The semiotics of litanies from the Middle Ages to YouTube: Interpretative, intersemiotic, and performative issues

(Article begins on next page)

23 April 2024

The semiotics of litanies from the Middle Ages to YouTube: Interpretative, intersemiotic, and performative issues

Jenny Ponzo (Università di Torino)

Francesco Galofaro (Politecnico di Milano, CUBE Bologna)

Gabriele Marino (Università di Torino)

1. Introduction

Since their Medieval origins, litanies can be performed in a plurality of ways: in private or public occasions, employing verbal language only or a plurality of semiotic systems such as music and other symbolic resources engendering a complex and stratified process of meaning-making. The present paper aims at shedding light on this process by adopting a semiotic perspective centred on the performance of acts and their relationship with a corpus of multimodal texts (written, iconographic, and audio-visual/digital).

In particular, we will look into three different types of fruition and enactment of litanies in Catholic culture. The first part (§ 2) presents considerations about the collective and oral performance of litanies in ceremonial occasions, by comparing contemporary ethnographic notes (based on two observations carried out in Poland and Italy) with Medieval testimonies. The second part (§ 3) looks

into a written genre, i.e. into a corpus of 19th- and 20th-century treatises mostly authored by priests and exposing the results of an individual and intellectual meditation of the litanic text. The third part (§ 3) explores the role of new media in the semiotic elaboration of litanies by studying and classifying a corpus of YouTube videos retrieved via the Italian query *litanie dei santi* ("Litanies of the saints")[1]. Litanies constitute an integral part of Catholic liturgy, and liturgy in turn is an important place for the construction of the identity of both the believing subject and the Church. Thus, the study of the different ways in which the litanic text is performed, meditated, interpreted, and remediated can contribute to an improved comprehension of some of the complex semiotic mechanisms that have shaped Catholic culture at least since the Middle Ages.

2. Ethnosemiotic notes on litanic performance

2.a. Morpho-dynamical hypothesis

In June 2016, we observed the Litanies of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as performed in the Temple of Divine Providence located in Warsaw, Poland (see Fig. 1). The temple was under construction, and the ceremony took place in the circular crypt beneath it, where important and honoured Poles would have been later buried, thus founding national Polish identity on Catholic Church. The Litanies were performed after a Confirmation[2]. Being circular, the benches are located in the northern, southern,

[2] In Poland the month of June is dedicated to the Sacred Heart and litanies are always performed after the rituals. Poland is officially devoted to the Sacred Heart from 1920.

and western part of the crypt. The altar is a cube placed onto a wooden square basis in the middle of the crypt, whereas in the eastern part of it[3], on the same axis of the altar, we find a lectern and the crucifix. The clergy's benches are in the background.

During the Confirmation, the disposition of the three involved actors ("clergy", "worshippers", and "altar") is mainly compliant with the Second Vatican Council's indications. The altar is the vertex of a quarter of a circle that constitutes the sacred space of the clergy, complementary to the three quarters of a circle that can be considered as the worshippers' profane space. The altar and its basis are between the two spaces, and clergymen are facing worshippers, with their back to the crucifix (which serves as the fourth actor). This implies that during the "Our Father", while they address prayers to Jesus, the clergy and worshippers look at each other, also because the clergy is on the same line of sight of the crucifix. However, during the litanies, the disposition of the space suddenly changes. Firstly, a deacon poses the monstrance on the altar, in the centre of the circle. Secondly, the clergy takes place between the altar and the worshippers, kneeling toward the monstrance, with the backs to the worshippers. Thus, both the clergymen and the worshippers look at the monstrance, which is on the same line of sight of the crucifix. Clergymen are at the first place, but they belong to the same space of the community. The altar is no more a frontier between two different semantic spaces, but it is the marker of the sacred space, delimited by its square basis. This disposition recalls the spatial structure preceding the Second Vatican Council.

Baumstark (1958) proposed ten laws to explain the morphological change in liturgy in a diachronic perspective. In particular, law 9 is the *law of the preservation of older usages in the more solemn liturgical seasons*. In other words, more solemn liturgical seasons tend to maintain older liturgical usages. Furthermore, as Taft (2001) observes, the law can be extended to more solemn or less frequently celebrated liturgical services. A second important law (number 8) could explain how the ancient and the new disposition in space can coexist: newer elements may be juxtaposed for a certain

---

[3] We refer to the liturgic East.

time with older ones before ultimately supplanting them. Thus, the meaning produced by the old disposition of the actors in space can survive and be employed immediately after the new one, even if there is a strong contrast between them. According to this hypothesis, Baumstark's law would not be relevant only to the verbal component of the litanies, but to the nonverbal ones too: in particular, to the semiotic relations between actors and spaces. In order to analyse the nonverbal features of the performance, we will apply a semiotic analysis to our ethnographic material, in an ethnosemiotic perspective (Marsciani 2012). The importance of a cooperation between Liturgical Studies and Semiotics has been pointed out by De Clerck (2001): from his point of view, liturgy is the place of the construction of the believing subject and the process which contributes to the formation of the Christians' identity and of the Church. Semiotics helps to centre the analysis on the performance of the acts that we study, asking who the actors are, what programs they operate, what processes they follow, and what is their effect, as it is described in the texts or observable in behaviours.

Evidence supporting our lecture of the reconfiguration of the space can be found in ancient descriptions of litanic performances, for instance in Beroldus (1894): "*Archiepiscopus flectit genua sua contra orientem. Tunc primicerius lectorum statim subinfert letanias*"; the Archbishop kneels to the East. Then the director[4] of the lectors immediately starts the litanies. Beroldus, author of liturgical treatises, lived in Milan at the beginning of the 12th century. In the quoted passage, he refers to the Litanies of the saints as they were sung in the Ambrosian rite during the Eastern vigil, right after the baptism (Valli 2016). The liturgical east is to be considered the very position of the altar. The similarity between contemporary performances of the Litanies of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Medieval performances of the Litanies of the saints is due to the fact that the latter, together with the Litanies of the Virgin, are the model to more recent litanies (Sadowski 2011).

---

[4] The primicerius was the first capitular after the archdeacon and archpresbyter, directing the liturgical functions and chant.

2.b. Thematic roles

Clergymen, considered as a collective actor in the performance, must take the first place between the worshippers. They are the first ones to invoke the saints and to propose petitions. They mediate between the worshippers and the divine manifestation, and between the two Churches (the one on Earth and the one in Heaven). The thematic role of the *mediator* is reflected in the structure of the Litanies of the saints, whose mediation is invoked before addressing petitions to God.

As structural analysis of medieval litanies shows[5], the role of mediator between the profane space of the worshippers and the sacred space of *sancta sanctorum* is another feature inherited from ancient tradition. This role of the clergy is also confirmed by the architectural space of the early Basilica, where the two spaces were separated by the *Templon* – as we can observe, for instance, in the Church of Saint Mary in Cosmedin, Rome (6th century) – and later gave the origin to the *Iconostasis* of orthodox churches. Thus, the space of the enunciation mirrors the structure of the enunciated space.

In order to achieve a better understanding of the role of the mediator, we can refer to classical analyses of ethnologic data (Greimas 1987), according to which the permanence of values in the immanent universe implies the position of the source of values in a transcendent one. *Senders* guarantee the participatory communication between the two universes and the circulation of values. Our case is actually more complex, since it involves a hierarchy of senders in the syncretic relation: the clergy is the sender in the space of the enunciation, while the Saints are the senders in the enunciated space. After the Second Vatican Council, when the position of the clergy changed, the role of mediator tends to disappear, or it is considerably weakened, and the relation between clergymen and worshippers becomes dialogic. This dialogic relationship between the priest and the assembly, which is evident, for instance, in the ritual of baptism, plays a strong influence on the meaning of the litanies, because it tends to underline the construction of the historical identity of the Church, rather than the ecclesiological relation between Heaven and Earth.

