

INTERDISCIPLINARY

JOURNAL for

GERMANIC  
LINGUISTICS

and

SEMIOTIC

ANALYSIS

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International and Area Studies

University of California, Berkeley

Berkeley, California

**T**he INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL FOR GERMANIC LINGUISTICS AND SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS (IJGLSA) is an innovative biannual journal which reaches out to the international community of researchers in two disciplines. While maintaining the integrity of each field, their appearance side-by-side, on the one hand, adds a new Post-modern focus to Germanic Linguistics and opens the door to its place among related humane and natural sciences in keeping with the holistic trends of contemporary research. On the other hand, research in the affable discipline of Semiotics, the general science of signification, finds its closest allied sister science in linguistics. Yet the specification of "Germanic" prevents the total merger/assimilation of these two disciplines, which would be a real possibility with simply "Linguistics." This journal proposes a bold experiment in the actual instantiation of the clustering of Germanic Linguistics and Semiotic Analysis.

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**G**ermanic Linguistics subsumes principally German, Yiddish, English, Frisian, Scandinavian, Netherlandic, as well as their genetic affiliation, Indo-European, and thus the numerous proximate and distal languages and cultures with which the Germanic languages interdigitate in the present as well as the past. Semiotic Analysis studies all of life as a perfusion of signs and symbols whose purpose is to communicate. Whether the signs and symbols are medical symptoms or vital signs, political codes or flag symbols, the sounds of music or of animals (human and non-human), clothes that make a fashion statement or money that talks, body language or the language of poetry, an enticing taste or an intimate touch, they all demonstrate that the human experience is essentially one of endless sending and receiving of messages by means of signs and symbols.

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## On Inventing the Enemy: Lies and Irony in Eco's Fiction

*In Memory of Carlos Fuentes*  
(1928-2012)

ABSTRACT: The subject of the fabrication of the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* in Eco's last novel, *The Prague Cemetery* (2011), is already present in *Foucault's Pendulum* (1989), his second novel. Looking beyond this direct link I saw an oblique correspondence between *The Prague Cemetery* and *The Name of the Rose* (1983), Eco's first novel. I noticed the closing of a cycle, the completion of a figure. Eco's essay on "Inventing the Enemy" (2012) gave me the first clue. The *Protocols* are the emblematic example of the invention of an enemy, and 'invented enemies' abound in *The Name of Rose*. But there is another less conspicuous 'enemy' in these novels, one that concerns the very fabric of signification. The question of the production and reception of deceptive systems of belief led me back to Nietzsche's reflections on language and rhetoric. His insights allowed me to think anew the tie between the novelist who reaffirms the value of the theory of signs — the study of "*everything which can be used to lie*" — and the semiotician who uses the artifice of art to reflect on the relation between fiction and history, between language and the real.

In the conclusion of *Literary Theory*, Terry Eagleton advises that sometimes "what might prove more useful will not be the criticism or enjoyment of other people's discourse but the production of one's own" (185); Mallarmé thought that the destiny of the world is to become a book ("Tout, au monde, existe pour aboutir à un livre"). For the student of signs the world is already a book, and our destiny is to learn to decipher it. Eco turned his formidable erudition and semiotic insights into enthralling novels that enrich imagination with the rigors of theory, and the rigors of theory with the joy of imagination.

Much like a detective, a semiotician is on the lookout for unusual signs and ponders their significance. To sustain the unpredictability of detective

fiction, a writer creates a complex system of conjectures around a series of enigmatic signs. *The Name of The Rose* follows the mystery of a forbidden book hidden in a medieval library. Similarly, *The Prague Cemetery* starts with a series of conjectures concerning the identity of the protagonist, Simone Simonini.

At the beginning of the novel Simonini doesn't know if he is two persons — Simonini and Abbé Dalla Piccola — or if for some inexplicable reason Abbé Dalla Piccola, a priest whom he never sees, comes at times to his apartment from an adjacent apartment “linked by a more or less secret corridor” (26). Is he suffering from selective amnesia and split personality — à la Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde? If so, what is the cause of this duplicitous psychopathology? Or are we in the realm of the fantastic and Simonini is two persons at once?<sup>1</sup>

To find the answers to these questions “the Reader” will have to follow the story of Simonini's life as “the Narrator” looks over the shoulder of “an elderly figure [...] writing what we are about to read.” And what we are about to read are the entries that Simonini and at times Dalla Piccola make in their diary, “which the Narrator will summarize from time to time, so as not to unduly bore the Reader” (4). This diary is also the only channel of communication between Simonini and Dalla Piccola.

This multiple framing distances the narrator character (Simonini/Dalla Piccola) from the fictional author (the Narrator) and from the empirical author (Eco). It is a variation of the series of frames which, in *The Name of the Rose*, separate Adso's original Latin manuscript (an elderly man writing about an adventure of youth) from previously printed (fictional) translations, and from Eco, who plays the dual role of fictional transcriber and empirical author. It is ‘history’ made of a patchwork of fictions.

