

Of Mirrors, Masks and Concentric Worlds. A Semiotic Analysis of narratives of Bullying and Cyberbullying for Teenagers

Jenny Ponzio

Abstract. This article focuses on the discourses and narratives about bullying and cyberbullying, in particular on the literature proposed to young people to explain and evaluate these phenomena and thus to guide their actions. The study of a representative sample of texts published in Italy (a country where public opinion and institutions seem to pay particular attention to these phenomena) reveals recurring narrative structures and figures (masks, mirrors, isolation and concentricity, martyrdom and redemption). These figures are analyzed through the lens of relevant semiotic concepts and theories, such as Foucault's on the mirror, Bakhtin's on the mask, Eco's on possible worlds, and Lotman's on the semiosphere. In particular, the analysis shows how the narratives of bullying and cyberbullying tend to present a kind of closed and self-referential bubble, isolated from the wider semiosphere and functioning similarly to a deforming mirror or a dysphoric possible world in which the actors involved seem to be trapped.

1. Introduction¹

Bullying and cyberbullying can be interpreted as manifestations of a conflict in the definition of a community's identity, its values, its boundaries, the notion of "normality" that this community embraces, and the relationship between individuals and the group. Of course, these manifestations represent a degenerate way of expressing and regulating these issues, as they involve violence against an individual or a minority.² The dominant and widespread portrayal of bullying and cyberbullying tends to limit it to a circumscribed dimension, to a niche within a broader community. Consequently, in mainstream narratives, bullying and cyberbullying take place elsewhere, so to speak, in a micro-universe that is partly independent of society outside, a sub-community with its own actors, rules, social dynamics and even spaces (e.g. the school, the group of young people, the online community, etc.).

As these brief preliminary remarks suggest, bullying and cyberbullying are relevant phenomena for a semiotics interested in understanding how individuals coexist within groups and what rules underlie the interactions. If semiotics serves as a metalanguage to study these phenomena, it cannot avoid taking into account an ethical dimension, as it must be based on the awareness of the impact of communication and the responsibility of the subjects acting in the semiosphere (Volli 2015). Several studies with a semiotic approach have indeed dealt with bullying and cyberbullying. These studies have mainly focused on the language, signs and discourses that characterize these phenomena (cf. e.g. Wagner and Yu 2021; Bankov 2020). However, the research proposed here takes a different perspective, focusing on the ways in which bullying and cyberbullying are narrated, with an emphasis on texts aimed at teenagers. The latter form

¹ This paper is part of the project NeMoSanctI (nemosancti.eu), which has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 757314). I wish to warmly thank the artists Fabia Mustica, Osvaldo Neirotti, and Maura Scalenghe for giving me permission to reproduce their works in this article. My gratitude also goes to the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments.

² For semiotic studies about violence, see Petrilli and Ponzio (2019); Alonso Aldama, Bertrand and Lancioni (2021). See also Heritier (2024).

an extensive literature that encompasses various textual genres, from comics to graphic novels, from manuals to collections of testimonies. Despite the numerous and relevant formal differences at the superficial textual level, all these texts have the common goal of providing young readers with an axiology, a knowledge and a set of instructions to recognize, evaluate and react to these phenomena. In this sense, they can be considered as relevant texts that orient the sensitivity and actions of a strategic target group, young people at risk of being involved in situations of bullying and cyberbullying.

The considered corpus includes only narratives written and published in Italian. Italy is indeed an interesting case study, because in this country not only public opinion but also institutions seem to be particularly aware of the seriousness of the forms of violence under consideration. It is particularly noteworthy that Italy was the first European country to enact a law against cyberbullying in 2017.³ A year later, the Vatican launched the first World Cyberbullying Observatory, promoted by Pope Francis.⁴ These institutional initiatives find a parallel in the engagement of educators and parents, but also of other cultural subjects, in particular publishing houses and authors. This framework explains the abundance of the literature under consideration, and also some intermingling between the two institutional spheres – the secular and the religious one. These institutional initiatives find a parallel in the commitment of educators and parents, but also of other cultural subjects, especially publishers and authors. This framework explains the wealth of the literature under consideration, and also some overlaps between the two institutional spheres – the secular and the religious. For example, Catholic bookstores offer extensive collections of books on bullying and cyberbullying that are also written and published by secular authors and publishers,⁵ while publishers from religious institutions publish books written by secular educators and authors that depict the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying without overt reference to religion, thus adopting a largely transversal narrative.⁶ The similarity in the treatment of these phenomena by people located in different institutional and cultural components of the Italian semiosphere is confirmed by the narratives analyzed. In general, despite the institutional, cultural or political context in which they may be embedded, the narratives in the literature analyzed share common narrative structures and figures.