---

[5] See Galofaro and Kubas (2016) and Galofaro (2018).

2.c. Formal and semantic variants

On September 30th 2018 we observed the performance of the Litanies of the saints during the baptism of two babies in Pordenone, a small city in the North-East of Italy (in the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia). The priest added to the ceremony different explanations on the rite. Before the beginning, he explained why the ceremony starts at the beginning of the aisle. After the prayers of the faithful, he explained why the Saints are invoked, linking the entry into the family and into the church. At the end of the formula: "I baptize you in the name of The Father …" the minister asked worshippers to clap. Another explanation regarded the symbol of the paschal candle, the rite of the *ephphatha* – linked to Mark 7, 31-37. After the "Our Father", before the final blessing, the priest explained that all humanity is one indivisible family. After the ceremony, he gave two gifts to the babies: a shell ("Christian sign related to Santiago de Compostela") and a book ("to write the history of your life"). He declared that it was possible to blow out the candle and said goodbye to everybody. In line with the "modernising" character of the ritual, the litanies presented significant variants as well. The brief list, in fact, does not comply with the traditional hierarchy. After Saint Mary we find John the Baptist, Peter and Paul, Martin, Francis, Clare, Thomas, the two names of the babies (Laurence and Irene), Edith Stein, Michael, Stephen, and the final invocation to all the Saints. After every name, the celebrant added an antonomasia. For example, Peter and Paul are the "apostles of the Gospel and first eminent witnesses"; Saint Martin is "rich with faith and he breaks bread with the poor"; Saint Francis is "God's jester and greatly in love with life"; Saint Irene is called "Life offered to the Lord for the Unity of the Church"; Saint Benedicta of the Cross, the only post-conciliar saint, is the "strong and luminous witness of the beauty of the Gospel". Basically, each apposition aims at resuming who the Saint was and why do we care about him/her. A literary model for such a practice could be identified in the Litanies of the Holy Virgin.

The variant is interesting in light of the relationship between form and morpho-dynamics. From the point of view of a narrative generative grammar (Galofaro and Kubas 2016), a single grammar

generates both the litanic genre featured by a list of Names (Litanies of the saints) and the one featured by a list of antonomasias (Litanies of the Virgin), provided that the grammar is equipped with the empty element [0]: this way the grammar can generate either the name *or* the antonomasia, *or* both. Thus, the variant can still be considered as a production of the *discursive configuration* (Greimas and Courtès 1982), 49-51 of the Litanies. The litanic grammar remained stable in the new litanies produced during centuries, and it is preserved even in the variant observed in Pordenone.

The apparition of appositions in the Litanies of the saints is an example of Baumstark's 7th law: "Later liturgical prose develops in the direction of an increasingly oratorical form and becomes more and more governed by rhetoric". More generally, the whole ceremony observed in Pordenone seems to support Baumstark's 2nd general principle: "Liturgical development proceeds from simplicity to increasing enrichment". An example of such an increased semiotic complexity can be found in the new symbolic gifts, the shell and the book. Possibly, something similar happened in early Christian baptism when new symbols (baptismal gown, eastern candle, blessed salt) were added to the immersion. Since in the observed case the new symbols appear after the very ceremony, as parting gifts, we can assume that elements as the gown could be originally involved in utilitarian actions and later charged of a symbolic meaning, according to Baumstark's 10th law.

The variants to the Litanies are related to the attempt to transfer knowledge to worshippers, which also motivates the comments on the ritual provided throughout the ceremony. This knowledge is not a necessary requirement for the rite performance, but the celebrants clearly attribute a great importance to the worshippers' awareness of the value related to litanies and to the other practices involved in the ceremony. This is probably due to the fact that their meaning entered a crisis. As we said, after the Second Vatican Council, the ecclesiological meaning seems weakened, and this could explain why, in our variant, the celestial hierarchy is not represented by the order of the invocations. The new sensibility is rather historical: in order to construct worshippers' collective memory, the priest must instruct them about who the Saints are, with particular reference to the lesser known (Irene, a martyr of Diocletian's persecutions) and to the newer ones (such as Edith Stein, one of the

few post-conciliar saints who entered the list of contemporary litanies, together with Father Kolbe and Maria Goretti).

2.d. Two different constructions of time

The historical sensibility accentuated in the 20th century adds a linear notion of time to a cyclical conception that is connected in several ways to the tradition of the litanic genre.

This circular temporality is particularly evident in the Litanies of the saints, not only because the list of saintly characters connects earthly Church with the Church on Heaven, but also because these litanies accompany both the beginning and the end of life. Thus, they are performed during the baptism, but also in last sacraments accompanying agony and death. For instance, the oldest litanies we found in the Ambrosian tradition are part of the ritual of the anointing of the sick, and are sung also during funerals. This is a peculiar trait of the Ambrosian rite: the Litanies of the saints connect baptism to funeral, i.e. the beginning of the life of a Christian in the Church on Earth to the beginning of the *real life* of the Christian in the Church on Heaven. Thus, the early meaning associated to the Litanies of the saints was ecclesiological. This explains also the syntagmatic position of the litanies in the *preces mortuorum.* The rite is subdivided in five parts: (1) *Ad domum defuncti* (at home); (2) *In itinere ad ecclesiam* (during the procession from home to the church) (3) *In ecclesia* (in the church); (4) *In itinere de ecclesia ad sepulchrum* (from the church to the graveyard); and (5) Ad *sepulchrum* (in the graveyard). The litanies conclude the part *In ecclesia:* ideally, they are the keystone of the whole ceremony and the link between two words. According to Magnoli (1996), litanies were originally sung during the anointing of the sick, and later became part of the baptism through the intermediate stage of the *baptismum gravitale*, addressed to babies in life-threatening situations.

Historical change of liturgy is seen as a way to preserve its meanings. This argument was frequently advanced after the Second Vatican Council. For example, during the second plenary session of the XLVI synod, February 28th 1967, while defending the maintaining of two distinct rites, the Roman and the Ambrosian, the Archbishop Card. Giovanni Colombo stated that the Ambrosian rite had to

be reformed precisely to remain faithful to those pastoral values which inspired Saint Ambrose, because of "the new needs of industrial society, which, with migrations and tourism, mixes and confuses the masses of the faithful" (Biffi 1993). This implies a different, linear construction of time, in which the preservation of the identity of the Church is essential.

3. Written meditations of litanies

A kind of performance of litanies that differs from their recitation in ritual or ceremonial contexts consists in their individual meditation and in the intellectual elaboration of their content. Traces of this kind of fruition, mainly carried out by the clergy, can be found in a genre of written treatises devoted to specific litanic texts. The corpus we focus on includes a sample of 13 texts published in Italian between 1850 and 1999[6]. However, a similar literature also exists in other languages, such as French[7], and was produced at least since early modernity[8]. Our main interest lies in the paratext (Genette 1982), which expresses the aims and principles motivating the works.

3.a. A moral, popular, and practical genre of treatises

In their paratexts, the treatises are defined as "commentaries" (e.g. Scippa 1999), "explanations" (Cavatoni 1912), "instructions" (Andreoletti 1941), "thoughts" (Schuster 1953) "considerations"

---

[6] Andreoletti (1941); Anonymous (1933); Bergagna, Canziani, and Galbiati (1955); Bersani (1871); Cavatoni (1912); Cavedoni (1850); Mortarino (1938); Piccione (1896); Razzore and Mora (1931); Sandigliano (1923); Schuster (1953); Scippa (1999); Svampa (1913).