*The Name of the Rose* and *The Prague Cemetery* are both historical novels. *The Name of the Rose* reconstructs life in a medieval abbey, a fictive-historical microcosm where the description of historical events is less important than the re-creation, and re-examination, of a medieval mind-set. The semiotic frontiers of *The Prague Cemetery* are not as clearly defined. The main events take place in Europe, mostly in France and Italy during the second half of the 19th century. Some memories of historical

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events reach as far as Napoleon's invasion of the Kingdom of Piedmont. The story ends in 1898.

In a certain way *The Prague Cemetery* also re-creates a mentality, but this one is not as clearly definable. Simonini's mind is an amalgam of the multifaceted mind-set that, in one way or another, contributed to the *Protocols*. This fictional Simonini (because there was a real Simonini, as we shall see), a character abandoned by his mother and brought up by an anti-Semitic grandfather, claims authorship of the *Protocols*: "I have constructed my Prague cemetery, stone by stone (you might say)" (430). In reality, the *Protocols*, a bogus account of a Jewish world-conspiracy, was most likely assembled, or commissioned to be assembled, at the end of the eighteenth hundreds by Pyotr Rachkovsky, the chief of the Russian secret service (the Okhrana).

Booklet versions of the *Protocols* were printed in Russia in the early nineteenth hundreds. It wasn't until 1905, in the third Russian edition of Sergey Nilus's *The Great in the Small: The Antichrist Is an Imminent Political Possibility*, that a fully fleshed version of the *Protocols* was able to reach a wider public. Nilus's *Protocols* became the source of most non-Russian translations. Purportedly authored by a leader of a secret Jewish government (the Elders of Zion), a set of 24 "Protocols" portray a nocturnal gathering of high-ranking representatives who scheme, among other things, to take over the financial, political, educational, and religious institutions of the world.

In one of the earliest models for the *Protocols*, Hermann Gödsche's novel *Biarritz* (1868), the Elders were envoys of the twelve tribes of Israel who assembled in the Prague cemetery to plan the world takeover. In 1881 Gödsche's fictional account would be attributed to British diplomat, Sir John Readcliff, as something that had really happened. "In 1896 François Bournard included the arguments of the Great Rabi (who this time is called John Readclif) in his book *Les Juifs, nos contemporains*" (Eco 2005:vi).

Summaries of the inception as well as the bizarre and often contradictory argument of the *Protocols* can be found in Cohn (60-65) and Eco (1994:136-37).<sup>2</sup> This is also the subject of *The Plot: The Secret Story of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a graphic narrative by Will Eisner

intended to reach a wider, and perhaps younger, audience. In his introduction to Eisner's book Eco writes: "That this fake was produced by a number of secret services and police of at least three countries, assembled from a collage of different texts, is by now a well-known fact. [...] But what no one noticed was that Gödsche had done nothing but copy a scene for Joseph Balsamo" (2004:v-vi).

The subject of the *Protocols* has long interested Eco. It is discussed in considerable detail in *Foucault's Pendulum*—starting from Barruel and the real Simonini (we shall have more to say about them) to the first, incomplete, version of the *Protocols* published in *Znamia* (St. Petersburg, 1903). In *Foucault's Pendulum* Eco describes Nilus as "half guru, the kind that runs off with the collection plate, and half hermit, the kind that yells that the end is near" (1988:394-407). Some years later, in "Fictional Protocols," Eco would offer a thorough picture of the Protocol's sources (1994:135-38).

In this essay, Eco calls attention to the scene in Alexandre Dumas' novel *Joseph Balsamo* (1849) where Dumas describes a meeting in Thunder Mountain (Mont Tonnerre) between Cagliostro and leaders of Masonic lodges from around the world. There, Cagliostro and "other Masonic conspirators [...] hatch the 1785 Diamond Necklace Affair and, with the scandal, create the right climate for the French Revolution" (Eco 2004:vi). Simonini gets the idea for the *Protocols* after reading this novel as a young man; it would become the initial stimulus of his "life's work" (427).

"Let us imagine conspirators who come from every part of the world and represent the tentacles of their sect spread through every country. Let us assemble them in a forest clearing, a cave, a castle, a cemetery or a crypt, provided it is reasonably dark. Let us get one of them to pronounce a discourse that sets out the plan and the intention to conquer the world..." It is from Dumas that Simonini learns of the need to invent an enemy. "No one believes their misfortunes are attributable to any shortcomings of their own; that is why they must find a culprit. Dumas offers, to the frustration of everyone (individuals as well as countries), the explanation for their failure. It was someone else, on Thunder Mountain, who planned your ruin" (78).

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In "Inventing the Enemy" Eco lists a number of notorious "enemies," supporting his observations with long quotes from historical documents.<sup>3</sup> "Enemies are *different* from us and observe customs that are not our own," he explains succinctly (3). The following are among the enemies he mentions: the Jew, the Negro, the gypsy, the heretic, the female, the witch, and the migrant. We should add another conspicuous "enemy" Eco does not mention, one that enriched and made possible the progress of Europe, an enemy that was meant for extermination: the American Indian.

