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BERNADETT SMID

The Magic of Saint Cyprian: Individual Crisis and Historicity in Recent On-line Prayer Texts¹

The story of Saint Cyprian of Antioch concerns the conversion of a magician, the magician being the saint of the title who had a magical function in popular tradition. This text has, rather unsurprisingly generated centuries of debate in the canonical assessment of his figure and the related texts. His role has evolved differently in the Eastern and the Western Churches. The saint, together with Justina (Justa), appeared in the calendar of the Roman Rite from the thirteenth century until 14 February 1969, when both were removed due to insufficient source material and their fictitious nature.² In 2001, their names were also taken off the list of the martyrs of the Church of Rome. In the Orthodox Church, Cyprian has long been the saint who eradicates the effects of black magic: believers turn to him when confronting cases of evil possession and spells. In the Western Church, however, his name became associated with the practice of magic and although the Church has forbidden belief in and magical practices connected to Cyprian for centuries, believers in Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking areas still call upon the ancient magician saint to achieve certain goals up to the present day. This is well documented on the Internet, especially among Spanish speaking (Latin-American and Spanish) users.

* * *

Before we discuss the topic in detail, the change of register of the texts examined demands the addition of a few introductory thoughts on the characteristics of the new space. From the 1970s on, because of the rapid developments in technology, researchers have begun to talk about the establishment of a new, general paradigm

¹ This paper was supported by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA).

² Pope Paul VI, by the apostolic letter of *Mysterii Paschalis* restored the liturgical year of the Roman Rite and revised the liturgical celebrations of Jesus Christ and the Saints in the General Roman Calendar. See http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19690214_mysterii-paschalis.html.

in three fields: according to Manuel Castells, these are micro-electronics, computers and telecommunication.³ Representatives of several scientific fields have discussed the economic, sociological and cultural impact of technological innovation. From the 1990s on, anthropology⁴ and ethnography have also joined this dialogue, although sometimes bringing with them a tangible technopessimism. In an electronic culture dominated by infocommunication devices, besides the phenomena of contemporary folklore, other online sociocultural practices (e.g. new methods of remembrance and representation) and the use of social media may also be regarded as subjects of investigation.⁵

It is also true from the point of view of religious practice, that the amount of information as well as the textual and visual anonymous communication available online has not only eliminated geographical boundaries, but also the conventional and normative nature of attributing meaning, in addition to the local rules of social interaction.⁶ The concept of time has altered, the flow of information has increased in both volume and speed, and geographical distances have shrunk. The new, computer-based interaction has changed the forms in which religious information and knowledge are transferred; new practices, new frames (in space and time) have been formed, and it has brought with it new modes of sharing religious and personal experience and opinions.⁷ The immediate availability of the known and unknown forms of religion can pose a challenge for religious authorities and forms of worship based on tradition.

With the spread of the Internet sacral communication is no longer geographically tied: the spread of virtual cultic sites and religious communities have intensified.⁸ Through these, there is no longer an exclusive need for concrete, clearly defined material spaces and sacral buildings for communication with the transcendent; virtual, online websites and spaces can serve as an alternative, and their use can become personalised and independent of place and time. The folklorist interested in such practices can exploit the online sacral, magical spaces as an opportunity to observe individual conditions or specific situations of personal crisis, by which a whole range of religious or magical practices, their personal variations or even the essence of the personal religious experience can be revealed. Through the investigation of online spaces, insights can be gained into personal, everyday, vernacular religious practice – for example, the practice of prayer.

³ Castells 2010, 39.

⁴ Nagy Károly Zsolt discusses the related aspects of anthropological methodology and the central issues of the emerging research in one of his studies. See Nagy 2015, 45–46.

⁵ Lajos 2016, 830.

⁶ Lövheim 2007, 87.

⁷ On the latter topic, long-term online community studies complemented by interviews have been carried out. Some examples: Lövheim 2007; and Meintel 2012. The author mentions several related studies as well. On praying in the cyber space, see Fitzgerald 2012, 115–30. About the conversion powers of a prayer spreading online, see Glenn Howard 2005. A comprehensive work on online praying as a theological question: Leinau 2009. Many additional examples could be listed.

⁸ Frauhammer 2016, 144.

The current study builds upon this last idea, with the central focus on texts related to Saint Cyprian, a “magical” saint, and the way in which they are exploited. The sources are in Neo-Latin languages, mostly in Spanish and Catalan; the related Orthodox or Scandinavian materials are not discussed here. The first half of the study gives a brief outline of the historical contexts, texts and magical functions related to the character of Saint Cyprian. The second investigates the practice of using Spanish Cyprian “prayers” in actual, specific online spaces. My short study cannot hope to present the historical continuity of texts and magical practices related to Saint Cyprian; it solely focuses on the personal crises in which those who turn to the saint use Cyprian prayers, and what personal communicative elements they add to the closed text of the original prayer. Through introducing the texts and their context, it is hoped that an understanding of the transcendent functional and pragmatic correspondences of past and present in connection with the saint will be developed.

1. The magical saint

The first source about the life of the probably fictive saint is the fourth century manuscript titled the “Confession of Cyprian” which is written in the first-person singular.⁹ According to the text, Cyprian lived at the turn of the third–fourth centuries, working as a pagan magician before his conversion. According to apocryphal legends, he studied his profession in India and Egypt. He was engaged in love magic, weather magic and divination, and was thought to have prepared love potions, used incantations and magic spells, been able to create storms and rain, and evoke the souls of the dead from the beyond. Once, a young man came to him and asked for help in gaining the love of a Christian virgin named Justina. Cyprian evoked demons and sent them to attack her, but the girl resisted them with the power of faith and the cross. For all his knowledge, power, and experience, Cyprian was unable to overcome her and in the end converted to Christianity. With the inevitable conclusion that the devil is at work behind all pagan religions, his conversion also led him to burn his magical books, too. On 26 September 304, he died as a martyr together with Justina. They were both cast into a boiling cauldron, but they miraculously escaped its heat, and finally were beheaded. The legend of their lives exists in Latin, Greek, Syrian and Ethiopian versions.