[7] See e.g. Cornet (1873) and Barthe (1858).

[8] The earliest treatise we found trace of is Fra Nicolò Riccardi's *Ragionamenti sopra le Litanie di Nostra Signora* (1626). This and other references for the early modern period can be found in Cavedoni (1850). It is reasonable to hypothesize that this literature was fostered since the Reformation period as a defence of litanies against the Protestant critique of vain repetitions.

(Anonymous 1933; Svampa 1913), "discourses" (Piccione 1896; Sandigliano 1923), or "sermons" (Mortarino 1938). They are all authored by clergymen, ranging from simple priests to high prelates such as cardinals (Svampa and Schuster). The readership designed in prefaces and introductions is mainly composed by other clergymen, in particular preachers, who could find, within such books, new ideas for their discourses and sermons. Consequently, laic faithful are only secondary receivers, either as a minor fringe of readers or as the addressees of the homilies that the treatises report and/or would inspire. All the treatises share a declared moral, popular, and practical character, as well as the aim of fostering the devotion toward the figure invoked in the litanies. The texts composing our corpus focus on three specific litanies: the Litanies of the Blessed Virgin (or Litanies of Loreto, 9 texts), the litanies of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (3 texts), and the litanies of St. Joseph (1 text). The recurring scheme of these books consists in presenting one discourse or meditation about each invocation.

It is possible to identify at least two reasons for the choice of particular litanic texts. The first is the intention of fostering a certain cult. Thus, a general goal expressed by the commentators of the Litanies of Loreto is the promotion of the devotion towards the Virgin but, more specifically, a number of them assigns a prominent importance to the meditation and celebration of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, proclaimed in 1854. For instance, Piccione (1923), instead of following the order of the litanic text, starts his discourses from the invocation "Regina sine labe concepta". Similarly, Sandigliano (1923) intends to promote the devotion towards St. Joseph, especially after the abolition of his feast by Pius X and its recent restauration by Benedict XV. In turn, Scippa (1999), Andreoletti (1941), and Svampa (1913) are careful in reconstructing the history of the cult of the Sacred Heart – which they date back to the Middle Ages – and to place their work in the frame of its most recent developments inside the Church. The second reason is connected to liturgy. Especially the treatises devoted to the Litanies of Loreto are conceived as propaedeutic tools for the celebration of the month of the Virgin (May), consisting in daily gatherings with the recitation of litanies accompanied by "moral discourses" held by preachers. In this context, the meditations contained in

the books could provide preachers with good material for their discourses and thus contribute to the faithful edification[9].

3.b. Making the litanic meaning explicit

Another feature characterizing the genre is the recurring idea that litanies contain a condensed theological sense that needs to be made explicit and explained. For instance, Sandigliano (1923), XIII claims that the litanies of St. Joseph "are wonderfully suited for the development of almost all the Christian morals," while according to Svampa (1913), 30 "The litanies [of the Sacred Heart] are almost a brief and juicy [It. *succoso*] popular catechism where the most elevated truths of the Catholic dogma are proposed in brief and precise formulas". In reason of this complexity, authors are generally worried about the fact that, although the recitation of litanies is appreciated for their beauty and the consolation that they bring to the soul of the faithful[10], they are not fully understood: "Unfortunately, numerous Christians hear their chant and repeat them, without knowing what they are saying. And even though their heart feels a sort of piety and devotion, they cannot understand the meaning and the importance of each of those lauds and invocations" (Bersani 1874), 14-15. As a consequence, the treatises aim particularly at improving the faithful comprehension of litanies[11]. This intention also

---

[9] A similar argument is claimed by Sandigliano (1923) who wishes to promote the celebration of March as the month of St. Joseph.

[10] For instance, according to Andreoletti (1941), 13 the litanies of the Sacred Heart "have a particular and most pleasing flavor, which leaves in those who recite them with devotion a deep impression of love and fervor. The invocations express the most beautiful titles of those that are suitable to our divine Savior".

[11] As the anonymous (1933), IX hyperbolically states, "when one thinks that these litanies […] are daily repeated by millions and millions of faithful […] it must be a good thing to look into what they mean".

determines some recurring formal features of the genre, such as the adoption of an argumentative style and the frequent conclusion of each argumentation with concrete examples (often taken from lives of the saints), as well as the use of a popular register, which entails the willing renounce to sophisticated theological disquisitions (Cavatoni 1912), 2. In some cases, however, the conscious recitation of the litanies is not considered the sole goal, but the litanic invocations are rather considered as the starting point (the pretext) for theological reflections that have a value per se (e.g. Scippa 1999).

The idea of condensation of meaning in the litanic text is well represented in the way our authors commentate the first invocation to the Virgin in the Litanies of Loreto (*Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis*). Most part of the commentators assert that the very name of Mary contains all of her magnificent attributes. More specifically, authors such as Cavatoni (1912) and Mortarino (1938) refer to the tradition according to which the name of Mary was not originated by humans, but was attributed by God himself, thus bearing the sign of Mary's intrinsic qualities and of her predestination to be the Mother of God. Each of these qualities are then individually described and discussed. The case of Mary is of course particular, but it exemplifies a more general belief in the evocative power to proper names: the name of the subject invoked in the litanies represents a summa of theological and moral meanings. This is true not only for litanies devoted to an individual subject, but also to those invoking a collective subject, such as the litanies of the saints. From this perspective, every saint represents a particular facet of the theology and the morals endorsed by the Catholic Church, or even a particularly significant moment of her history. Therefore, the recitation of the sequence of saints should evoke in the mind of the ideal faithful a chain of coherent meanings. This concept is well explained by a sentence of John Paul II, who metaphorically defined "litanies" the list of the 512 laics canonized and beatified in the 20th century: the sequence of their names and appellations (such as "mater familias," "puer", "iuvenis") constitutes for the pontiff a sort of "identity card" containing "the history of the Church" and transmitting a message and an invitation to all the faithful. This is a

further example of the importance of building an historical identity as one of tasks of liturgy, especially in the contemporary Church.

Therefore, the comprehension of the litanies is an important part of their performance and clergymen seem attentive in disciplining the mental associations that the single invocations can raise. A number of our authors (such as Razzore and Mora 1931; Bersani 1974) stress the fact that the primary performance of the litanic text is their public recitation, and consequently that discourses and written comments are propaedeutic to the moment of the oral and collective acting. However, the understanding of their meaning also necessarily entails a different kind of performance of litanies, a slower one, involving reflection and acquisition of knowledge. While for the faithful this secondary fruition mainly takes place by listening to the preachers' discourses[12], written treatises can be considered as indexes of a kind of fruition of the litanic text peculiar to the clergy. The authors of such texts study the litanies, meditate about them, read the relative literature, and then rewrite them by developing and making explicit the meanings of each invocation. In turn, authors' work will help preachers, who will diffuse their ideas among the faithful. Therefore, the books in question are part of a hermeneutic cycle that involves a plurality of subjects. We could also argue that the treatises have a performative character (Austin 1962) as far as they inevitably push the reader (and the listener to the derived sermons) to reproduce the logical and argumentative path of the writer's reflection. Ecclesiastic writers and readers of this genre are the protagonists of a performance of the litanic text characterized by a slow rhythm, an intellectual and contemplative elaboration, and a private fruition where the oral recitation is irrelevant. Despite its propaedeutic and ancillary character, this kind of fruition is of primary importance for the preservation and the development of the meaning of the litanic text inside the Church. It is therefore reasonable to hypothesize that this written genre testifies an exegetic process and a kind of intellectual and meditative fruition that parallels the oral and public

---

[12] In this case, regarding the Litanies of Loreto the complete fruition of the text should take place in one month, according to the tradition of holding one moral discourse on one invocation per day.

one since the Medieval origins of the litanic texts, especially among the clergymen. This "intellectual" fruition does not contradict or ignore the aesthetic and multimodal components characterizing the litanic text. This integration of the aesthetic and intellectual components is evident in a particular sub-genre (e.g. Razzore and Mora 1931; Bergagna, Canziani, and Galbiati 1955) where the comments are accompanied by pictures[13] (see Fig. 2). The preface to Razzore and Mora (1931), authored by Cardinal Dalmazio Minoretti, underlines that the pictures are full "of suggestion and instruction", that the written notes can help everybody to catch the meaning of the litanies, and that the work itself is suitable to meditation. Similarly, the presentation of Bergagna, Canziani, and Galbiati (1955) stresses that the work, which integrates beautiful pictures and wise words, fosters meditation and contemplation. These multimodal works anticipate the contemporary multimodal reformulation – and fruition – of litanic texts on the Internet.