Three of these "enemies" feature prominently in *The Name of the Rose*: 1) The "heretic" — heresy is a major theme in the book. 2) The female: Ubertino, a Franciscan friar, instructs young Adso that "it is through woman that the Devil penetrates men's hearts!" (225). 3) The witch — the Inquisition arrests Adso's peasant lover and burns her. Ubertino explains to him: "if you look at her and feel desire, that alone makes her a witch," (330). In "Inventing the Enemy" Eco adds: "For the male who dominates and writes, or by writing dominates, the woman has always been portrayed with hostility from the earliest times" (10). It is a curious analogy that the Native Americans did not have writing systems and were thus defenseless against the usurping power of the property title.

Humor does not make Eco's list of invented enemies, but as Ubertino explains, "heresy survives even the destruction of the heretics" (225), and laughter, as we will see, is the worst heresy.

### Lessons and Mystery of *The Name of the Rose*

Perhaps because it includes the uncertainties and contradictions of life in the description of a historical period, *The Name of the Rose* has become a useful pedagogical tool for historians and historiographers.<sup>4</sup> Eco's engaging reconstruction of the atmosphere and mentality of a Middle Ages abbey brings to a historical subject characters that are faced with choices, much as we are in life. Sustaining the possibility of uncertain outcomes refutes the idea of history as a two-way, reversible process.

Historians, like novelists, work with texts to generate texts. The description of long-term historical processes, *la longue durée*, requires working with texts and organizing (interpreting, transposing) recorded

events into another sign system.<sup>5</sup> The historical novelist recognizes that the content is inextricably tied to the form of expression, to the level of system, and tries to give the reconstruction of the past a form that responds as much to the narrative exigencies as to the “accuracy” of representation.

Ostensibly a translation of a translation, *The Name of the Rose* gives a new twist to the genre of detective fiction. Eco’s “detective” is a Franciscan friar and former inquisitor, William of Baskerville (a name reminiscent of Conan Doyle’s *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and, metonymically, of Sherlock Holmes and the power of deduction). His young assistant, Adso of Melk (Watson), is the story’s narrator. Using deductive reasoning William tries to solve the mystery of a series of inexplicable deaths in the abbey. Misleading signs lead to a labyrinthine library hiding a forbidden book. The allusion to Borges’ story “The Library of Babel” (“La biblioteca de Babel,” 1941) is all but explicit.

Holding the keys to the mystery is a blind librarian, a humorless old monk, Jorge of Burgos. Jorge Luis Borges, too, went blind and worked as a librarian. Making a humorless librarian named Jorge the villain of his novel is an ironic homage to a writer who thanked God for the “magnificent irony” of granting him “both the gifts of books and the night” (Borges 809). Perhaps no other writer has had a deeper influence on both the theoretical and creative aspects of Eco’s work.

William solves the mystery almost by accident. The old librarian has poisoned the pages of the book so that any curious monk who reads it would die (the assumption is that the reader would moisten his index finger with his tongue in order to flip the pages). Chased by William and Adso through the winding library, the librarian manages to set it on fire and is consumed by the flames. A monk by the name of Morimondo voices: “The library is on fire!” In “Prelude to a Palimpsest” (1988), Eco observes that when he selected the name of this monk — which evokes both death (*mori*) and world (*mondo*) — he was unaware that the monk’s scream would signal “the fall of the abbey as a microcosm” (xi).

The subject of this fatal book is laughter, a reference to the lost second book of Aristotle’s *Poetics* dedicated to comedy (the first part, on tragedy, is extant). In the final pages we listen to a long dialogue about the benefits



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and dangers of laughter. William points out that laughter can even cure an illness ("Lycurgus had a statue erected to laughter" [477]); for Jorge, who represents the ethos of the church, laughter is a "mystery desecrated for the plebeians," one that has a special place and a specific function:

Laughter is weakness, corruption, the foolishness of our flesh. It is the peasant's entertainment, the drunkard's license; even the church in her wisdom has granted the moment of feast, carnival, fair, this diurnal pollution that releases humors and distracts other desires and ambitions. [...] In their "saturnalia," the plebeians revel in their "foul parodies of order." [...] Laughter "frees the villein from the fear of the Devil, because in the feast of fools the Devil also appears poor and foolish, and therefore controllable (474).

Laughter is permissible, even encouraged, in a sanctioned sphere. But when this function is reversed and laughter is "elevated to art," when laughter becomes the "object of philosophy and of perfidious theology," as it ostensibly happens in Aristotle's book, then it becomes a foul expression of the human spirit, a sin which must be suppressed, or even purged. Laughter, moved by that insidious rhetorical device which inverts the expected, becomes a dangerous enemy.

Freedom from fearing the devil should not be confused with wisdom, adds Jorge. True wisdom lies in conforming to the dogmas of the church, to the prevalent order — which at the mythological level of the novel is a metaphor for any repressive ideology. Laughter is an enemy capable of bringing down an established order, as it in fact does: a forbidden book on laughter, ironically, is the direct cause of the fire that destroys the abbey.

