocław unifies the eclectic interior, directing attention toward the miraculous transubstantiation of bread into the Body of Christ on the days when the sisters receive Communion in church, and evoking that mystery on the days when they do not.

The Polish sisters have embraced the former German heritage with tenderness and care. Evidence of the amicable relations between the descendants of those who left Lower Silesia and those who later settled there can be found in the occasional transfer of objects associated with Lower Silesian nunneries from Germany in the new millennium. At the same time, for their most personal devotional needs, the Ursuline, Franciscan, and Borromean sisters chose

images that reflect not only a profound reverence for tradition, but also their autonomy, agency, and openness to changing times. Remarkably, this openness coexists with a desire to overcome time and history themselves.

References

Antkowiak, Z. (1991). *Kościoły Wrocławia*. Wrocław: Muzeum Archidiecezjalne we Wrocławiu.

Belting, H. 1994 [1990]. *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art.* [*Bild und Kult- Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*] (E. Jephcott, Trans.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Borkowska, M. (2018). *Oślica Balaama. Apel do duchownych panów*. Kraków: Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów.

Chadwick, O. (1975). *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Daranowska-Łukaszewska, J. (Ed.). (2012). *Mam ja skarb mam... Katalog. Wystawa z okazji czterystu lat pobytu karmelitanek bosych w Polsce*. Kraków: Muzeum Archeologiczne w Krakowie.

Dupré, L. (2004). *The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Evangelisti, S. (2007). *Nuns: A History of Convent Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Eysymontt, R., Ilkosz, J. et al. (2011). *Leksykon architektury Wrocławia*. Wrocław: Via Nova.

Freedberg, D. (1989). *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Greenlee, E. (2016). Qu(e)er(y)ing Mary: Popular Mariology as Visual Liberation Theology. *Horizontes Decoloniales / Decolonial Horizons*, *2*, 75–104.

Harasimowicz, J. (Ed.). (1997). *Atlas Architektury Wrocławia*, Vol. I. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie.

Houszka, E. (Ed.). (2009). *Malarstwo Śląskie 1520-1800. Katalog zbiorów*. Wrocław: Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu.

Hurlak, P. (2018). *Zakochani są wśród nas. Rozmowy o spełnionej miłości i zakochaniu, które się nie kończy*. Siedlce: Wydawnictwo Unitas.

Jaspers, K. (1953) [1949]. *The Origin and the Goal of History* [Vom Urspung und Ziel der Geschichte] (M. Bullock, Trans.). New Heaven: Yale University Press.

Juraczko, M. (2018). *Drogi do szczęścia*. Pelplin: Wydawnictwo Bernardinum.

Juszczak, W. (2009). *Wędrówka do źródeł*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo słowo/obraz/terytoria.

Kaczmarek, E. (2006). Specyfika sytuacji zakonów na Ziemiach Zachodnich – organizacja i przebieg akcji X2. In W. Musialik (Ed.). *Zakony żeńskie na Śląsku w XIX i XX wieku* (ss. 120–134). Opole: Stowarzyszenie Instytut Śląski