4. Digital rendition of the litanies

4.a. YouTube: an archive and a performative ground

Despite the existence of websites like GodTube (godtube.com), "a Christian-filtered version of YouTube" (Campbell 2013), 10 and similar ones devoted to other cults, the original YouTube is still the second global search engine after Google (who owns it) and the first video-sharing platform (China aside) also for religion. Nowadays, videos and online videos have become a totally integrated semiotic resource for religion in the respect of their powerful capability to convey a *vicarious experience*; videotaped ceremonies, for instance, are "religious practices readily accepted today that

---

[13] This sub-genre too has more ancient antecedents: Razzore and Mora (1931) mention an 18th-century German work by the Glauber brothers. Another antecedent can be detected into the manuscripts of litanies containing miniatures, which were produced since the Middle Ages (see e.g. Ferrari 2017).

our forebears never dreamed of", they have become "common elements of spirituality in the new millennium, but they would have puzzled, and possibly horrified, our ancestors of a few hundred years ago" (Brasher 2001), 13. Indeed, videos and online videos represent a key asset for the ethnography of religious popular practices (Rehatschek *et al.* 2007; Knoblauch 2011; Pihlaja 2013 and 2015; Schnettler *et al.* 2015), as well as of religious education (Riegel 2017).

In this perspective, YouTube is mainly a huge *archive* of recordings, namely of *things that happened*, "there" and "then", and that can be retrieved; a place wherein people use to store some of their religious experiences, in order to turn them into memories, without relying on the very medium to build up new religious experiences in turn. In other words, this aspect of the pragmatics of YouTube is pertinent to "religion online", rather than "online religion" (Cowan 2007), 367, namely to the online remediation (Bolter and Grusin 1999) of religion, rather than the religious remediation of the online. However, Youtube is much more than an archive. Indeed, the video has been a key means of *proselytism*, at least since the age of cable-TV televangelists (Johnson 1998) and up to the age of spectacularized terrorism (Nauta 2013; Leone 2015 and 2018). One can *do things with videos*, to paraphrase Austin (1962). As suggested by Stephen D. O'Leary, in the wake of Brenda Danet (1996), "technology can drive changes in our use of language and our concepts of symbolic action. If the creation of a written document can have the illocutionary force of a speech act, then it is not unreasonable to think that this force can be extended to cybercommunication" (O'Leary 2004), 48.

In this perspective, ethnographic research should not be limited to the analysis of video contents; it should not only be the ethnography of an event happened in the past, which is observable thanks to recording. A *whole new ethnography* can be carried out, by investigating what happens "on the screen" (what happens in the online interaction between the user(s) and the media content) and "on this side" of it (what happens to the user(s) during the interaction with the media content). According to Stephen Pihlaja, this is why

"the video is only the beginning of the interaction: the ability to comment on and share the video across the web allows it to become a hub for interaction, both online on a variety of sites (on Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, blogs, etc.) and in offline interaction as users view videos together and comment on the content to one another" (2015), 49-50.

So, on the one hand, the *performative nature* of the platform lies in its interactive affordances[14]. On the other, it is granted by the fact that "people are doing the rituals online and the participants are testifying to their efficacy" (Helland 2013), 37. As scrupulously reviewed by Ronald Grimes (2006), along with "rites being presented over the Internet" we can find

"online rituals that people view and participate in 'live'; rituals conducted in virtual reality environments; rituals and myths that people participate in during online gaming; magical rites in which the media device has become a fetish or icon; ritual activity that incorporates the computer as part of the altar space; ritual objects that are delivered 'online'; and cases where the ritual uses the computer as a tool around which its activities are built" (Helland 2013), 37.

Thus, "changes in the way a ritual is presented, the way the rules are developed or changed, how people engage with the activity, and even the beliefs about where it can take place" (Helland 2013), 37 are key aspects the scholar has to take into account.

 4.b. A typology of the "litanie dei santi" videos on YouTube

---

[14] A term popularized by perception psychologist James J. Gibson (1979) and his interpreters, meaning the features a given object or experience does offer to its potential user in order to be used.

The following explorative analysis aims at tracing the idea of the performativity of YouTube videos concerning the Litanies of the saints, with a specific focus on the Italian context. Based on what we said about the *meditations* (to be studied as a preparation to the performance of the litanies) and the *ethnography* of live performances of the litanies, our hypothesis is that no radical remediation can be identified, but rather sporadic and yet key elements of what we may call a "performative upsurge".

The search on YouTube has been carried out as non-logged user, namely without being connected to any email account, in order to minimize the influence of the customization YouTube applies in the selection of the results as concerns navigation history (via cookies) and suggested or sponsored videos. With no systematic intent, nor employing quantitative tools of analysis, a selection of 100 videos listed in the YouTube SERP[15] for the Italian query *litanie dei santi* ("Litanies of the saints") has been watched, with the aim of outlining a – provisional and perfectible – typology; a brief description and elementary analysis of the most representative 17 of them is here provided.

Whereas the English query "litanies of the saints" returns 115k results and the Latin "litaniae sanctorum" a 17k, the Italian "litanie dei santi" is about 14.1k. Due to the functioning of the platform, many of these videos are ascribable to one or more of the following queries (and, therefore, categories), which are the first 10 ones suggested by the autocomplete of the internal search engine: *litanie dei santi cantate in italiano, litanie dei santi in latino, litanie dei santi cammino neocatecumenale, litanie dei santi bose, litanie dei santi [canto] gregoriano, litanie dei santi italiano, litanie dei santi gelineau, litanie dei santi frisina, litanie dei santi veglia pasquale, litanie dei santi cantate*[16].

---

[15] Search Engine Results Page, the list of results selected by the algorithm as pertinent to the query.

[16] As of Oct. 23, 2018. Autocomplete is a form of automatic word completion provided by online search engines. Google and YouTube's search predictions "are possible search terms you can use that are related to the terms you're typing and what other people are searching for" (bit.ly/gytautocomplete; accessed Oct. 31, 2018). Predictions are made based on factors, like the

Despite its relatively small dimension and the non-systematic character of our analysis[17], the selected corpus allowed us to outline a typology of six kinds of videos that may constitute a good basis for further in-depth studies.

4.b.1. TV broadcast

The uploaded video, a recording of a litanic performance, is an extract from a TV broadcast. In this case the remediation is double, since the litanies passed from the live event, to their televised version, to the sample put online on YouTube.