A precise reversal of Jorge's belief can be found in Part Four of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* (1892): "What has so far been the greatest sin here on earth? Was it not the word of him who said, 'Woe unto those who laugh here?'" (293). It is not surprising that the subject of laughter would lead to Nietzsche, since it is Nietzsche who made laughter a central question of philosophy. "All good things approach their goal crookedly. Like cats, they arch their backs, they purr inwardly over their approaching happiness: all good things laugh" (294).<sup>6</sup>

Nowhere in Nietzsche's work is the subject of laughter treated more extensively than in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, his best known and arguably most important book. The kernel of Nietzschean laughter can be traced back to one of his earliest essays. Life itself is the greatest irony, he reminds us in "On The Pathos of Truth" (1872). Reflecting on the greatness of true *philosophers*, and he is thinking primarily of Heraclitus, he taunts our individuality: "While the common man regards this bit of existence with such morbid seriousness, those on the journey to immortality knew how to respond with an Olympian laugh, or at least with sublime disdain; often they went to their graves with irony — for what did they have to bury?" (6-7).

The link between laughter and irony, understood broadly, unfolds in Nietzsche's work. In *The Gay Science* (1882), the book immediately preceding *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche exalts the artistic value of gaiety, which can rescue us from "the prejudice" of seriousness. "The lonely human beast always seems to lose its good spirits when it thinks well; it becomes serious" (257). And in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), Nietzsche daringly ranks philosophers according to their laughter: "I should actually risk an order of rank among philosophers depending on the rank of their laughter — all the way up to those capable of *golden* laughter. [...] Gods enjoy mockery: it seems they cannot suppress laughter even during holy rites" (232).

But the mysterious deaths leading to a book on laughter is not the only mystery in *The Name of the Rose*. "In a riddle for which the answer is chess," asks Borges, "what is the only word that cannot be mentioned?" In Eco's novel the word rose is only mentioned once — in the last sentence of Adso's manuscript and of the novel itself: *Stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus*. This Latin line from a poem by Bernard of Morlay, a twelfth-century Benedictine, is hard to translate. The following paraphrase is intended to illustrate some of Eco's points: *Only the naked name remains of the pristine rose.*<sup>7</sup> For Adso, an old man recalling distant events which include his first love, it means paradise lost.

"It is curious that in America and the United Kingdom," observes Eco in a note to the first chapter of *Postscript to The Name of the Rose* (1983),

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"the Latin verse reminded many reviewers of *Romeo and Juliet*." These readers had in mind Juliet's question: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet" (2.2). "Bernard might have agreed with Shakespeare that words are arbitrary labels," but, as Eco points out, "the sense of Juliet's words is exactly the opposite of Bernard's. Shakespeare suggests that names do not matter and do not affect the thing-in-itself;" [...] Bernard's implies that "what remains of the real (?) rose (if any) is precisely this evanescent, powerful, fascinating, magical name" (83, 3n).

By inviting reflection on these kinds of questions, *The Name of the Rose* opens much wider questions than the mystery of a whodunit surrounding a series of deaths. These questions are at the heart of Nietzsche's thought. He reminds us of the gap that separates things from words, and truth from conceptual structures built on words. His early attempts to reveal, and revolve, the falsity of these invented orders resemble a postmodern operation at the heart of both *The Name of the Rose* and *The Prague Cemetery*.

Nietzsche develops some of these ideas in "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense" (1873), an essay written during his tenure as a Professor of Rhetoric at the University of Basel, Switzerland (1869-1878).

### What Is a Word?

"What is a word? The portrayal [*Abbildung*] of nerve stimuli in sounds.<sup>8</sup> But to conclude from a nerve stimulus to a cause outside ourselves is already the result of a false and unjustified application of the law of causality [...] 'The stone is hard' [we say], as if 'hard' were known to us otherwise than as a subjective stimulation! [...] The various languages, juxtaposed, show that what words are never really concerned with truth, never with adequate expression; otherwise there would not be so many languages." Language is disconnected with "the 'thing-in-itself,' (which would be pure, disinterested truth)" (248), unconcerned with "what is "true in itself, real and universally valid, apart from man" (251).

There are, however, Nietzsche tells us, ways to access the truth hidden by the obligation to 'lie' according to social conventions built on sign systems. "Intuitions," "first" or "sudden impressions," can reach the "es-

sence of things;" any "concrete" or "intuitive metaphor [...] is individual and unique and therefore always eludes any commentary." In contrast, language can only express the "relations of things" by way of the "boldest metaphors." This is the realm of distortion, of lies, of "the great structure of concepts" or "schemata" (248-50).