In the next section, therefore, I will highlight some of the most common and significant figures in Italian narratives about bullying and cyberbullying aimed at young people. A major issue emerging from these narratives is that the actors involved seem to move in a closed and dysphoric dimension, a hybrid world in which virtual and material reality often overlap.⁷ At first glance, Lotman's theory of the semiosphere (1984) seems useful in explaining this phenomenon: The characters seem to operate in a kind of peripheral niche in the broader semiosphere with its own values and codes. However, as I will argue, the narratives under consideration describe a more radical and immersive situation of closure: They portray a kind of parallel world with no ways out or boundaries that can be crossed. The actors involved are trapped in a self-referential reality that lives and makes sense only in itself and results isolated and alienated from wider society. To describe this specific narrative configuration, I propose to draw on an expanded idea of the "possible world" (Eco 1979).

³ For the statistics of the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying in Italy, and on the 2017 law, see: alleyoop.ilsole24ore.com/2023/06/21/cyberbullismo-legge/; the text of the law is available here: www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/06/3/17G00085/sg; for further information about the Government's initiatives and regulation to contrast bullying and cyberbullying see: www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/bullismo. Consultati il 4 agosto 2024.

⁴ Cfr. archivio.agensir.it/2018/11/08/cyberbullismo-nasce-in-vaticano-losservatorio-mondiale-voluto-da-papa-francesco/; www.romereports.com/en/2019/06/21/vatican-presents-the-first-global-report-on-the-growing-issue-of-cyberbullying/. Consultato il 4 agosto 2024.

⁵ E.g.; www.libreriadelsanto.it/cerca-bulli-0-1/all-0-1. Consultato il 4 agosto 2024.

⁶ E.g. Carù and Santoro (2022) is published by a publishing house linked to a religious institution (the Church of Milan), but the book contains no reference to religion.

⁷ On the one hand, cyberbullying can arise and take place exclusively online, but there is no doubt that its consequences also affect offline aspects of the lives of the actors involved. On the other hand, contemporary forms of bullying can originate in different contexts of the actors' offline lives (e.g. school), but then extend to digital media and the online dimension. For this reason, both phenomena are mentioned in my considerations, despite the respective characteristics and differences between them.

2. Recurring figures in the discourse about bullying and cyberbullying

2.1. Masks

Many of the narratives under consideration make extensive use of the metaphor or figure of the mask. A good example of this is the graphic novel by Fabia Mustica (2023), which depicts a fictional situation of cyberbullying involving a young second-generation homosexual immigrant and his classmates, in particular a popular boy who is confronted with his parents' divorce and a sudden situation of loneliness. A page of Mustica (2023, p. 44) shows the protagonist's crying and expressive face surrounded by white and blank masks (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 – Mustica (2023, p. 44, detail).

A very similar figure can be found in a 2016 documentary by journalist Luca Pagliari, which features high school students. In a book on cyberbullying aimed at the same audience, Pagliari (2018, p. 11, my translation) comments on this figure and explains: “A peculiarity of the documentary is linked to the use of masks, which I had dozens of children wear. They are expressionless masks, they only have round holes instead of eyes and they have no nose or mouth. My intention was not to create masks that could instill fear, but rather to create a feeling of anxiety. Empty masks. [...] There is no face, no humanity, there is no gaze to catch.” The main studies on bullying speak of a form of social contagion that occurs when aggressive actions are imitated, especially when they are proposed by people who are considered leaders or models. This phenomenon leads to a weakening of the inhibition to carry out aggressive actions, as well as of the individual's sense of responsibility, which, together with the feeling of guilt, becomes diffuse and diluted (Olweus 1993). In semiotic terms, it can be said that the individual subject is partially lost in a collective subject to whom responsibility for the persecutory act is delegated. This type of phenomenon, which also characterizes traditional bullying, reaches a higher level in cyberbullying, which entails forms of social contagion that correspond to the dynamics of virality (cf. Marino, Thibault 2016) and the formation of an “e-crowd” (Bankov 2020), where the emphasis on emotional reactions is accompanied by a disengagement of the individual. Indeed, the empty mask is a particularly powerful figure to evoke the presence of a de-individualized and de-responsible crowd. In the examples considered, at the figurative level, the lack of features of the blank mask contrasts with the clean features of the victim, suggesting a strong imbalance of power between the bully and the victim. In cyberbullying in particular, the anonymity of the former contrasts with the exposure – or rather overexposure – of the latter, whose intimate and private sphere is often laid bare.⁸ According to Bakhtin