In the video "Litanie dei Santi - processione del Conclave (2005)"[18], this two-step remediation process is made explicit via paratextual clues such as the superimposed text "Replica" and the symbol of the TV channel. Even though "LITANIE DEI SANTI - GELINEAU"[19] does come from a TV broadcast (one can find editing, shots from different angles, transitions etc., but no paratextual signs), it presents detailed information about the event itself[20], rather than about its televised rendition. This is due to the fact that the user who uploaded it is the very performer – the organist – in the video; this

popularity of the search terms, namely the number of times in which people have entered them as a query on the engine.

[17] Due to space restrictions, it was not possible to focus on users' comments, nor on a series of interesting cases of anonymous, misattributed, or ambiguous content.

[18] youtu.be/GYlrh4JKccE, 09:57 minn., uploaded on Apr. 6, 2012, now couting 125.928 views; accessed Oct. 31, 2018 (the same applies to all the videos included in the corpus).

[19] youtu.be/GqplcGzZXg0, 14:02 minn., Nov. 25, 2017, 2.506 views.

[20] "Sabato 30-09-2017 / S. Messa di Professione Perpetua / di Fr. Domenico Morello / Basilica Pontificia Santa Casa di Loreto / Coro della Cappella Musicale Cattedrale di Macerata / Direttore Carlo Paniccia' / Organista Marco Agostinelli".

also explains the focus on the composer of the music, Joseph Gelineau, whose surname is included in the video's title.

4.b.2. Published music

The uploaded video presents music from a published record, whose editorial metadata are usually automatically identified by the YouTube algorithm; the main difference between the many videos of this kind is the usage of one still image or more images, constituting a slideshow that may be synchronized or not to the recited or sung verbal text.

"Litaniae Sanctorum + Litany of the Saints / Litanie dei Santi"[21] stands as the blockbuster in the series, being the most viewed one in the whole YouTube SERP for our query; it displays a portion of Beato Angelico's depiction of the saints from his famous Fiesole Altarpiece (1424 circa). "Litanie dei santi"[22], with a Polish description ("Litania do świętych") and no automatic metadata displayed, employs a peculiar still image, namely what seems to be a stock photo[23] for the query "Inkwizycja Stosy / Inquisition Piles" (see Fig. 3).

Another video called "Litanie dei santi"[24] presents quite a postmodern series of pictures of very different kinds and from very different sources, most of them being unrelated to the saint isotopy at all, including apocalyptic images such as an atomic explosion (see Fig. 4); the grim tone of the images

---

[21] youtu.be/KiM9uJIN64g, 08:08 minn., June 16, 2008, 1.058.048 views. The YouTube automatic metadata retrieval info reads: "Brano: Litaniae Sanctorum - DNC / Artista: Saint Bernard Choir / Album: Kyrie: Chants from the Soul / Concesso in licenza a YouTube da: HAAWK for a 3rd Party (a nome di Naive Records) e 1 società di gestione dei diritti musicali".

[22] youtu.be/hOwNEtg7V94, 08:02 minn., uploaded on March 22, 2012, 6.879 views.

[23] A stock image commercially available via specialized online repositories.

[24] youtu.be/0EiSw-ZjEcI, 03:53, March 22, 2015, 8.558 views.

is mirrored by a user's comment which reads *Dio mio vieni a salvarmi, Signore vieni presto in mio aiuto* ("Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O Lord!").

"Litanie dei fiori"[25] matches a version of *Ave Maria di Lourdes* by Giancarlo Silva (as identified by Google/YouTube's metadata) to a slideshow visualizing the *Litania Mariana dei Fiori* written by Suor Chiara Immacolata Trigilia[26], so that hundreds of pictures of flowers, their romanticized descriptions, and the subsequent invocations are displayed to the user as the music goes on.

4.b.3. Videorecorded event

The uploaded video stands as a devotional document of a live performance, with a prominent focus on the local, communitarian dimension, so that there is a proliferation of litanies as in the tradition of specific orders (e.g. Dominicans) or devoted to specific figures (the litanies of *Santissimo Sangue*, *Vergine Maria* etc.). Recorded events may include ordinations of priests, presbyteries, and deacons, synods, consecrations of the Virgins, funerals of religious figures, regular liturgy, and ceremonies of various kinds, such as the Easter-related ones or patron's holidays.

"Litanie dei Santi - Professione Perpetua - Chiesa San Pietro, Viterbo"[27] is an extract from a perpetual profession of vows; it is featured by the typical enunciational traits of the amateur and/or found footage video genre, such as the shaking, side shot. A title in the video description and a comment from a user make it legitimate to think that the video is mainly addressed to the local Romanian community.

---

[25] youtu.be/s8e0zWMLYX4, 06:15, Apr. 22, 2009, 985 views.

[26] A Clarisse at the Santa Chiara monastery in Biancavilla, Catania. The litanic poem was published in 2005 by the publishing imprint of the monastery.

[27] youtu.be/O8HJr9sPl6k, 08:97, March 11, 2018, 208 views.

"Festino dell'Assunta 2011 a Novara di Sicilia - Canto delle Litanie"[28] testifies the momentum from the procession that takes place during the town's patron holiday referenced in the title (Aug. 15); the video has devotional and memorial purposes only, as inferable by the watermark of the freeware software employed for the conversion of the video file from camera to computer that pops up cyclically along the reproduction.

4.b.4. Original content

The video presents a piece of user-generated content that was most probably created on purpose for being posted onto YouTube as its primary medium. In such cases, the personal and devotional value is of prominent relevance, together with a strong sense of authorship.

As we can deduct from paratextual elements such as the comments, "LITANIE LAURETANE (illustrate)"[29] presents the reciting voice of the YouTube users themselves, paired with a music composed by a "former student" of theirs and pictures from various sources synchronized with the text. A rich textual and hypertextual apparatus is provided in the description: the text of the litanies, links to other videos made by the user, and to their website.

"Litanie al Preziosissimo Sangue di Gesù"[30] features a reciting voice, with a slight Slavic accent, performing the litanic text in what seems to be a recording realized *ad hoc*; this video is particularly interesting because it testifies how users do interact with the multimedia content via comments, which are meant to be invocations or proper prayers (one can read a lot of "Amen!"), and because it was

---

[28] youtu.be/4vhkS0r3nAE, 09:35, Aug. 21, 2011, 1.681 views.

[29] youtu.be/AuSFgFLQcyE, 02:55, Feb. 12, 2017, 12.600 views.

[30] youtu.be/sOHPgL3_-Xs, 04:21, Feb. 28, 2018, 2.848 views.

uploaded by a quite prolific and followed YouTube channel, which publishes videos on a daily basis, and more than once a day, specifically devoted to online prayers and ceremonies.[31]

4.b.5. Didactic video

This category is the most sub-articulated one. By "didactic" we mean here a video providing the YouTube viewer with a quantity of semiotic and paratextual resources so as to *reconstruct* or *simulate* the live rendition of the litanic performance and/or to *study* and *learn* the litanic text and performance practices in order to re-enact them in turn. In other words, we define as "didactic" the slideshow videos that pair the recited or sung text of the litanies with pictures, captions/subtitles, and scores/musical notes, more or less synchronized, in order to provide the name of each saint with his/her visual representation and the recorded performance with the corresponding series of musical notes.

"Litanie dei Santi in latino"[32] presents a slideshow employing three pictures only, so that there is no actual synchronization between the recited text in the soundtrack[33], which is in Latin (as suggested by the title), and what the YouTube user is seeing. The focus of the slideshow is rather the indication of the response that the user-believer is supposed to utter ("ora pro nobis", "orate pro nobis", "te rogamus audinos" etc.): contrarily to the pictures, responses are synchronized. It is interesting to notice that, diversely from the other videos uploaded by the very same channel ("Blog Cattolici"), the

---

[31] On the early hours of Oct. 23, 2018, the latest video, uploaded "7 hours ago" (youtu.be/uuCeWhf95H0), already has 336 likes, 7 dislikes, and 3.491 views.