The early hagiography of the saint was studied by Hippolyte Delehaye who demonstrated how, from the third–fourth centuries onwards his story became contaminated with that of Saint Cyprian the bishop of Carthage shortly after his alleged martyrdom.¹⁰

⁹ The “Confession” is almost certainly a product of a pagan revival in the latter half of the fourth century (Bailey 2009, 4–5) whereas it is clearly directed at pagan audience as is apparent from its incipit, which addresses “all you who take *offence* (προδοκότες) at the mysteries of Christ” (1:1) (Bailey 2009, 5).

¹⁰ Delehaye 1921. However, there are examples of confusion between the two saints in the early sources as well.

Aelia Eudocia, the wife of Eastern Roman Emperor Theodosius II wrote a long poem about the life of Saint Cyprian in the early fifth century.¹¹ Saint Gregory of Nazianzus was the first Christian author among the early fathers of the Church to merge the figures of the two saints in the fourth century (379), in his work titled *Oraatio XXIV in laudem sancti martyris Cypriani*.¹²

Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, a Christian hymn poet of Roman origins who operated as a lawyer in Hispania and was later appointed governor of the province two times, made the same mistake in *Liber Peristhephanon* at the turn of the fourth–fifth centuries, and it also occurs in the medieval sources.¹³ In the tenth century, Symeon the Metaphrast included certain parts of the legend in his ten-volume *Synaxarion* written in Greek. Cyprian's cult became established in the Roman Church in the middle of the Medieval Period, when Jacobus de Voragine included his story together with Saint Justina in his *Legenda Aurea* in the thirteenth century (1260–1267).¹⁴ Subsequently, centuries passed without any reference to Saint Cyprian.

1. 1. "Prayers" from the Early Modern Period¹⁵

The cult of the saint became a part of the popular culture of the age; his name was associated with magical practices mostly in the Scandinavian and the modern Latin areas in Europe. In the Iberian Peninsula, his name was well known and popular even in the seventeenth century. There is more evidence for this: e.g. the Spanish poet and playwright Pedro Calderón de la Barca wrote a pious and cheerful play titled *El mágico prodigioso* (*The Wonder-Working Magician*) about the story of Saint Cyprian and Justina in 1637. In this work meant for entertainment, the theme of the alliance with the devil is also present. The comedy was first performed in front of the believers at the procession on the Lord's Day in Yepes (Toledo). Based on this, it seems that the position and attitude of the Church in connection with Cyprian was ambivalent in the sixteenth–seventeenth centuries. His prayer was forbidden, possessing a copy of his book was comparable to having an alliance with the devil; at the same time, the popularity of the saint was noted and respected.¹⁶

At the time of the Counter-Reformation, the Church began to publish the list of books and prints dangerous to Orthodox Catholicism; the prayer of Cyprian was probably circulated in large numbers in vernacular language(s) in chapbooks also in the

¹¹ Plant 2004, 198–206.

¹² PG [Patrologia Graeca] 35, Sp. 1164–1197, in Migne 1857.

¹³ See the text and its Spanish translation in: Prudencio 1950, 808–16.

¹⁴ See *Legenda Aurea* 1922: The Life of Justina.

¹⁵ I use the word prayer in quotation marks, referring to the ambivalence that the Cyprian prayer text versions known from the Early Modern Period were claimed to be effective prayers, while the Church regarded them as harmful, improper prayers and prohibited their use. Within the framework of the current study it is not possible to discuss questions of genre in more detail.

¹⁶ So much so that the loved and patronised playwright of Phillip IV, Pedro Calderón de la Barca received permission for a grandiose, festive performance of the comedy popularising the saint.

Iberian Peninsula. The Church prohibited use of the prayer in Iberia multiple times throughout the sixteenth–seventeenth centuries. Sources from the late-Renaissance and early-Baroque era confirm the popularity of Saint Cyprian of Antioch among the emerging bourgeoisie and in the lower, literate social circles as well.

In the last few years, researchers have discovered several Cyprian prayer texts from the Early Modern Period. Four different versions of the prayer of Saint Cyprian in Spanish and Catalan from this era are currently recognised. One of the Spanish versions is a translation from an 82-page exorcism book for storms and devils published in 1631 in Pamplona for clerical use: *Liber exorcismorum cum adversus tempestates et daemones*.¹⁷

Besides the known versions of the text, I have recently published an earlier, 1557 version of it in the Catalan language.¹⁸ In this version, the practice of the *novena* is “encoded”, the application of which is also supported by the ritual-magical healing practice that I have discovered.¹⁹

As concerns the ecclesiastical point of view, prints serving the strengthening of devotion and the vulgarisation of reading caused a particular problem for the Church of the age. For example, the names of several saints became associated with the use of love magic. In 1605, the court of Milan mentioned it as a specifically female problem that certain prayers were mistakenly attributed to Saint Daniel, Saint Martha and Saint Cyprian and used for profane purposes, that is, for love magic.²⁰ The category of bad, superstitious prayers was formed, into which Saint Cyprian’s prayer also fell.

¹⁷ Itúrbide Díaz 2010. The Spanish version was published by Javier Itúrbide Díaz, who also mentions its origins and contemporary reception. The Spanish translator was Cristóbal Lasterra, a priest from Navarra. Despite his active participation in the work of the inquisition, Lasterra did not consider the fact that the prayer had already been included in several *Indexes* before the publication of the exorcism manual. Based on the content of the book, the prayer was said in the case of a drought, which is also proven by the parts of the text related to the fertility of land and nature and the help of women giving birth. Based on its content, we can draw a parallel between this prayer and a prayer text in Arabic which was published by René Basset (Basset 1982). In that, Cyprian mentions his past as a magician, also reveals his misdeeds, his repentance and conversion, and then addresses a list of sorceries he is breaking with the help of God. The list details the materials involved in the implementation of the sorcery, which also appear in the later versions, although in the form of a much shorter list. The translation of the Arabic text is the following (by Humberto Maggi, <http://www.occult-study.org/new-world-saint-cyprian/> – accessed 6 July 2017): “If there is sorcery or magical binding or wickedness by iron, by gold, by silver, by bronze, by lead, by tin, let it be unmade and be no more, as if it existed in a thread, from silk, from cotton, from flax, threads of silk, in the remains of wool, let it be unmade, if it is made with human bones, with the bones of a quadruped, or of birds, of fish, let the enchantment be undone, etc.”