⁸ It may be interesting to note that the figure of the mask is used not only in the literature under consideration, but also in the academic discourse, e.g.: “Cyberbullying is a faceless denominator, similar to the masks of the

(1965), in medieval popular culture the mask expressed the infinite richness of life, gaiety and play, while in the Romantic grotesque its meaning was associated with dissimulation and deception and thus took on a somber valence. From this historical perspective, the use of the figure of the mask in contemporary narratives of a hostile e-crowd appears as a further elaboration of the grotesque motif, linked to the development of digital media and the related identity issues for individuals living in the dimension of “onlife” (Floridi 2014).

2.2. Isolation and concentricity

A common feature in stories of bullying and cyberbullying is the sense of isolation of the victim, who is often portrayed as trapped in a web of hostile or completely indifferent people. This situation appears even more radical in the stories of cyberbullying: persecution in the virtual dimension of the Internet adds another dimension in which the humiliation can be multiplied by a network of texts that are potentially transmedial and viral and exposed to an indefinite crowd of hostile people protected by anonymity, which makes the victim even more vulnerable and lonely. From this point of view, one can imagine a system consisting of different concentric levels: At the center are the victim and the bully, then a community of people who share the same place of life, then a virtual community of peers who find their social milieu in digital media, and finally the community at large. Another important factor to consider is that the protagonists of the bullying and cyberbullying episodes in the corpus under consideration are very young and the situation they find themselves in carries enormous weight for them. They are unable to recognize the limits and ways out of this dimension, which they interpret as the only possible level of reality.

In an artwork realized by Maura Scalenghe as part of the artist group GoArtFactory,⁹ we find not only the figure of the mask, but also an organization of the topological plane that effectively expresses this idea of concentric universes (Fig. 2): For those trapped in this dysphoric micro-universe, the world outside appears blurred, almost unreal, unattainable, and perhaps even irrelevant.



Fig. 2 – Maura Scalenghe (2020),
“Vessazione”, GoArtFactory.

anonymous, which amplifies harassers’ power. They move forward masked, seldom or never reveal themselves.” (Wagner and Yu 2021, p. 946). For further reflections on the mask and on the idea of concealment in the online forms of life connected to the Internet, see Thibault (2020).

⁹GoArtFactory is an artistic movement that brings art to the people. Its founders are the artist and writer Osvaldo Neirotti and the conductor and composer Giorgio Bolognese. Maura Scalenghe’s work, “Vessazione” was shown in an exhibition that took place in Turin in 2020 on occasion of the National Day Against Bullying and Cyberbullying (www.spaziotorino.it/scatto/?p=20144). Consultato il 4 agosto 2024.

Another example of the thematization of a parallel and dysphoric universe can be found in a passage of a poem collected by Pagliari (2018, p. 61, my translation), written by a girl victim of bullying and cyberbullying:

Try to find out for yourself
This empty city that doesn't know how to involve you
As if I were in a parallel universe
And you see everything as if under a veil
A dirty veil, stained with pain
Then when you come home, you think about how it tasted...

In Carù and Santoro (2022, p. 47, my translation), a handbook for young people affected by bullying and cyberbullying, we find a clear description of the feeling of the suffocating presence of a hostile and mainly anonymous community, which is accompanied by the victim's sense of loneliness:

1. You can be reached always and everywhere and feel that you have no way out
2. You have the feeling that everybody has seen or read the insults directed at you and thinks you are someone to be despised
3. You feel lonely and scared; no one is on your side
4. Often you don't even know by whom you are offended, because cyberbullies act anonymously, so you end up suspecting of everyone
5. You think you can confide in anyone.

On a visual level, Mustica's graphic novel (2023) often uses circumscribing forms to describe cyberbullying: In these images, the victim appears surrounded by the virtual community and prisoner of a dysphoric dimension.

2.3. Mirrors

Another recurring figure is that of the mirror. Mustica (2023) also provides several examples in this sense (see Fig. 3). It is a figure that shares common features with those previously mentioned and thus offers another angle on the imaginary about bullying and cyberbullying, especially when read in the light of Foucault's theory.