[32] youtu.be/Wm-IMjXis4A, 06:25, March 8, 2015, 5.085 views.

[33] "Canto Gregoriano Desde Jerusalem by Monjes de Santos Sepulcros as published by Producciones AR/The Orchard Music" as the automatic metadata specify.

comments were disabled; one can assume that this happened due to a controversy of some kind (maybe concerning the usage of Latin instead of Italian; see Ponzo forthcoming).

"LITANIE DEI SANTI per la Veglia Pasquale (Diego Montaiuti)"[34] presents an original audio content, namely the piano tune of the title, written and performed by the user owning the YouTube channel; the recording is acoustic, so that we can hear the sound of the hands hitting the keys. The instrumental music, conveyed through a passionate but imprecise performance (particularly, as regards rhythm), is matched to a slideshow with the score, the notes (for those who would not be able to read notation), and the lyrics of the invocations.

"Invocazione dei Santi 1"[35] matches a "field recording" of "the Acclamations adopted during the Mass in the parishes of Sammartini, Caselle, Ronchi, Bolognina, Dozza, Calamosco, within the diocese of Bologna" (as the description reads) to one single slide featuring a summary of the notes and the lyrics; despite this limitedness, it is clear that the aim of the video is not only testifying the practice, but also making online users "sing together" (which is also the very name of the YouTube channel, *insieme cantiamo*). The recorded performance features guitar, organ, and flute, as regards the musical part, and a male and female lead vocals, for the call, and a small choir, for the response.

"Litanie dei Santi. Coro Unacum Angelis. Dirige R. Caiazzo, all'organo P.L. Marino, solista A. Perrella"[36] presents a live recording, datable thanks to the information in the description (Easter Vigil 2015), with a prominent focus on authorship (we are given the full detail of the interpreters in the title); the subtitles/captions flow in sync with the invocations of the litanic text (with no formal distinction between call and response) and, occasionally, still pictures from the Easter celebrations are inserted in the flow of the live footage.

---

[34] youtu.be/2OAOI55Uh6o, 07:47, Feb. 21, 2015, 9.278 views.

[35] youtu.be/VTtCKJmy9I0, 09:10, Aug. 10, 2014, 843 views.

[36] youtu.be/mN3aPqLzZpM, 05:44, Apr. 5, 2015, 916 views.

"LITANIE GREGORIANE DEI SANTI"[37], employing the very same musical piece of "Litaniae Sanctorum + Litany of the Saints / Litanie dei Santi" (see typology B; perhaps the most standard musical version in usage), presents a slideshow of synchronized pictures from different pictorial sources and the related identifying captions (e.g. "Sancte Basili et Gregori") and invocations ("orate pro nobis"). The same type of semiotic resources is featured in "LITANIE SANTO ROSARIO"[38], with the difference that both the recited and the written text is in Italian. Furthermore, there is a prominent focalization on the actions evoked by the invocations; at 05:30, for instance, the picture of a soldier kneeling before Jesus and hugging him in cry, with the Golgotha in the background, is employed to figurativize the response *Perdonaci o Signore* ("Forgive us, Lord").

4.b.6. Reinterpretation

Technically, the videos included in this cluster would belong either to group B or D, since they happen to include published music or content created *ad hoc* for the YouTube upload; nevertheless, we chose to create a dedicated group due to the specificities of some notable tokens, as to highlight the relevance of the transtextual (Genette 1982) levels in action.

"Litanie dei Santi (Rock) - I Maddalen's Brothers"[39], for instance, proposes a song by a Christian band, the Maddalen's Brothers, that recontextualizes the invocations to the saints in a folk-Medieval sort of soft-rock style, including the refunctionalization of the calls and responses as verses and refrains and the usage of a vocoder/autotune-filtered male vocal part. As noted by a user ("Perfect timing :-*"), the video was purportedly uploaded in coincidence with the All Hallow's Eve, so that it is possible to hypothesize a ritual usage of the song.

---

[37] youtu.be/scHLnPKw7Wo, 08:15, Aug. 14, 2018, 227 views.

[38] youtu.be/xnZGHIWSTDI, 06:40, Aug. 22, 2012, 5.006 views.

[39] youtu.be/KnEUC7yjGYA, 04:18, Oct. 31, 2017, 1.547 views.

4.c. From recording to remediation

Through our survey, we have identified videos that diversely stress or feature one or more of the following aspects: intersemiotic translation (still image or slideshows for recorded music), authoriality (original uploads), remediation (TV footage), devotional and community values (footage of live events), performativity (didactic videos), and transtextuality (reinterpretations).

Our main focus concerned mediation; in this respect, there are at least two main aspects to be addressed: the first one is the multimodal encoding of the *litanies* and the second is the elasticity of the *medium* in channelling performative affordances. Both aspects are part of a communication strategy aiming at conveying immediacy through hypermediation and transparency through opacity (Bolter and Grusin 1999); in other words, the analysed videos build up layers of interfaces and semiotic resources in order to give the user the illusion of an immediate religious experience, that is the *simulation* or the *substitutive experience* of a live, face-to-face litanic performance.

As concerns the litanies, the most interesting case is the one of the slideshows; pictures of the saints are being synchronized to their recited or sung names (in a kind of "mickeymousing")[40], as an attempt of *widening the semiotic resources at stake*. Thanks to the *visualization* of the saint figure, such digital renditions make it possible the *recognition of the saint* (his/her traditional iconography, the circumstances of the death, the thematic role etc.), which is key to the functioning and the effectiveness of the litanic performance. The perlocutionary[41] effect of this kind of videos is similar

---

[40] The practice, perfected and popularized by Disney cartoon studios (hence the name, alluding to Mickey Mouse), to synchronize the moving images to the music that would have served as their soundtrack.

[41] The perlocutionary component of a given speech act, as defined by Austin (1962), concerns its consequences on the listener (e.g. persuading, scaring etc.).

to the one of the variations introduced during the baptism observed in Pordenone (see § 2) as well as the written and illustrated treatises on the meditations (§ 3).

As concerns YouTube specifically, it is possible to identify digital renditions of the litanies that rely on the features of the medium in order to reconstruct the conditions of a litanic performance and, therefore, *summon the latent presence of the user-believer* and his/her *agency*; it is the case with what we have called didactic videos, which propose a kind of *call-and-response* and/or *karaoke*-style litanic reading.

5. Conclusions

Despite the fact that the oral and collective recitation is generally perceived by believers as the main model of litanic performance, our enquiry showed that other kinds of fruition, enactment, and remediation play an important role in shaping both litanic performative features and meanings. Litanies are at the centre of a complex dialectics between private and public fruition, and their identity depends on a multifaceted interaction between different media, from speech to written text, from picture to video.

The relationship between words and pictures is particularly interesting and deserves further analysis. While in the illustrated treatises the iconography appears to be traditional and responds to the stereotyped collective imagery connected to saintly figures, the analyzed videos display a proteiform iconography, characterized by the proliferation of non-traditional subjects and sources.

The re-elaboration of the litanic text is detectable in each of the litanic renditions that we analyzed (the variations introduced in the oral performance, the comments and images in the treatises, and the interplay between text, music, and images in online videos). One of the main functions of this semantic and semiotic expansion of the litanic text is in each case the explicitation of the meaning of litanies, and more specifically of every mentioned figure (in the case of the Litanies of the Saints) and attribute (in the case of litanies devoted to one specific figure). The perlocutionary effect presupposed by this operation is to provide participants with the cognitive competences enabling them to fully

understand the litanies. This understanding is not strictly necessary for the felicity of the performance of the text per se, but it is fundamental at two deeper levels: it is crucial, firstly, for the fulfilment of the narrative program contained *in nuce* in the litanic text (narrating the identity of the invoked characters and, consequently, of the Church) and, secondly, for the efficacy of the litanies in shaping the identity of the believing performer.