Nietzsche makes us aware that words are metaphors of metaphors, translations of sensory stimuli detached from the entities they designate. "First, [the creator of language] translates a never stimulus into an image! That is the first metaphor. Then the image must be reshaped into a sound! The second metaphor. And each time there is a complete overlapping of spheres — from one sphere to the center of a totally different, new one" (248-49). "Like sound in the sand-figure," he writes alluding to Ernst Chladni's visual method of showing sound, "so the mysterious *x* of the thing appears first as a nerve stimulus, then as an image, and finally as sound" (249).<sup>9</sup>

This observation, which Nietzsche made as a young professor at Basel, would continue to inform his later thought. Consider the following notes from *The Will to Power* (1883-88): "First *images*—to explain how images arise in the mind. Then *words*, applied to images. Finally *concepts*, possible only when there are words—a subsuming of many images under something not intuitive but audible (a word). [...] That weak sensations are regarded as alike, sensed *as being the same*, is the fundamental fact. Thus confusion of two sensations; but *who* is taking note?" (Note 506:275, 1884). "The development of reason is adjustment, invention, with the aim of making similar, equal—the same process that every sense impression goes through!" (Note 515:278, 1888).

Words and concepts generalize the "absolutely individualized original experience" (1873:249). "A uniformly valid and binding terminology for things is invented and the legislation of language also enacts the first laws of truth" (247). "What is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphisms, in short, a sum of human relations which were poetically and rhetorically heightened, transferred, and adorned, and after long use seem solid, canonical, and binding to a nation" (1873:249-50).

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In the realm of schematizing “something is possible that might never succeed under the intuited first impressions: to build a pyramidal order according to castes and classes, a new world of laws, privileges, subordinations, boundary determinations” — an immense planking of societal obligations, a collective and mandatory lie to which man clings his whole life “in order to preserve himself” (250). Our own “convictions,” writes Carlos Fuentes, “have a tendency to become our prisons. [...] To break out of prison: perhaps this is the action that Nietzsche suggests we take against received truths, against complacency, against the notion of existence as mere accident or carelessness” (2005:283).

As a “*rational*” being, man “puts his actions under the rule of abstractions” (250). We cannot eliminate the systems imposed on us by default, but we can dismantle them critically and reinvent them with reflective creativity. This, I think, is the essence of Nietzschean irony, a concept that would resurface years after his death adapted to postmodernist thought. “When [the liberated intellect] smashes apart [the great structure of concepts], scattering it, and then ironically puts it together again, joining the most remote and separating the closest, he reveals that he does not need the emergency aid of poverty, and he is now guided not by concepts but by intuitions” (1873:255).

In the third volume on *Nietzsche*, Heidegger discusses the development of Nietzsche’s “*sole thought*.” “Nietzsche thought eternal recurrence of the same at an earlier time than he did will to power. For when he thinks for the first time, each thinker thinks his sole thought to its completion, though not yet its full unfolding; that is, not yet in the dangerousness that always grows beyond it and must first be borne out” (1961:10). This is a keen insight into the development of a thought, or what we perhaps may call the figure of a thought.

But Nietzsche certainly didn’t have a sole thought — some of his thoughts would unfold, as we said, many years after his death. The ironic reconstruction of great conceptual structures would inform a postmodern device used by Eco and other contemporary writers. “Postmodernity is a kind of extended footnote to the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche” writes Eagleton in the “Afterword” to the Anniversary Edition of *Literary Theory*

(1996:201). "Some men are born posthumously," Nietzsche said more than once. Eagleton's judgment, a century later, justifies this prophecy.

In one of the last chapters of the *Postscript to The Name of the Rose*, "Postmodernism, Irony, the Enjoyable," Eco gives credit to "the American theorists of postmodernism" for the rediscovery not only of plot but also of enjoyability" (1983:64). He draws a contrast between the avant-garde (modernity) and the postmodern. The modern destroys the past, Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* is an example; it even destroys its own recreations, leading to the abolition of the flow of discourse, to the white canvas (Malevich), or to silence (Cage).

The time comes when the modern can go no further "because it has produced a metalanguage that speaks of its impossible texts (conceptual art). The postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognizing that the past, since it cannot be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence, must be revisited: but with irony, not innocently" (1983:67).

### **Everything That Can Be Used to Lie**

Before I had finished reading the first two chapters of *The Prague Cemetery* it occurred to me that Eco may have, after all, found and put into practice the lost book on comedy at the center of the detective riddle of *The Name of the Rose*. *The Prague Cemetery* starts with one of Eco's 'signature lists.' The Narrator describes the contents of a Parisian junk shop "that a faded sign extolled as *Brocantage the Qualité*" (2). Soon after he had me laughing at stereotype-spewing mentality embodied by the narrator. Here are some of Simonini's thoughts:

"A German produces on average twice the feces of a Frenchman. Hyperactivity of the bowel at the expense of the brain, which demonstrates their physiological inferiority" (6). The French "think the whole world speaks French;" some of their academicians "took it for granted that Caligula, Cleopatra and Julius Caesar would have written their letters in French" (10). The Neapolitans and Sicilians "took the worst of each of their hybrid forebears—laziness from the Saracens, savagery from the Swabians, and from the Greeks, indecision and a taste for losing themselves in idle talk until they have split a hair into four" (12). "Jesuits are Masons dressed

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up as women" (14). "Women are just substitute for the solitary vice, except that you need more imagination" (16).