Fig. 3 – Mustica (2023, p. 43, detail).



In the 1960s, Foucault expressed with great foresight the sense of living in an age of simultaneity and juxtaposition, in which the experience of the world is no longer a path extending through time, but rather an intertwined network (Foucault 1967, p. 1). He also introduced a reflection on the mirror as an experience that stands halfway between utopia and heterotopia:

The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there. (Foucault 1967, p. 4)

Despite the temporal and cultural distance between the context in which these reflections were formulated and the contemporary phenomena and narratives of bullying and cyberbullying, Foucault's idea of the mirror is useful – almost prophetic – in describing the contemporary reality in which the identity of the individual is defined by a reciprocal relationship between how we are in the real and material world and how we are in the virtual space beyond the screen. In the phenomenon of cyberbullying, these two identities are in a vicious circle, and the damage to one affects the other, creating a sense of alienation and suffering for the victim. As we have seen, cyberbullying is described in many stories and representations within the framework of a delimited world which functions as a sort of dystopia, a dysphoric dimension dominated by injustice, violence and indifference. It is also a timeless world in which this condition is perpetuated in a durative aspectuality in which the victim, at least before the possible turning point leading to the happy ending or the final catastrophes, sees no chances for change. As mentioned above, one could explain this phenomenon by referring to the idea of a niche in the broader semiosphere (Lotman 1984), but the characteristics of extreme closure, self-referentiality and a distorted or at least dysphoric perspective on reality and on social interactions seem to call into question another concept, such as that of the 'possible world'. When I use this term, I refer to the idea that possible worlds are narrative universes endowed with their own properties, values, logics and rules that determine the characteristics of the story on the one hand and orient the reader's interpretation on the other (cf. Eco 1979). Taking the cue from this notion, it can be observed that the stories of bullying and cyberbullying represent a kind of second-degree possible world that shapes the perspective of the victims (and possibly also of the other characters involved). This dysphoric possible world is a static reality, with boundaries that are very difficult to cross. In this closed dimension, certain individuals embody roles that they can hardly change or get rid of (and this applies to both the bully and the victim). From this perspective, this phenomenon appears similar to that of echo chambers in certain aspects. As Lorusso (2018, p. 41, my translation) affirms, on the one hand the web “spreads in a viral way, on the other hand it isolates”, creating echo chambers that entail the risk of deforming reality through “the partiality and the absolutization of one's own partial perception of the world” (Lorusso 2018, p. 42). Nevertheless there are relevant differences. While in the case of echo chambers this distortion arises from the system of preferences (so that the information that is proposed to us coincides with our interests, ideas, tastes, habits, etc.), in the case of the cyberbullying micro-universe, the sphere surrounding one or more people is completely dysphoric. While in the case of the echo chamber, the user is endowed with a form of agency, since the choice of the contents depends on their previous actions, in the case of cyberbullying, the victim has no agency and suffers from the confinement in this dysphoric sphere.

2.4. Martyrdom and redemption

This reflection on the role and actions of the “victim” leads me to introduce a further motif. Mustica’s book (2023) is published by Edizioni San Paolo, a religious publishing house, and the author has also published a graphic novel about the life of a Catholic saint, the young martyr Saint Agatha (Mustica 2016). Consideration of this religious background may lead to the recognition of implicit religious imagery in the graphic novel about cyberbullying. In particular, the depiction of the young protagonist seems to have some martyrological traits: In several illustrations, the boy’s body appears bound and covered only by a cloth around his waist (Figg. 4 and 5).



Fig. 4 – Mustica (2023, p. 40, detail).

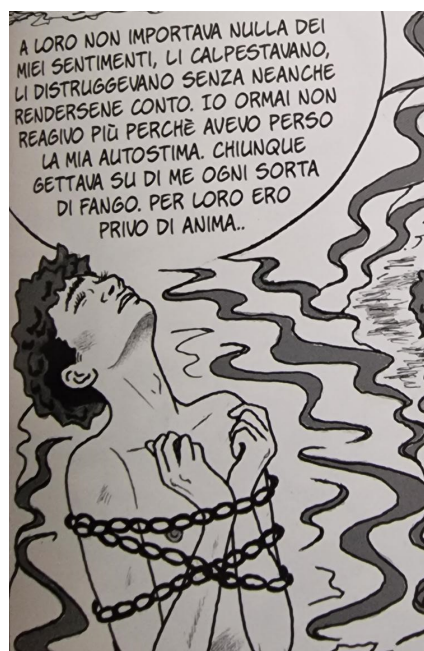


Fig. 5 – Mustica (2023, p. 43, detail).