¹⁸ The chapbook, which contains the text, was remarkably small, which implies that its illiterate owners used it as an amulet text in the time of the Thirty Years’ War. Fortunately, I also have some data regarding the magical use of this “prayer” thanks to an inquisition trial. On further implications, the use of the text, the position of the Church and the contemporary context, see Smid 2017.

¹⁹ Novena is a repetition-based devotional prayer practice in the Roman Catholic Church, in which the focus is on waiting, saying the prayer regularly, and emphasising the request. It is usually repeated nine times for nine subsequent days or months.

²⁰ Davies 2009, 80.

In the *Confessionario* of Pedro Ciruelo, the incorrect prayer text is related to pointless ceremonies.²¹ Thus, he advises the penitentiaries to ask the believers whether they say any prayers which they have to perform on specific days, accompanied by certain ceremonies (e.g. lighting a candle), and whether these promise any kinds of rewards to the believers.²²

1. 2. *Cyprian's magic book: writing as a magical power*

Another important layer of the history of the texts related to the saint consists of the magic books, or grimoires.²³ These are usually based on the legendary element that Cyprian did not burn all his books during his conversion: one secret issue remained, which was later copied several times.

In Southern France, a belief appeared around the end of the fifteenth century that there is an existing magic book related to the wizard knowledge of Saint Cyprian, which contains various magical practices. One example is the grimoire attributed to Pope Leo III (*Enchiridium Leonis Papae*). Its dating is misleading; it might have been first published in 1663. Then it was circulated in chapbooks from the eighteenth century. This French source includes a prayer of Saint Cyprian that was also used against storms.

It is probable that both the text of the prayer and the related ideas came to the Iberian Peninsula from French territory. In the inquisition, the name of the saint became associated with an alliance with the devil. In the seventeenth century, several priests were summoned before the Holy Office because they had used or copied the infamous Saint Cyprian book for treasure hunting, exorcism and for saying several dubious *conjuratio*s.²⁴ These trials deepened the popular belief that Saint Cyprian's book was hidden and copied secretly in various monasteries. Its possession or usage appeared repeatedly as a serious charge in the inquisition trials of the Early Modern Period.

The number of magic books was also notably high in areas where Scandinavian languages were spoken. It has been estimated that over a hundred of them survive in Norwegian libraries and museums alone, most dating back to the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²⁵

²¹ Ciruelo 1544.

²² *Ibid.*, 43. For more details on the topic, see Smid 2017.

²³ These were published at great speed in the nineteenth century, when they tried to advertise printed products as old Cyprian magic books with all possible tools of authentication. The magic book titled *Cyprien Mago ante Conversionem*, which is written in Latin and "dates itself" to 1460, is probably also from the nineteenth century. See e. g. Skinner 2010.

²⁴ For several collected and extracted Iberian (Galician) examples, see Barreiro 2010.

²⁵ Davies 2009, 124; Ohrvik 2012; Ohrvik 2018. We can also bring *Cyprianus Konstbog* (*Cyprian's Art Book*), a Norwegian manuscript from the seventeenth century as an example, which has 33 leaves/ is 66 pages long work and is by an unknown author, to be found in the library of the University of Oslo. See Ohrvik 2012. The black books presented by Ohrvik all contain divination formulae, healing texts, recipes (e.g. home-made ink), and runes (e.g. protection against witches). According to these sources, Cyprian was a Danish man who lived on an island and was so evil that the devil himself threw him out of hell and sent him home. On the role of Saint Cyprian in Norwegian magic books, see the newest book of the author: Ohrvik 2018.

2. Prayer texts on the Internet

Above we have discussed the periods, social environments, geographical areas and registers in which texts related to Saint Cyprian have appeared, as well as their basic functions and contexts. Nowadays, it is possible to find different versions of Saint Cyprian's prayer on electronic prayer sites, through which the new media have made the practices of believers and the shades of personal religiousness and, in this case, the use of magic more visible.²⁶

First, we need to distinguish between the texts referring to Cyprian of Antioch and the online material referring to Cyprian of Carthage, as the current study is only concerned with the magical saint. In contemporary practice, the saint deleted from the list of martyrs does not appear on Church websites operating "official" virtual altars. As suggested by one of these sources, it is only possible to ask for the intervention of Saint Cyprian the bishop of Carthage, to light a candle for him and send a personal request in an electronic message indicating the name and the country of origin.²⁷ Thus, obviously, we cannot expect the figure of Saint Cyprian of Antioch to appear on the official Church practice websites exploiting contemporary communication techniques. The texts related to his character appear on prayer blogs, sites publishing magical texts, and on esoteric community sites.

Concerning the method of selecting the online texts, as a first step I entered the combination of the phrases *oración* (prayer) and *San Cipriano* (Saint Cyprian) into Google Search, as I have been working with texts in Spanish. 274,000 results appeared in 30 seconds. The majority of these refer to Saint Cyprian of Antioch, and they are clearly characterised by the appearance of a practical function encoded in the texts. Without exception, they all offer a solution of some kind for an unexpected, stressful situation or crisis, such as estrangement from a loved one, a declining financial situation or a negative workplace environment.