"In inspiring the pleasure of the ridiculous, [comedy] arrives at the purification of that passion," reads William from Aristotle's forbidden treatise hidden in Jorge's library. "We will show," he continues, flipping the pages of the poisoned book with a gloved hand, "how the ridiculousness of actions is born from the likening of the best to the worst and vice versa" (467). *The Name of the Rose* offers this example of "that insidious figure of speech that rhetors call irony," which the young narrator at one point recognizes in William's unmarked speech, "not prefaced by the *pronunciatio*, representing its signal and justification—something William never did" (145). Irony, as dissimulation, becomes a lie. "How are we to overcome irony's dissimulation, which would equal the exigency of truth?" Carlos Fuentes asks Nietzsche in *Federico en su balcón* (2012). "Through art," answers Federico Nietzsche, "which uses irony only to destroy it," for the mask of irony is equal to the desire for truth (65).<sup>10</sup>

It has been variously said that *The Name of the Rose* is a creative expression of applied semiotics; this may be so, but it clearly contains numerous examples of what could be called applied or meta-rhetoric. It is *The Prague Cemetery*, however, which brings us closer to Eco's definition of semiotics. In *A Theory of Semiotics (Trattato di semiotica generale, 1975)*, Eco defines semiotics as "the discipline studying everything which can be used to lie." He adds, "I think that the definition of a 'theory of the lie' should be taken as a pretty comprehensive program for a general semiotics" (*A Theory of Semiotics* 7). This famous definition has been interpreted — and misinterpreted—in many ways.

Semiotic systems where signs act as substitutes for something else, such as verbal or visual modes of representation, can easily be used to lie.<sup>11</sup> Just as the label 'honest' doesn't make a person honest—and I am paraphrasing Nietzsche—the word 'leaf' is not "the cause of leaves" (1873:249). In a very practical sense, the awareness that words and representational systems "lie" can be a useful and liberating notion. As Thomas Pynchon's forgetful PI remembers in *Inherent Vice* (2009), "the word is not the thing, the map is not the territory" (194).

Labels replace the effort to understand people who are different from us. This can be as seemingly harmless as making fun of the eccentric,<sup>12</sup> and as dangerous as the adherence to belief systems which result in hostile and often-violent acts towards the other: xenophobia, chauvinism, misogyny, etc. Ignoring the distinction between sign systems and truth has led to horrible lies—an ignorance that has sparked hostility ever since language helped mark differences among people and among groups of people. The history of the myth that informs *The Prague Cemetery*, for instance, extends far beyond the early nineteenth-century scope of the novel. “The fantasy of Jews as a brotherhood of evil was first conceived between the second and fourth centuries,” writes Cohn, “as a device for immunizing Christians against the attractions of the parent religion” (253).

One of the precursors of the myth of the Jewish world-conspiracy in the nineteenth century was Captain Giovanni Battista Simonini, the mysterious author of a letter to the Abbé Barruel, author of the *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* which warns of the dangers of “the Judaic sect” (Cohn:27). History tells us little else about this man; Eco puts him at the epicenter of the creation of an anti-Semitic myth. Captain Simonini, an officer during the Napoleonic invasion of Piedmont, becomes the grandfather and ideological mentor of the novel’s narrator.

Simone Simonini, the fictional grandson, turns out to be a professional counterfeiter — a useful skill in a time when the authenticity, or appearance of authenticity, of handwritten documents had great value. Wherever there is a need to counterfeit a valuable document — a will, let’s say — Simonini is there to offer his services. He extends the scope of his skills and becomes a spy. An epitomical double agent, he moves in the no man’s land of espionage and counterespionage, of the making of disinformation for political gain and profit, a world populated by historical characters who do and say things much stranger than fiction.

In 1860 Simonini accompanies Dumas on board the *Emma* to meet with Garibaldi’s Thousand in Sicily. In 1871 he witnesses the horrific short-lived days of the Paris Commune. In his journeys he comes across many of the (historical) people directly or indirectly associated with what would become his “life’s work,” that is, concocting and disseminating the



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*Protocols*. He gets the chance to realize his dream when agents of Czarist Russia ask him to help assemble the fake document in their efforts to stop social unrest.

The major people associated with the *The Protocols* during the nineteenth century come to life in the novel, from Maurice Joly who wrote an allegory attacking Napoleon III to Osman Bey, “an international crook of Jewish origin whose real name was Millinger” and author of *The World Conquest by the Jews*, published in Basel in 1873 (Cohn:57). There are also peripheral characters. Dostoyevsky’s name comes up in a conversation: that “master of rhetoric,” who, “by professing and understanding, a sympathy, dare I say respect, for the Jews: ‘Am I too perhaps an enemy of the Jews. Might it be that I am an enemy of that unfortunate race?’” [proceeds to] “show how this unfortunate race seeks to destroy the Christian world” (333-34).<sup>13</sup>

Simonini drafts his *Protocols* in the context of what would become the most sensational legal case in French history: the Dreyfus Affair. Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a young artillery officer of Jewish descent, was falsely accused of treason. Behind this scapegoating was the fear that France’s Catholic identity was losing ground to the ‘equality’ that the Revolution had brought about—“except for those poor folks in the ghetto” (Eco 2011:352). A twelve-year struggle to prove Dreyfus’s innocence and free him would ensue. These efforts forced Émile Zola into exile after he published an open letter accusing the French government of anti-Semitism (“J’accuse,” 1898).