Parallel to this visual representation, the value of forgiveness is emphasized at the level of narrative structures: it is the victim who helps the persecutor when he is lonely and sad. In the end, the two become friends, but the work of forgiveness and dialogue, which is initially difficult due to the bully's resistance, is attributed to the victim. This imbalance in coping with the bullying situation is not a prerogative of Mustica (2023), but is found in a number of stories aimed at an audience of children and young people. This feature can seem quite surprising, but perhaps being able to forgive the other person and overcome their hostility is a way of not only finding a moral solution to the problem, but also emphasizing the virtues of the victim. The persistence of a saintly and martyrological religious imagery even in secular texts and narratives is the subject of numerous studies, including in the field of semiotics. On the one hand, the use of Christian-Catholic iconography can have a predominantly aesthetic character and/or deprive religious signs of their religious and sacred character.¹⁰ On the other hand, ideas such as martyrdom and sainthood and their associated themes and narrative structures cross the boundaries of religion to be borrowed and reworked in secular culture, of course in different ways (for example, the concept of martyrdom can be extended to secular characters, such as fighters and victims of totalitarian regimes, or to animals in animalistic discourse, etc.).¹¹ In the present case, the implicit reference to religious martyr imagery can be explained precisely as a reference to – and the extension to a new context of – a narrative structure in which there is a victim who is not (or no longer) a passive object of the actions of others, but who affirms and restores his agency and confronts his persecutors in a non-violent and moral way, thus being able to overcome the initial power imbalance that, as mentioned above, characterizes bullying and cyberbullying situations. In the narratives considered, at the point where the story reaches its negative climax, the characters suffering from bullying and cyberbullying are ascribed an undesirable and degrading identity that causes distress and shame.¹² To return to the figures mentioned above: It is as if these characters are prisoners of a distorted reality created by a deforming mirror. But to freely quote a passage from Umberto Eco's reflection on distorting mirrors: "The two universes, of which the first is the threshold of the second, have no points of passage, the border cases of the distorting mirrors are points of catastrophe, *at a certain moment you have to decide, either you are here or you are there.*" (Eco 1979, p. 49, my translation, my italics). In the stories examined, the protagonists are called upon to make precisely this effort by deciding on their point of view, their perspective and their focus: At the climax of the catastrophe, they decide to reject the image of themselves reflected in the distorting mirror, to regain their agency and (re)build themselves as semiotic subjects. Therefore, this type of story exhibits a narrative structure of redemption, which shows the progressive restoration of subjectivity based on the decision to react, break out of the dystopian world and be reborn, through a path that is often difficult and always based on moral values and actions that eventually turn the protagonist into a positive hero.

3. Conclusion

The discourses on bullying and cyberbullying, and in particular the literature dedicated to young people who report, evaluate and try to overcome these social problems, tend to present these situations as creating a kind of degenerated echo chamber, a dysphoric possible world made up of rigid roles and animated by negative passions. The solutions generally proposed for this situation are initially aimed at improving the competence of both the victim and the bully: The texts considered seek to increase self-awareness and understanding of the other, as well as to clarify the moral and sometimes legal implications of bullying and cyberbullying. Secondly, the victim is encouraged to take an active role by initiating a dialogue with the bully or sharing their problem with a trusted person, especially their parents or teachers. A useful concept to frame this type of narrative is that of "semiotic ecology" (Volli 1991; 2015). If semiospheres are complex sets of interactions between different subjects, it is useful to examine

¹⁰ See on this subject Dondero (2007).

¹¹ For semiotic reflections about the idea of martyrdom and the use of martyrological themes outside the borders of the traditional religious culture, see in particular the essays collected in Ponzo (2018), but also Ponzo (2024a).