In addition to this explanatory function, the online renditions of litanies also display another peculiar and unprecedented function, which consists in freely expressing and sharing subjective mental associations connected to the litanic text. This is evident for instance in the videos associating litanies to apocalyptic or inquisitorial imageries. While the recitation of litanies in ceremonial gatherings and the meditations expressed and fostered in the treatises are "mediated" by the Church, Internet allows a non-mediated public exposition of individual and unconventional ideas associated to the litanic texts.

Semiotic complexity is undoubtedly a constitutive feature of the litanic genre. However, the changing equilibrium between its performative options, interpretative trends and kinds of remediation depends on historical and cultural circumstances. This is evident not only in the above-discussed dialectics between the ecclesiological and historical value attributed to the litanic acting, but also in the variable and growingly blurred relationship between private and public performance. Indeed, the prominence attributed to the public recitation of litanies can be traced back to the Council of Trent, which prohibited silent prayer in order to avoid heresy and regulated the occasions when private prayer was admitted, based on a restricted corpus of liturgical texts, rigorously in Latin. These rules contrasted with the aristocratic tradition of the private prayer based on the "Books of Hours" (Rozzo 1993), widespread in the Middle Ages. The 19th- and 20th-century treatises demonstrate a renewed acceptation of private practices of prayer and meditation, especially because they do not exclude the laic faithful as readers and therefore as interpreters reading, meditating, and performing litanies in private contexts. The 21st-century digital remediation of the litanies tends to dilute the border between public and private fruition: even though an individual watching a litanic video on YouTube typically

sits alone in front of a screen, the overall fruition of a video should be considered as set within a communitarian dimension; indeed, users share an experience by the very fact of watching the same video and interact with each other through comments, tags, and posting.

Bibliography

Andreoletti, M., (1941) *Le litanie del Sacro Cuore: commento e riflessioni pratiche con esempi storici,* Monza [Ancora, 2nd ed].

Anonymous (1933), *Il più bel fiore del paradiso: considerazioni sulle litanie lauretane,* Vicenza [Società anonima tipografica fra cattolici vicentini, 3rd ed.; 1st ed. 1904].

Austin, J. L., (1962) *How to do things with words*, Oxford [Oxford University Press].

Barthe, E., (1858) *Monument à la gloire de Marie. Litanies à la Très-Sainte Vierge illustrées – accompagnées de meditations,* Paris [Librairie Catholique de P.-J. Camus].

Baumstark, A., (1958) *Comparative Liturgy,* Westminster MD [English Edition from the 3rd French edition of *Liturgie comparée,* Chevetogne, 1953].

Bergagna, E.R., Canziani, L., and Galbiati, L.M., (1955) *Cantico mariano: sussidi alla contemplazione delle glorie di Maria SS. secondo le litanie lauretane*, Milano [Scuola Beato Angelico].

Beroldus (1894) *Beroldus sive ecclesiae Ambrosianae Mediolanensis kalendarium et ordines saec. XII: Ex codice Ambrosiano*, Milan [Magistretti].

Bersani Dossena, A., (1871) *Il mese di maggio: discorsetti ad onore della Vergine*, Lodi [Tipografia vescovile di Carlo Cagnola].

Biffi, I., (1993) 'La riforma del rito ambrosiano', *La Scuola Cattolica* 121, 367-386.

Bolter, J.D., and Grusin, R., (1999) *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, Cambridge, Massachusetts [MIT Press].

Brasher, B., (2001) *Give Me That Online Religion*, Hoboken, NJ [Wiley].

Campbell, H.A., (ed.) (2013) *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, London [Routledge].

Cavatoni, A., (1912) *Le litanie della SS.ma Vergine Maria: spiegate al popolo con discorsi istruttivi e morali,* Trento [Tipografia Editrice Artigianelli, 3rd ed].

Cavedoni, C., (1850) *Le litanie lauretane della Beata Vergine Maria Madre di Dio dichiarate coi riscontri delle sacre scritture e de' santi padre,* Modena [Soliani].

Cornet, N.J., (1873) *Les litanies de la Très Sainte Vierge: explications, exemples, traits, notices relatifs au culte de la Sainte Vierge: ouvrage utile au clergé at aux pieux fidèles*, Paris [Libr. Internationale Catholique, 3rd ed].

Cowan, D.E., (2007) 'Religion on the Internet', in J.A. Beckford and J. Demerath (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, London [Sage] 357-376.

Danet, B., (1996) 'Speech, Writing, and Performativity: An Evolutionary View of the History of Constitutive Ritual', in B.L. Gunnarsson, P. Linell and B. Nordberg (eds.), *The Construction of Professional Discourse*, London [Longmans] 13-41.

De Clerck, P., (2001) 'Les lois de Baumstark, l'evolution de la liturgie', in Taft and Winkler (2001), 233-249.

Galofaro, F., (2018) 'Le Litanie ai Santi: tempo, memoria, gerarchia', in S. M. Barillari and M. Di Febo (eds.), *Calendari. L'uomo, il tempo, le stagioni*, Monza [Virtuosa-Mente].

— and Kubas, M.M., (2016) 'Dei Genitrix: A Generative Grammar for Traditional Litanies', *OASICS* 53: 12:1-12:8.

Genette, G., (1982) *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré*, Paris [Éditions du Seuil].

Gibson, J.J., (1979) *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, Boston [Houghton Mifflin].

Greimas, A.J., (1987) 'A Problem of Narrative Semiotics: Objects of Value', in *On Meaning: Selected Writings in Semiotic Theory,* Minneapolis [University of Minnesota Press].

Greimas, A.J., and Courtés, J., (1982) *Semiotics and Language: an Analytical Dictionary,* Bloomington [Indiana University Press].

Grimes, R., (2006) *Rite Out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts*, Oxford [Oxford University Press].

Helland, C., (2013) 'Ritual', in Campbell (2013), 25-40.

John Paul II (2000) *Il Giubileo dell'Apostolato dei Laici. 26 novembre 2000: l'Omelia e l'Angelus di Giovanni Paolo II e le litanie dei 521 santi e beati laici canonizzati e beatificati nel XX secolo. Supplemento all'OsservatoreRomanodel 26 novembre 2000,* Vatican City [Editrice l'Osservatore Romano].

Johnson, E., (1998), 'The Emergence of Christian Video and the Cultivation of Videoevangelism', in L. Kintz and J. Lesage (eds.), *Media, Culture, and the Religious Right*, Minneapolis [University of Minnesota Press] 191-210.

Knoblauch, H., (2011), 'Videography', in M. Stausberg and S. Engler (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, London [Routledge] 433-444.

Lapidge, M., (1991) *Anglo-Saxon Litanies of the Saints,* London [Henry Bradshaw Society].

Leone, M., (2015) 'Propaganda mala fide: Towards a comparative semiotics of violent religious persuasion', *Semiotica* Vol. 2015, Issue 207, 631-655.

— (2018) 'Conversione e complotto. Il reclutamento del fondamentalismo religioso violento', in A. Prato (ed.), *Comunicazione e potere. Le strategie retoriche e mediatiche per il controllo del consenso*, Roma [Aracne] 63-78.

Magistretti, M., (ed.) (1897) *Monumenta Veteris Liturgiae Ambrosianae vol. 1*, Milano.