By mixing historical and fictional events Eco’s novel thematizes the way in which the *Protocols* were put together. Among the fictional influences of the *Protocols* is the work of Léo Taxil, a French satirist and journalist who “wanted to be crowned king of hoaxers” (Eco 2011:406). And he did so at the expense of both the Church and the Masons, as well as of any gullible reader willing to pay for what he wrote—*Pecunia non olet*. For Taxil, writes Eco, “there was really no difference between describing the private life of Pope Pius IX and the homosexual rituals of the Masonic Satanists. People want what is forbidden to them, and that’s that” (328). Some of Taxil’s most fantastic “disclosures” were informed by the revelations of a Diana Vaughn, part hysteric part oracle, part angelic

convert, part lubricious devil, whose fictional *Mémoires*, Eco tells us, were even read and admired by the young Saint Thérèse of Lisieux.

Simonini learns some things from Taxil and teaches him others. The difference is that Simonini is less motivated by money than by a deeply engrained hate. He hates just about everything and everyone: *odi ergo sum*. He is capable of murder and disposing bodies without remorse, but he prefers to leave that work to others. He lies about everything — except perhaps about his love for French and Italian dishes, which he describes with great gusto. He even lies to himself; each side of his split personality — part counterfeiter and spy (Simone Simonini), part priest (Dalla Piccola) — is unaware of the other, except through the diary that he starts on 24 March 1897, concerned about amnesia, and possibly under advice of Dr. Froïde (read Freud).

On 17 April 1897 Dalla Piccola communicates with Simonini via their diary: “Your last pages detail an incredible number of events, and it is clear that while you were involved in those matters I was busy with others” (378). Between this entry and the one for the next days (April 18 and 19) the writer, or writers, of the diary will be able to remember something, an event that happened on the night of the 21st of March, “the spring equinox, a date full of occult significance” (388), something that explains Simonini’s memory loss and his split personality disorder.

Chapter 24, “A Night Mass,” holds the answer to the Simonini/Dalla Piccola mystery. It is in this foreboding night where the clerical—and misogynist—side of the protagonist succumbs to an act with implications he cannot withstand. Perhaps this is the repressed “traumatizing element” that is mentioned in Chapter 3 after his conversations with Doctor Froïde. In any case, Simonini behaves like a paranoiac in the grip of fear and delusion; he exhibits schizophrenia symptoms similar to those described by psychoanalyst Ernst Simmel in 1946 as he reflected on anti-Semitism as a social disease (cf. Cohn 266).

The story ends in 1898. In the following pages, clearly outside of the novel’s diegesis, of its posited world, Eco adds a three-part section titled “Useless Learned Explanations.” It is here where he drops the biggest bombshell. The first part, subtitled “Historical,” is less than a page long but

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contains huge amounts of information about the intersemiosis of history and fiction. "The only fictitious character in this story is the protagonist, Simone Simonini," Eco tells us. "All the others (except for a few incidental minor characters [...]) actually existed, and said and did what they are described as saying and doing in this novel." Even the amalgamated actions of the fictional protagonist, he says, are drawn from historical data, "indeed, to be frank he is still among us" (2011:439).

The third part of this 'extra-fictional' section is subtitled "Later Events." Here Eco quotes a passage from the first pages of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (1925), where Hitler defends the authenticity of the "famous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*." The document is "genuine," Hitler writes; what is "based on a permanent falsehood" is "the whole existence of this people" [i.e., the Jewish people]. And he concludes: "When this book [*The Protocols*] becomes the common heritage of all people, the Jewish peril can be considered as stamped out." Eco adds Henri Rollin's observation in *L'Apocalypse de notre temps* (1939): "[*The Protocols*] can be regarded as the most widely circulated work in the world after the Bible" (444).

Eco does not think the *Protocols* can explain anti-Semitism or the Holocaust.<sup>14</sup> That the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is clearly a malicious story "founded on explicit quotations from fictional sources" should not be hard to tell; and yet, "many people," he reminds us, "have unfortunately taken [them] to be true history" (1994:131). "It is not the Protocols," he concludes, "that produce antisemitism, it is people's profound need to single out an Enemy that leads them to believe in the Protocols" (2004:xii).