Based on the search results, I looked for a "saturation point" above which the functions are repetitive and listed the personal crises to which the texts offer solutions. The following text types were identified:

1. Cyprian prayer used for love magic: "Saint Cyprian's prayer, to make your lover return".²⁸ In this text, the user forces a person with the power of Saint Cyprian to go

²⁶ These texts should not be considered as the genetic variants of the Early Modern texts examined by me, and I do not aim to demonstrate the historical continuity and dynamism of several hundred years in a single study. Among the text types, there are some without any historical parallelism; however, the historical roots can be traced in the functions without exception. Throughout their presentation, I deliberately use the emic genre category, not discussing issues of genre. As the newest reference on the genre of runes and prayers see Kapaló 2011, and on the functional relations of the religious obsecration, blessing, prayer and rune, based on an extensive Hungarian corpus, see: Pócs 2014, 437–515.

²⁷ <http://www.altaresvirtuales.com/sancipriano.htm>, and <http://www.altaresvirtuales.com/index2.php>. Accessed 7 August 2017.

²⁸ "Oración de San Cipriano, para que regrese el ser amado/ para amarrar, amansar/ recuperar parca."

back to them. The text does not include the name of God or the theme of conversion. The “prayers” used for love magic are often applied as novenas, but another related text recommends the practice of repeating the prayer two times a day, for three days.

2. Text used to get rid of any kind of evil spells, turning directly to Saint Cyprian.

3. Some prayers extend the request for solution to several crisis situations; one example is the novena of Saint Cyprian used for urgent requests, which keeps away those with negative energies or bad intentions.²⁹ At this text type, the comments prove that it is used in cases of adultery, by the “victim” or occasionally their mother.

4. Saint Cyprian prayers aimed at earning more money and helping with work.

5. Cyprian’s exorcism against storms (contra huracanes).

6. Finally, the texts which are useful for exorcising the home of evil spirits. (*Para liberar la casa de espíritus tentadores.*)

Based on the order of the search results and the number of comments posted by the users of the online prayer sites, it is clear that the functions identified from previous centuries still prevail in contemporary practice; however, the most frequent and popular among these is the text utilised for love magic.³⁰ This functional predominance can be regarded as quantitative even if we consider that the search results appearing in Google are not necessarily based on visitor numbers but can occasionally depend on financial factors as well.³¹

The owners, operators and administrators of such websites are sometimes unreachable with their emails not working; however, some are specialists in magic advertising their own self-published books of “prayers” and magic on the site, where they also refer to their broader activity, for instance, in the field of astrology.³²

In the following part, two specific sources and online sites are presented; a Saint Cyprian “prayer” text available online, and an audio-visual “prayer” uploaded to YouTube, the online video channel with the largest viewership on the Internet. Both texts are concerned with love magic, and, in addition, can be considered as the variants

²⁹ <http://www.oracionesalossantos.com/2015/08/san-cipriano-oracion-para-recuperar-la.html>. Accessed 7 August 2017.

³⁰ The sources and the related data presented at the beginning of the study present a different proportion; however, that can stem from the eventuality of the sources that remain. Due to the sparse historical data and the current state of the research, we cannot draw conclusions regarding a possible shift in the proportions.

³¹ We should bear in mind that multiple search results may point to a single page, thus the same content may appear more than once in the search list. To exclude repetitions, a database will have to be set up in the future.

³² See for example the video channel of Candela Hernández, who published an e-book of magical texts collected and recommended by her in 2015. The 23-page book provides concrete instructions to the reader regarding the use of actual gestures and objects accompanying the texts. The target audience of Candela Hernández are private users of magic. She gives audio-advice for the prayer of Saint Cyprian: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-HWp998xEg>. Accessed 6 July 2017. Here we can witness elements of the magical-ritual toolkit related to folkloric and popular practices of the previous centuries, in a register barely observed before.

of one another. In both cases the focus is on the context and the comments, that is, the functional user side.

2. 1. *The prayer of Saint Cyprian on a website quoting “miraculous” prayers*

The first is the Saint Cyprian text from the webpage [oracionesmilagrosasypoderosas.com](http://www.oracionesmilagrosasypoderosas.com) (“miraculous and effective prayers”).³³ The header of the site reflects its crisis-centred focus: it offers magical-religious texts for users in personal crisis. The header advertises prayer texts related to various saints for problems of love, finance, work, health, luck and other urgent cases.

The “prayer” addresses Cyprian as a mediator, then it aims at changing the existing situation using a number grammatical structures expressing enforcement. The text was published on the website on 9 September 2014 by the administrator Maite Rojo. The comments thread shows unbroken activity since the date of publication; 3813 comments were left up to 2 January 2018 and the daily recorded activity of users is above average for pages on this site. More information on the activities and interests of the publisher of this text is available from their public Google+ page, which makes evident that the individual in question gladly shares content from various blogs related to aromatherapy, health, magic, body care, healthy lifestyles, Wicca, runes, and prayers.

It is important to note that the comments are managed by an administrator, and so, are moderated. Their length is limited, and many are anonymous or signed under a pseudonym. The comments published in the electronic space can be interpreted as complementary texts related to the “prayer”, making the practice of praying personal through secondary literacy. What would be uttered orally or perhaps phrased only in thought when reciting the text personally is present here in writing.³⁴

There is little reference to the circumstances in which the texts are used. Regarding its use, the text itself provides some details through the paratext provided: in the instructions on how to say the prayer; for example, that the prayer and obsecration should be executed with great faith, in the morning and in the evening for three days, followed by other prayers.³⁵ Or the advice given to online users that they should publish their personal request to Saint Cyprian, light a white candle, and if their wishes are granted, then this information should be shared together with their

³³ <http://www.oracionesmilagrosasypoderosas.com/2014/09/oracion-san-cipriano-para-que-regrese.html>. Accessed 6 July 2017. See Annex for the transcribed version. I have made no changes in the spelling.

³⁴ Hereinafter, I make no changes to the original spelling of the texts cited. “Anónimo, 2 de junio de 2015, 21: 17. San Cipriano bendito, te pido con las fuerzas de mi corazón que escuches mis suplicas y oraciones, haz que SAE regrese pronto a nuestro hogar para que regrese el amor, la armonía y la felicidad, te estaré eternamente agradecida se que estás trabajando a mi favor, Así sea, así sea, así será.”