— (ed.) (1905) *Monumenta Veteris Liturgiae Ambrosianae vol. 2*, Milano.

Magnoli, C. (1995) 'La liturgia funebre nella tradizione del rito Ambrosiano', *La Scuola Cattolica* 123, 217-257.

— (1996) 'Un nuovo rituale di iniziazione cristiana ambrosiano?', *Ambrosianus* 72, 500-521.

Marsciani, F., (2012) 'Il discorso della preghiera', in *Minima semiotica,* Milano-Udine [Mimesis].

Ferrari, M., (2017) 'I rotoli delle litanie triduane Ambr. Z 256 sup.', in *Miscellanea Graecolatina*, V, 231 – 246, Milano [Biblioteca Ambrosiana – Centro Ambrosiano].

Mortarino, G., (1938) *La Vergine invocata nelle litanie lauretane: sermoni per il mese di maggio con varie citazioni e numerosi esempi,* Vicenza [Società anonima tipografica fra cattolici vicentini, 2nd ed; 1st ed. 1934].

Nauta, A., (2013) 'Radical Islam, Globalisation and Social Media: Martyrdom Videos on the Internet', in M. Gillespie, D. Herbert and A. Greenhill (eds.), *Social Media and Religious Change*, Berlin [De Gruyter] 121-142.

O'Leary, S.D., (2004) 'Cyberspace as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Networks', in L. Dawson and D.E. Cowan (eds.), *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, London [Routledge] 37-58.

Piccione, G., (1896) *Mese di maggio: le grandezze di Maria SS. Svelate nelle litanie lauretane: brevi discorsi compilati con figure, fatti ed esempi tratti alla S. Scrittura e SS. Padri,* Alessandria [Tipografia Giovanni Jacquemod, 2nd ed].

Pihlaja, S., (2013) 'Truck stops and fashion shows: A case study of the discursive construction of Evangelical Christian group identity on YouTube', in M. Gillespie, D. Herbert and A. Greenhill (eds.), *Social Media and Religious Change*, Berlin [De Gruyter] 165-184.

— (2015) 'Analysing YouTube interaction: a discourse-centred approach', in S. Cheruvallil-Contractor and S. Shakkour (eds.), *Digital Methodologies in the Sociology of Religion*, London [Bloomsbury] 49-58.

Ponzo, J., (forthcoming) 'The representation of Latin and liturgy in 20th-century Italian narrative', in *Ancient and Artificial Languages in Today's Culture*, Rome [Aracne].

Razzore, D., and Mora, D., (1931) *Le Litanie Lauretane in onore della Vergine Madre di Dio.* Acquasanta, Genova [Santuario N.S. Acquasanta].

Rehatschek, E., *et al.*, (2007) 'A Tool Supporting Annotation and Analysis of Videos', in S. Knauss and A.D. Ornella (eds.), *Reconfigurations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Religion in a Post-secular Society*, Wien [LIT Verlag] 253-268.

Riegel, U., (2017) 'Video Analysis. Opening the Black Box of Teaching Religious Education', in F. Schweitzer and R. Boschki (eds.), *Researching Religious Education: Classroom Processes and Outcomes*, Münster and New York [Waxmann Verlag] 117-129.

Sadowski, W., (2011) *Litania i poezja. Na materiale literatury polskiej od XI do XXI wieku*, Warsaw [WUW].

Sandigliano, G., (1923) *Corona di fiori sul capo del glorioso S. Giuseppe ossia tracce di discorsi sulle litanie del San Patriarca per un mese di predicazione in suo onore,* Casale Monferrato [Unione Tipografica Popolare].

Schnettler, B., *et al.,* (2015) 'Videographic Analysis of Religious and Secular Rituals: Examples from a Study on the International Holocaust Remembrance Day', in R.R. Williams (ed.), *Seeing Religion: Toward a Visual Sociology of Religion*, Milton Park [Taylor and Francis] 137-156.

Schuster, I., (1953) *Pensieri mariani su le litanie lauretane*, Milano [STEM. Pontificia editrice arcivescovile Giovanni Daverio].

Scippa, V., (1999) *Le litanie del Sacro Cuore. Un cammino di catechesi per il terzo millennio.* Casale Monferrato [Piemme].

Svampa, D., (1913) *Le Litanie del Sacro Cuore di Gesù: studio storico e teologico e considerazioni divote,* Milano [R. Ghirlanda].

Taft, R.F., (2001) 'Anton Baumstark's Comparative Liturgy Revisited', in Taft & Winkler (2001), 191-232.

Taft, R.F. and Winkler, G., (eds.) (2001) *Comparative Liturgy Fifty Years After Anton Baumstark (18721948),* Roma [Pontificio Istituto Orientale].

Ruzzo, U., (1993) *Linee per una storia dell'editoria religiosa in Italia 1465-1600*, Udine [Arti Grafiche Friulane].

Pierno, F., (ed.) (2015) *The Church and the languages of Italy before the Council of Trent*, Toronto [Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies].

Valli, N., (2016) *Il triduo pasquale ambrosiano,* Roma [Edizioni liturgiche].
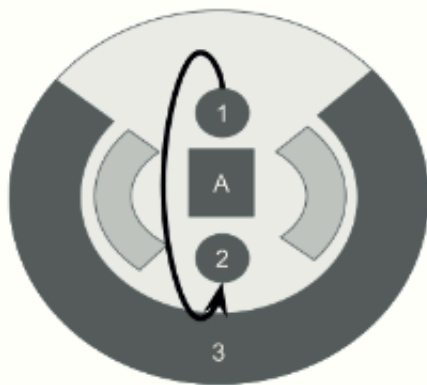
A: Altar

1: Clergy's position during the Confirmation Mass;

2: Clergy's position during the litanic performance;

3: Worshippers' position;

Figure 1. Temple of Divine Providence, Warsaw. Map of the crypt by Francesco Galofaro.

SANCTA MARIA O. P. N.   Tavola N. 6

SANTA MARIA, PREGA PER NOI. – Al di sotto della Triade Augusta – della quale se ne è decantata la gloria – sta la Vergine "piena di grazia" nell'atto in cui Dio – Uno e Trino – l'incorona di meriti, per inviarla tra gli Uomini a compiere la sua Missione materna. Santa è Maria poichè è il "Tempio di Dio" fattura delle Sue Mani! Gli Angioli offrono preghiere ed incensi all'Eterno Padre che si è degnato di compiere questa "cosa nuova sulla terra" e con le trombe angeliche ne danno l'annunzio agli uomini. Questi – effigiati nelle figure tipiche dalle Cinque parti della terra – si prostrano dinnanzi a Maria e la chiamano "Santa", quasi a presagio del saluto che a Maria rivolgerà la S. Chiesa, continuando l'Ave dell'Arcangelo S. Gabriele. A Maria – che significa Signora, Stella del Cielo e del mare – alla MADRE DI DIO, che sarà il "Tempio del Verbo Incarnato" – gli Uomini eleveranno i loro tempii, i loro Santuari; nel quadro noi contempliamo il "Tempio di Nazareth" (a sinistra) e la Chiesa di Roma, donde è partita la prima solenne affermazione che proclamava Maria Madre di Cristo, Madre di Dio.

Figure 2. 'Sancta Maria Ora Pro Nobis', Table 6 from the treatise by Razzore and Mora (1931).

Figure 3. Inquisition-styled still image employed as the visual companion for the YouTube video '*Litanie dei santi*' (youtu.be/hOwNEtg7V94).

Figure 4. Apocalyptic stock image employed as a visual companion for the You-Tube video '*Litanie dei santi*' (youtu.be/oEiSw-ZjEcI).