Kaczmarek, R. (2021). Temat jadwiżański w malarstwie Michaela Willmanna. Tradycja i następstwa. *Quart*, *3*(61), 74–97.
Kądziela, P. (1990). *Kościół a państwo w Polsce 1945–1965*. Wrocław: Biblioteczka "Nowego Życia".
Kalinowski, K. (1986). *Rzeźba barokowa na Śląsku*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
Kiwerska, J. (2001). *Polska wobec Niemiec w latach 1945–1949*. Poznań: Instytut Zachodni.
Klich, D. (2015). Mauzoleum Piastów Śląskich. In M. Piela (Ed.). *Historia Magistra Vitae. Dolnośląskie dziedzictwo religii i kultury, wykłady z lat 2013/2014 i 2014/2015* (ss. 163–195). Wrocław: Papieski Wydział Teologiczny
Klich, D. (2016). Urszulanki wrocławskie wobec dziedzictwa księżnej Anny Śląskiej. *PERSPEC†IVA, Legnickie Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne*, *1*(28), 67–80.
Kołtan, E. (2016). *Zgromadzenie Sióstr Maryi Niepokalanej w Polsce i w Niemczech w latach 1945–1970*. IPN Wrocław: Wrocław.
Kozieł, A. (2006). *Angelus Silesius, Bernhard Rosa i Michael Willmann czyli sztuka i mistyka na Śląsku w czasach baroku*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
Krucina, J. (1996). Rola integracyjna Kościoła na Ziemiach Zachodnich. In I. Dec & K. Matwijowski (Eds.). *Kościół katolicki na Dolnym Śląsku w powojennym 50-leciu* (ss. 12–20). Wrocław: Dolnośląskie Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne.
Krupiński, T., Kwiatkowska, B., & Rajchel, Z. (1995). Szczątki kostne Świętej Jadwigi Śląskiej w ujęciu antropologicznym. In M. Kaczmarek & M.L. Wójcik (Eds.), *Księga Jadwiżańska*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
Lejman, B. (2008). *Philip Christian Bentum malarz śląskiego baroku*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton.
Lévi-Strauss, C. (1966) [1962]. *The Savage Mind* [*La pensée sauvage*]. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Lightman, B. (2000). The Visual Theology of Victorian Popularizers of Science: From Reverent Eye to Chemical Retina. *Isis*, *4*(91), 651–680.
Łukasiewicz, P. (2012). *Malarstwo niemieckie od klasycyzmu do symbolizmu. Katalog zbiorów*. Wrocław: Muzeum Narodowe Wrocław.
Mach, Z. (1998). *Niechciane miasta. Migracja i tożsamość społeczna*. Kraków: TAiWPN Universtas.
Makowski, J. (2007). *Kobiety uczą Kościół*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B.
Małachowicz, E. (1973). *Mauzoleum Piastów Wrocławskich*. Wrocław: Dolnośląskie Towarzystwo Oświatowe.
Mirek, A. (2009). *Siostry zakonne w obozach pracy w PRL w latach 1954–1956*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.
Miske, L. (1724). *Zwierciadło przykładności, to iest Swiątobliwy Zywot [...] S. Iadwigi [...] Patronki Sławnego Klasztoru Trzebnickiego*. Kraków: Drukarnia Iana Domańskiego.

Moller, H. (1971). The Social Causation of Affective Mysticism. *Journal of Social History*, *4*, 305–338.

Moxey, K. (2013). *Visual Time. The Image in History*. London: Duke University Press.

Nancarrow Taggard, M. (2000). Picturing Intimacy in a Spanish Golden Age Convent. *Oxford Art Journal*, *23*(1), 97–111.

Musialik, W. (2006). W nowej ludowej rzeczywistości. Śląskie klasztory żeńskie w pierwszych latach po zakończeniu drugiej wojny światowej (zarys problematyki). In W. Musialik (Ed.). *Zakony żeńskie na Śląsku w XIX i XX wieku* (ss. 188–193). Opole: Stowarzyszenie Instytut Śląski.

Nitschke, B. (2001). *Wysiedlenie czy wypędzenie? Ludność niemiecka w Polsce w latach 1945–1949*. Toruń: Adam Marszałek.

Przywecka-Samecka, M. (1996). *Z dziejów wrocławskich konwentów klarysek i urszulanek*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Signum.

Sokołowski, G. (Ed.). (2020). *Rola Kościoła Katolickiego w organizowaniu życia polskiego na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1951*. Wrocław: Papieski Wydział Teologiczny we Wrocławiu.

Strauchold, G. (2006). Ziemie Zachodnie i Północne – odzyskanie, łup wojenny czy „podarunek" Stalina? In *60 lat temu powróciliśmy na Dolny Śląsk*. Bolesławiec: Muzeum Ceramiki-Proart, 6–10.

Thum, G. (2011) [2003]. *Uprooted. How Breslau Became Wrocław During the Century of Expulsions* [Die fremde Stadt Breslau] (T. Lampert & A. Brown, Trans). Wrocław: Via Nova.

Tondys, E. (2017). *Habit zamiast szminki czyli zakonnice zabierają głos*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie.

Townley, C. (2006). Toward a Revaluation of Ignorance. *Hypatia*, *3*, 37–55.

Weigel, S. (1996). *Body-and Image-Space: Re-Reading Walter Benjamin* (G. Paul, R. McNicholl, & J. Gaines, Trans.). London–New York: Routledge.

Wright, W.M. (2013). Visual Theology: Reading the Text of One Marian Altar. *American Catholic Studies*, *3*(124), 99–107.

Wolska, A. (2019). *Konsekrowani*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo BEL Studio.

Zabłocka-Kos, A. (1996). *Sztuka-wiara-uczucie. Alexis Langer – śląski architekt neogotyku*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.

Anna Markowska is an art historian, art critic, and exhibition curator. She holds the position of Full Professor and Head of the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Institute of Art History, University of Wrocław. Her recent research and publications span a broad range of interconnected concerns: the relationship between art and power, the enduring legacy of modernism, and innovative methodological approaches with a particular focus on the post-secular turn. Her work also engages with Polish and American neo-avant-garde art, as well as the oral counter-histories of women.