³⁵ <http://www.oracionesmilagrosasypoderosas.com/2014/09/oracion-san-cipriano-para-que-regrese.html>. Accessed 6 July 2017.

names and thanks to Saint Cyprian.³⁶ Several comments demonstrate that online users of the prayer do not regard the paratext as binding, and in reality, they use the text as a novena, or recite it together with other prayers, for example the prayer to Saint Martha or Hail Mary.³⁷ Most of the comments function as a “virtual ex voto plaques”, thanking Saint Cyprian that he has listened to their prayers. Certain users copy the text and include the abbreviations of the actual names, but based on the comments it seems that in most cases, primarily with the novena, the uttering of the words is important. The personalisation of the praying practice, and its real operation and effectiveness are ensured by the commenters writing the name of the person saying the prayer and also the name of those the text is directed towards.³⁸ In most cases, however, only the first name or the abbreviation of the full name, and sometimes the relationship (friend, husband, or wife) are present in the online space.³⁹

Most of the users’ comments are repeating or completing the parts of the text referring to the relationship with the saint.⁴⁰ Commenting is mostly used for making the communication with Saint Cyprian effective, and not for users communicating with each other, sharing their experiences, the circumstances of saying the prayer, or how things turned out for them afterwards. Usually they do not react to each other’s comments or experiences, although the space gives them the opportunity: technically, it

³⁶ See the text in Annex.

³⁷ This is also shown by the following example: “Anónimo 10 de mayo de 2015, 16:59. Esto funciona, lo recé junto a la oración de santa marta la dominadora durante 9 días, pasaron los días y nada pasaba, pero luego de 2 o 3 semanas pasó justo lo que yo pedí, eso que ya había perdido el contacto con esa persona, solo debes tener mucha fe y ya ves como vuelve la persona que amas, espero te funcione.” <http://www.oracionesmilagrosasypoderosas.com/2014/09/oracion-san-cipriano-para-que-regrese.html>. Accessed 6 July 2017.

³⁸ Out of the numerous examples, I am quoting one: “Anónimo 26 de julio de 2015. 21: 30. Soy Isabel ... quiero decirles que San Cipriano escucha el corazón de las mujeres, yo doy fé, y testimonio ... doy gracias a él por mi amor, solo le pido ahora que le apaciente ese mal caracter que tiene, tengan fé” <http://www.oracionesmilagrosasypoderosas.com/2014/09/oracion-san-cipriano-para-que-regrese.html>. Accessed 6 July 2017.

³⁹ “Anónimo 19 de agosto de 2015, 17:59 San Cipriano vengo hasta ti desesperada, pero a la vez enamorada.. tanto que sufro demasiado..te pido por favor, con toda mi fe que intentes darle una señal a ELS para que de esa manera el se de cuenta que lo unico que quiero es hacerlo feliz y buscar su bienestar..lo necesito y lo extraño a diario..Se que la situación es complicada, por eso vengo hasta ti para que de alguna manera quites de su cabeza esos prejuicios que tiene y se permita ser feliz a mi lado, sin importarle nada ni nadie..yo se que con tu infinito poder puedes lograr esto, de ello depende mi felicidad..dejo todo en tus manos y te estoy agradecida por escucharme siempre.. asi sea..AMÉN.” <http://www.oracionesmilagrosasypoderosas.com/2014/09/oracion-san-cipriano-para-que-regrese.html>. Accessed 7 August 2017.

⁴⁰ An example for the completion of the “prayer” with other magical texts is to be found on another webpage, where the commenters recommend charms counting backwards as an accompanying text. “Cuenta atras 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1. y di brujos y brujitas ayudenme que D no deje de pensar en mi, por medio de esta oracion que yo A sea la única en su pensamiento que se duerma pensando y acordandose de mi/ que me llame hoy y me pide que este con el para siempre, tener mucha fe y veran lo que ocurre al publicarla.” <https://www.fiuxy.co/consultorio-sentimental/2232367-oracion-san-cirpiano.html>. Accessed 7 August 2017.

is possible to answer comments. When they comment on each other's comments, the aim is mostly to confirm the information that Saint Cyprian was indeed helpful, and he is worth believing in. It is remarkably rare that the commenters answer each other's questions, but this might have to do with the moderator of the webpage. As transpires from the examples quoted, the comment is a practice complementing the saying of the prayer with personal features. In the case of the novena, the users write it either before they start, or after a poorly performed prayer (e.g. forgetting to recite a daily prayer) or a completed practice. They explain why they are starting the prayer, what they expect from it, as well as to assure the saint that they trust him, they are grateful to him, and they are grateful for his help; in most cases in advance. Therefore, most of the texts which seem personal at first sight serve as the confirmation of the invocation or are votive; some promise Cyprian to light a candle or pay for a mass.

As we know, individual prayer is authorised and sponsored by communities of practice, but the question emerges how these virtual communities function on the web, if their members do not communicate with each other? In what ways does CMC (computer-mediated communication) serve them? Based on the above, the people behind the virtual prayers do not typically communicate with each other; they merely observe the grateful messages. This ensures the spread of the practice, the faith in its effectiveness and continuity. The users almost exclusively leave comments to garner a closer relationship with the saint, which suggests, at least in our case, that the Internet space functions as *a transcendent communication channel*. It is not the text itself that has magical-transcendent powers but the text appearing in the online space and the related online visual-communicative world together. Virtual communication is formalised, which gives an element of community character to the personal reading and saying of the prayer. The supposed effective role of Cyprian in love and wealth magic, the power attributed to him fills the user of the prayer with hope. The opportunity of online communication: writing a comment reflecting a personal situation creates the expression of confident faith, as well as an opportunity to establish connection with the saint: it makes the prayer texts open for the person in crisis, making it possible for them to contact Saint Cyprian directly through newly added, personalised passages, thus consolidating the immanent element of sacral communication, transforming the quality of the original text and internalising it.⁴¹

2.2. *The prayer of Saint Cyprian on the YouTube channel*

To verify the above statement, an analysis was undertaken on the operation of a contemporary audio-visual space, a YouTube video channel presenting the prayer of Saint Cyprian, and the community practice that has arisen around it. From a methodological point of view, I found it important to select a version of the text introduced

⁴¹ Thus, the condition for the online sacral communicative act as an illocutionary act: faith is created. Cf. Lovász 2002, 50–53.

above; thus, I chose the channel “*oraciones en video*” (prayers on video).⁴² The two texts are largely identical; the version on the video channel differs from the former in the ways it explains the passages related to the prayer’s application and that it is read by a female voice, using the male grammatical structures of the original. The paratext related to the practice does not appear this time, and probably – apart from the basic differences between the written and the audio-visual data medium – this is the reason for the differences in the communication of the users.