¹² For further reflection and bibliography on the pathemic configuration of shame, see Ponzo (2024b).



the conditions for maintaining their functioning and identity. This idea expressed by Volli (2015) is in line with Lotman's original idea of the semiosphere (1984), a term famously reminiscent of the 'biosphere'. In this sense, the issues of bullying and cyberbullying can be seen as problematic factors that challenge the functioning of certain semiospheres, their semiotic ecology, with aggressive and violent discourses and practises, with the consequence of creating a kind of separate dimension that functions as a dystopian and self-referential bubble inhabited by individuals who end up being excluded from the broader semiosphere. The maintenance of the semiotic ecology is the responsibility of the subjects acting within the semiosphere. The narratives addressed to young people certainly fulfill this function. They express this idea through a series of recurring figures and suggest ways to break through these bubbles and reintegrate the involved subjects into the broader semiosphere. Semiotics can raise critical awareness of these cultural dynamics, and the discourses, narrative structures and figures associated with them. Developing such an approach is consistent with recognising the ethical role of semioticians as subjects who – together with numerous other social and cultural actors – are called to participate in the work of preserving the semiotic ecology of the semiosphere in which they live.



References

Within the text, the year in bibliographical references refers to the original language edition, while page number cross-references refer to the Italian translation, if listed in references.

- Alonso Aldama, J., Bertrand, D., Lancioni, T., eds., 2021, *Sémiotique de la violence, Actes Sémiotiques*, n. 125.
- Bakhtin, M., 1965, *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaia Kul'tura Srednevekob'ia i Renessansa*, Moscow, Khudozhestvennaia literatura.
- Bankov, K., 2020, "Cyberbullying and hate speech in the debate around the ratification of the Istanbul convention in Bulgaria: a semiotic analysis of the communication dynamics", in *Social semiotics*, n. 30, pp. 344-364.
- Carù, R., and Santoro, L., 2022 [2013], *Bullstop. Come difenderti e uscire da bullismo e cyberbullismo*, Milan, ITL.
- Dondero, M. G., 2007, *Fotografare il sacro. Indagini semiotiche*, Rome, Meltemi.
- Eco, U., 1979, *Lector in fabula*, Milan, Bompiani.
- Floridi, L., 2014, *The Fourth Revolution. How the Infosphere is Reshaping Human Reality*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Foucault, M., 1967, "Des espaces autres", conference published in 1984 in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, n. 5, pp. 46-49; trad. eng. "Of other spaces. Utopias and Heterotopias", in *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité* October 1984, pp. 1-9.
- Heritier, P., 2024, "Hate Speech Anthropologies. Evil, Democracy and Social Media: between Popper and Girard", in A. Wagner, S. Marusek, *Handbook on Cyber Hate, The Modern Cyber Evil*, Springer, forthcoming.
- Lorusso, A., 2018, *Postverità*, Bari-Rome, Laterza.
- Lotman, J., 1984, "O semisfere", in *Trudy po znanoknym sistemam*, n. 17, pp. 11-24.
- Marino, G., Thibault, M., eds., 2016, *Viralità - Virality, Lexia*, n. 25-26.
- Mustica, F., 2016, *Agata. Storia di una santa*, Cinisello Balsamo, Edizioni San Paolo.
- Mustica, F., 2023, *L'amico diverso. Una storia di cyberbullismo*, Cinisello Balsamo, Edizioni San Paolo.
- Olweus, D., 1993, *Bullying at school. What we know and what we can do*, Oxford (UK)-Cambridge (MA), Blackwell.
- Pagliari, L., 2018, *Cyberbullismo. Le storie vere di chi lo ha affrontato*, Loreto, La Spiga Edizioni.
- Petrilli, S., and Ponzio, A., 2019, *Identità e alterità. Per una semiotica della comunicazione globale*, Milan, Mimesis.
- Ponzo, J., 2018, ed., *Semiotica del martirio-Semiotics of martyrdom, Lexia*, n. 31-32.
- Ponzo, J., 2024a, "Saintly animals: a semiotic perspective on changing models of sanctity and personhood", in *Ocula*, forthcoming.
- Ponzo, J., 2024b, "Body-shaming e vergogna: una prospettiva semiotica", in M. A. Gallina, P. Borgna, T. Parisi, eds., *Cyberbullismo e body-shaming (on-line). Italia e Romania*, Rosenberg & Sellier, forthcoming.
- Thibault, M., 2020, "The Mask and the Lock. Techniques of Concealment and Secrecy in the Pheripheries of the Web", in *Versus*, n. 130, 1, pp. 89-104.
- Volli, U., 1991, *Apologia del silenzio imperfetto*, Milano, Feltrinelli.
- Volli, U., 2015, "Dalla censura alla semioetica", in *Lexia*, n. 21-22, pp. 15-34.
- Wagner, A., Yu, W., 2021, "Machiavellian Apparatus of Cyberbullying: Its Triggers Igniting Fury With Legal Impacts", in *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law*, n. 34, pp. 945-963.