What do we know about the owner of the channel? The site provides direct links to a virtual Facebook community and a virtual prayer group administrated by Rocío Muñoz. She herself is not accessible through the community media page – private messages addressed to her are not transmitted by the system.

On 2 January 2018, the channel had 841,640 subscribers; its operator published the prayer of Saint Cyprian on 15 March 2016, and it had been viewed by 403,169 users up to the given date. The comments appearing under the video are somewhat similar to the comments on the web page discussed above: most can be interpreted as attempts at making a connection with the saint as well as demonstrating faith in his powers, or as textual *ex voto*, as the users express their gratitude to Saint Cyprian for his help in the form of comments.

Nevertheless, the comments also have a function which differs from those in the prayer site. One of the most salient being that users in similar crisis situations do address each other: they ask questions from some of those who state that the prayer has worked for them. The questioners are mostly interested in the exact procedures of the rite, as they attribute the effectiveness to the accurate use of magical objects, especially candles.⁴³ In the case they receive an answer, the users wish each other permanent success, and close the conversation with a blessing formula. Sometimes, users also ask each other whether the prayer can work for those who have not been left by their lovers, but are single and would like to find a partner. The virtual community created here discusses the exact course of the magical procedures and the need appears for “deciphering” the mechanisms of the prayer’s effect. There are several narratives in the comments which declare that after using the prayer, a miracle occurred, and the personal request of the prayer was granted.⁴⁴ The emotional foun-

⁴² Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PaVAnYWDEE&t=3s>. Accessed 7 August 2017.

⁴³ The comment of Patti Castro for the channel of Candela Hernández, in November 2017: “Bueno a mi me funciona prendiendo una vela blanca cada tercer día pero yo rese la oracion 9 días, tres veces en la mañana, tres en la tarde y tres en la noche .y cada ves que lees la oracion resas tres padres nuestros, tres ave marias, y tres glorias ...” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-HWp998xEg>. Accessed 7 August 2017.

⁴⁴ See the comment of Carolina Amador Castillo, added three weeks ago: “hola quiero compartir mi milagro, hace algunos días entregué mi dolor y mi angustia a San Cipriano en un momento de dolor, todas mis aflicciones se las dejé a él, e intercedió por mí con gran amor; y ahora estoy nuevamente con el amor de mi vida después de dos años de idas y vueltas, y lo más importante que quiero dejar aquí plasmado, es mi gente confianza pero sobre todo mi agradecimiento divulgare por siempre el nombre de San Cipriano, se quedara en mi vida, crean en él no pierdan su fe, y sean perseverantes que si su amor es sincero todo es posible, gracias infinitas San Cipriano por favor concedido te amo con todo mi corazón.”

dition of the quoted story is in the pleasure of success, and its function is to reconfirm faith which is the basis of the sacral communication, to communicate it towards others and ensure that the prayer is used continuously.

The other difference lies in the alternative texts, magical practices and specialists used in similar situations which appear in the comments related to the video, for example in order to achieve the goal of the loved one calling the one in crisis immediately.⁴⁵ The comments also recommend a healing specialist with a phone number given, who offers help in case of a crisis in marriage or intimate relationship.

Owing to the scant paratext, the “instructions of use” and the character of the online space, the communication between the users is not as formalised as that of the web page discussed earlier, and we can also observe how it opens gates towards other practices, offline worlds and magical specialists to be called upon in similar crisis situations.

2.3. Magical objects related to Saint Cyprian available online

Based on the online examples, it was possible to see how the comments inform us of the prayer users’ personal crises, faith and the practice of personal text repetitions. However, we are rarely presented with a full picture of the offline world – on what material tools and detailed gestural elements are connected to the texts said or read out. To gain a better insight into this issue, we would need to know the actual material objects of the practice, the related writings of the online space, and an investigation of the offline practices in connection with Saint Cyprian would be required. As I have not had the opportunity to investigate the latter, in the last part of my study, I would like to present briefly the material tools marketed online, in a non-exhaustive manner. Is it possible to discover the importance of the material-gestural environment of reciting the prayer?

⁴⁵ “Among others, see the comment of Diana Pérez added 3 months ago: Llamada telefónica de tu amor Me llamará ahora mismo. LLÁMAME YA, AHORA EN ESTE MISMO INSTANTE, (nombre de tu amor). En este momento, en cualquier lugar. En este momento tú pondrás tu concentración y tus pensamientos de nuevo en mí (tu nombre), tú entiendes que no puedes vivir sin mí. En este momento comenzarás a descartar tu orgullo. En este momento tú estás dispuesto a llamarme. En este momento estás pensando en mí (tu nombre). ¿Vas a tratar de resistir? No te resistas. Si tú (nombre de tu amor) no me llamas ahora, me vas a llamar más tarde. Pero ahora tú puedes estar seguro de que me llamarás. Tú entiendes que estás enamorado de mí y no puedes estar sin mi presencia. En este momento tú piensas en mí (tu nombre). Invoco a los tres ángeles, MIGUEL, GABRIEL y RAFAEL, para iluminar tu corazón (nombre de tu amor) y deshacer cualquier duda. Lo que MIGUEL expulsará lejos de ti es el espíritu del mal, todas las influencias del mal. GABRIEL para anunciar a ti (nombre de tu amor) mi nombre (tu nombre), que soplen al oído la palabra AMOR y te acuerdes de mí (tu nombre), anuncio a su ÁNGEL DE LA GUARDA. RAFAEL para que utilice el bálsamo curativo para sanar la desconfianza que se ha desarrollado en tu corazón, y para mantener abierta la cicatriz del AMOR y el deseo hacia mí (tu nombre). Que así sea. ¡Con todo mi amor! Cuando este mensaje se publique, dentro de dos minutos él tendrá un impulso irresistible para llamarte. Cederá a lo que estás esperando de él. Que así sea, así será.”

An English web page on saints and folklore magic, for instance, provides the following statement coming from Italian language territory:

Those who wish to petition San Cipriano di Antiochia's help can burn a purple candle on a Saturday to request protection from womanizers, liars, and cheaters. He helps homeless people, too. Occult shops and botanicas sell "San Cipriano Oil" for anointing candles. Some practitioners blend their own "San Cipriano Oil" mixing cinnamon powder (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*), galangal root powder (*Alpinia galanga*), orris root powder (*Iris germanica*), with a few drops of cedar oil, cypress oil, and myrrh oil into a base oil, such as castor oil or olive oil.⁴⁶

Sometimes, there is not even a text explaining how to use Saint Cyprian's oil; the instruction simply tells us to apply it to the relevant areas of the body:⁴⁷

The San Cipriano oil will help you bring back that special person that left you.

Anoint your earlobes and wrists and have them come back to you.

You can also pour a capful of this oil in your bath water for triple strength.

You can also dress a spiritual candle to increase the power of the candle burning ritual.

Buy 1 oil for only \$5.00 each, 3 for only \$13.50.

2 oz Bottle for \$11.95 each.

4 oz Bottle for \$14.95 each.

8 oz Bottle for \$24.95 each.⁴⁸

Online search results also show that it is not only the material, but also the colour of the candle used for magical purposes related to Saint Cyprian that is of significance, although so far we have only met examples of the white colour. The red candle moulded into the form of Saint Cyprian makes any prayer or spell more effective. The use of candles shows a great geographical variety. The spiritual artist from New Orleans, Denise Alvarado created the picture appearing on Voodoo Mama's St. Cyprian Fixed Conjure Candle based on Saint Cyprian's icon. According to the New Orleans web shop, the candle helps "to draw on the patronage and power of Saint Cyprian to gain his protection and intervention against evil magic and psychic warfare, when one turns to him with a request."⁴⁹

Saint Cyprian's oil is also used to win back one's fiancée, by rubbing the oil on a Happy Couple Candle, depicting the pair dressed in wedding clothes. The two saints, Cyprian

⁴⁶ <http://www.jesterbear.com/Aradia/Cipriano.html>. Accessed 7 August 2017.

⁴⁷ For the time being, we have no information on the ways and intensity the material objects are used by those who primarily use the prayer text.

⁴⁸ www.luckshop.com. Accessed 7 August 2017.

⁴⁹ https://www.creolemoon.com/store/p222/St._Cyprian_Fixed_Conjure_Candle.html. Accessed 7 August 2017.



Fig. 1. San Cipriano oil from the web-page www.luckshop.com



and Justina are also asked to ensure a happy future marriage.⁵⁰ So, the comments on the objects lead us to the conclusion that they are primarily used for love magic.

Some of the objects carry a general cleansing function. “Saint Cyprian bath crystals”, which can be bought in various esoteric and herbal shops and webshops, serve the purification of body and soul.

However, there is also a website that gives detailed explanations supported by pictures on what objects can assist in asking for the intervention of Saint Cyprian in unresolved matters.⁵¹

⁵⁰ <http://www.jesterbear.com/Aradia/Cipriano.html>. Accessed 7 August 2017.

⁵¹ The web page turns to the mode of action of analogical magic, recommending the implementation at the time of a waxing moon, or, as a last resort, a full moon. According to it, the objects needed are a printed image of Cyprian, a white tablecloth, three white and three red candles, scissors, a black ribbon and liquor. The altar is a table covered with a white cloth and the red candles on it arranged in a triangle shape. Saint Cyprian’s picture must be placed opposite to one of the angles of the triangle, in the main place. (In the illustration, the candles were placed under a glass sheet.) The white candles must be placed in equal distance from the red candles, so that they form a bigger triangle. Then one must tie as many knots on the black ribbon as many problems one wishes to solve. While tying these knots, the person is thinking of the problems, and after it is ready, the ribbon is placed in the middle of the triangles formed by the candles. Finally, the person lights the candles while saying the following: “For the opening power of roads of San Cipriano, I turn it on so you can light up and open doors and solutions.” Then one must meditate in front of the altar on the problems and requests. After that, each of the knots must be cut through with the scissors in order to have the problems solved. The following text is linked to this action: “This is how I cut you, remove you, this is how you are eliminated.” The parts of the knots cut through

We cannot establish a concrete textual or material connection; it is only possible to raise further questions and phrase hypotheses: for example that the online market spaces may contribute to the uniformity of the magical practice.⁵² In order to clarify the issue, however, an investigation of offline practice is a necessity.

3. Conclusions

This study has presented the personal and communal characteristics of the use of the prayer texts related to Saint Cyprian. As evidenced, the prayers appearing on the Internet connect the functions and motifs of different texts related to the saint. The online spaces are obviously characterised by the predomination of the prayers used for love magic. Previous contents can be identified based on the historically permanent functions, although we cannot speak of a straight line of textual tradition. The elements of apocryphal and once canonised texts related to the saint, such as love magic (see *Confession* and *Legenda Aurea*), gaining money (vs. digging for treasures), and the theme of disabling evil spells have also been present in prayers related to Cyprian for centuries. In addition, the texts have also gone through a change: the people who say the prayers now turn directly to Cyprian, and the texts are no longer phrased in the first person singular, like in the case of the Early Modern texts discovered.

In summary then: First, I introduced a prayer in an online space related to love magic and its use. I examined the comments related to the text as paratext, through which we can observe the role of secondary literacy in connection with the actual prayer text type. We can interpret the comments as an activity completing the personal prayer recital, which serve to make the prayer internal and personal, as well as to express the power of personal faith, thus strengthening hope in the effectiveness of saying these texts. Through them, we can draw conclusions on the personal crisis situations and to some extent, the practice of saying the prayer; however, the formalised nature of the comments has also become apparent, which was formed by the instructions of the prayer text published online, as well as by the environment and the register together. The users of the web page do not communicate with each other but with Saint Cyprian; they use CMC as a transcendent channel, in which we can observe that in case of the contemporary prayers, the written text in itself does not bear supernatural power. The amulet-like features of the texts present in the Early Modern times

remain inside the triangles. Then the person implementing the magical practice washes his/her hands in the alcohol and cleans the scissors in it as well. The candles are left there until they burn down, but the person does not have to be present throughout this process. Finally, the remaining waste is thrown into the toilet or into running water.

This web page does not recommend a prayer text; it is only related to the saint in that he is asked as a mediator.

<https://comotenersuerte.com/un-abre-caminos-poderoso-a-san-cipriano/>. Accessed 7 August 2017.

⁵² Cf. Kis-Halas 2008, 309.

have disappeared, probably because of the changing socio-cultural environment, as literacy became widespread. The writing in itself no longer possesses magical powers. The Internet can be interpreted as a transcendent communication channel increasing the efficiency of the texts aimed at solving personal crises, which contributes to the simplification and individualization of the praxis.

Nevertheless, we could also see that the novena features of the prayer texts related to Saint Cyprian of Antioch can live on, just like in the Early Modern texts. The reasons for the survival of the novena properties can be found in the paratext related to the written texts as well as the prayers' function of emphasising a personal request.⁵³

Based on the online prayer site we concluded that the literate specialist has been drawn out of the system, while the method and the function of resolving the crisis or problem have not altered. Seeing the individual character of the magical-religious communication, one could assume that specialists have been eliminated from the system; however, based on the investigation of the parallel text on the YouTube channel, this turned out to be untrue. In case of the audio-visual prayer, the paratexts related to usage were absent, and the aims of the comments written there were only partly equal to those on the prayer website. The comments also offered alternative solutions, and the involving of a specialist in resolving the particular crisis situation was also mentioned. In case the presence of a specialist emerges in connection with the prayer of Saint Cyprian, he or she must possess additional knowledge and personal power legitimate in the eyes of the virtual users. Just like the involvement of specialists, the online investigation of material objects related to Saint Cyprian's character has also highlighted the diversity of the contemporary offline practices.

⁵³ As a remote parallel, we can mention the use of prayers in Magyarfalu studied by Iancu Laura. In connection with the new, paraliturgical cult forms and novenas also characteristic of the 2010s, the author observes that these may have become recognised in the Moldovan village with the appearance and spread of literacy. She states that most of the prayers found in religious prayer booklets and pulp publications published by the Church are centred on problems, expressing the everyday difficulties of people, and offering a solution for them. Iancu 2013, 269.

Annex

Oración a San Cipriano para que regere se tu amor manso
y muy enamorado⁵⁴

Por los poderes de san Cipriano
y de las tres almas que vigila san Cipriano ...
(nombre de la persona que quieres amansar)
vendrá ahora detrás de mí ...
(tu nombre),
va a venir arrastrándose y enamorado-a,
lleno-a de amor;
deseo para volver y pedirme perdón por mentir
y para pedirme en noviazgo
y mas tarde en boda lo más rápido posible.

San Cipriano glorioso,
tendrá ese poder de que él (o ella) olvide
y dede de una vez cualquier mujer (u hombre)
que pueda estar en su cabeza,
y vuelva a asumirme
y declararse para que todos vean.

San Cipriano aleja a ... de cualquier mujer (u hombre),
que él (o ella) me busque en todo momento
hoy, ahora y siempre
deseando estar a mi lado,
que él (o ella) tenga la certeza que yo ...
soy la mujer (u hombre) perfecta-o para él,
que ... no pueda vivir sin mí,
y que ... siempre tenga mi imagen en su pensamiento
en todos los momentos.

Ahora donde esté y con quien esté,
él (o ella) me buscará
porque el pensamiento de él (o ella) esta en mí.

⁵⁴ <http://www.oracionesmilagrosasypoderosas.com/2014/09/oracion-san-cipriano-para-que-regrese.html>, and with modifications: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PaVAnYWDEE&t=3s>. Accessed 7 August 2017.

Y al acostarse que sueñe conmigo
y al despertar que piense en mí y me desee,
al comer piense en mí, al pisar piense en mí,
en todos los momentos de su vida piense en mí.

Que quiera verme, sentir mi olor,
tocarme con amor, que ... quiera abrazarme,
besarme, cuidarme, protegerme,
amarme las 24 horas de todos sus días
haciendo así que él (o ella) me ame más
y que sienta placer solo por oír mi voz.

San Cipriano, te ruego, haz a ...
sentir por mí ... un deseo fuera de lo normal,
como nunca sintió por otra persona y nunca sentirá.

Que halle placer solo conmigo,
que sienta deseo solamente por mí
y que su cuerpo solo a mí me pertenezca,
que solo tenga paz si esta bien conmigo.

Te agradezco a ti san Cipriano por estar trabajando
a mi favor y voy a divulgar tu nombre
en pago de amansar a ... y traerlo-a enamorado-a,
cariñoso-a, devotado-a, dedicado-a y fiel
y lleno-a de deseo a mis brazos.

Así sea. Así sea. Así será. +

Rezar tres Padrenuestros, tres Avemarías y tres Glorias.

Hacer la oración y los rezos,
con muchísima fe, durante tres días (mañana y noche).

Se puede corresponder a san Cipriano
los favores concedidos, o los que puede conceder,
encendiéndole una vela blanca
y publicando su nombre y lo mucho que se le agradece.

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