It is Matvei Golovinski in *The Prague Cemetery* (in reality he was a Russian journalist and writer) who mentions the final solution. "Many will understand that we have reached the moment of the final solution" (425). Rachkovsky has directed Golovinski to work with Simonini in drafting *The Protocols*. The Russians are in need of a mythical "enemy" to redirect the people's discontent. "Hatred has to be cultivated as a civic passion. The enemy is the friend of the people. You always want someone to hate in order to be justified in your own misery," Rachkovsky says as the story comes to an end (342).

By making us aware that *The Protocols* were originally disseminated in Tsarist Russia, Eco reminds us that different versions of the same myth can be recycled to fit different political needs (Tsarist Russia / Nazi Germany). The concept of national unity, as Terry Eagleton writes *On Evil* (2010), is “always easier to achieve in the face of an omnipresent danger” (97). The agencies of power are always looking for an enemy that can help advance their isolated cause.

The Russians will appropriate what Simonini considers to be “his” *Protocols*. He laments: “I’ll have wasted my life producing a testimony for no purpose. Or perhaps this is how my rabbis’ ideas (they were always *my* rabbis) will spread throughout the world and will *accompany* the final solution” (430-31, the last italics are mine). But Simonini keeps the hope to express his hate. He agrees with Rachkovsky to place a bomb in the Paris Metro which was then just under construction.

The *Protocols* mention “the undergrounds, metropolitans, those subterranean corridors which, before the time comes, will be driven under all the capitals and from whence those capitals will be blown into the air with all their organizations and archives” (34). Subways “have been devised with the sole purpose of ensuring that the Elders will be able to meet any serious opposition by blowing whole capital cities sky high” (Cohn 63). All that is needed, Rachkovsky tells Simonini is “a small explosion, but something that looks like a threat—and a confirmation” (432).

By detonating a bomb in the subway Simonini would help make the *Protocols* believable. He acquires a time bomb from Gaviali, a man still suffering the consequences of having been betrayed by Simonini and sent to prison: years of punishment in Cayenne have left him almost incapable of walking or even lifting a glass. He gives Simonini detailed instructions on how to activate the time bomb. In the last pages we see Simonini, likely high on cognac and a supply of Parke & Davis cocaine that Dr. Froïde gave him, preparing to detonate a bomb in the Paris Metro. His life hangs on the instructions of a man who may well wish him dead.

Will his desire to detonate a bomb that could “cause one hell of a stir” supersede his survival instinct? Could Gaviali’s instructions be accurate? That is, could the bomb maker’s passion for mayhem trump his desire for

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personal revenge? Will Simonini live to see the “fruits” of his “Prague cemetery”? The author of *The Open Work* (*Opera aperta*, 1962) lets us imagine these and other endings. We know, for instance, that Simonini has started to complain of “gastric upsets” that make it difficult for him to “even enjoy good food” (247). Could the gourmand’s only love end up killing him — slowly? These questions remain open as the novel’s ending takes us on a road laden with deceptions.

### Words and Pictures

*The Prague Cemetery* is illustrated with reproductions from nineteenth-century books and feuilletons. The last etching shows a well-dressed man poised in a dimly lit tunnel. He is holding a cane with one hand; the other is in his jacket’s pocket. The caption underneath the picture reads: “I don’t need to know where the tunnel leads, or even whether it goes anywhere. All I have to do is place the bomb at the entrance, and that would be that” (435). In the quoted passage Simonini, inspecting the excavations of the Paris Metro in preparation for the attack, imagines what he would need to do to set off the explosion.

It is natural for the reader to juxtapose the verbal and visual registers at the end of the book. The result is a gestalt effect that leads one to imagine that the book ends with Simonini walking in a tunnel of the Paris Metro with a bomb “the size of a parish priest’s turnip” (434) in his pocket. But when the narrative ends Simonini is still in his apartment writing the final entry of his diary as he gets ready for the bomb attack. If we look at the illustration critically, that is, removed from the allure of the narrative, the man in the tunnel looks rather harmless, more like casual explorer rather than one about to detonate a bomb.

The gestalt that turns the poised man into a terrorist about to blow up the Paris Metro is completed by the iconic principle of verbal art—language’s capacity to generate images in the reader’s mind. The fact that Simonini’s diary stops as he plans the attack helps bring the last illustration closer to the end of the exegesis: the picture illustrates what the reader assumes the character will do next; it merges with a passage of verbal iconicity and redefines it, showing just how easily misleading the intersemiosis of words and images can be.

The Illustration Credits inform us indirectly that this and most of the other illustrations belong to the author's collection (445). It would be revealing to know from which book or magazine in Eco's large personal library it came. What other story was the picture of the man in the tunnel intended to illustrate? By transposing it from one co-text (the intended text) to another (*The Prague Cemetery*) the sign is used to lie. This is analogous to the appropriation of fictional sources in the *Protocols*, and I am thinking here about the transposition of Cagliostro's Plot.

There are many other examples of how the novel invites us to consider the ways in which verbal and visual languages work together in the fabrication of myths. Pictures and words can be used to enhance the splendor of a hero: a caption under a handsome engraving of Garibaldi, for instance, uses Dumas' words to compare the general to "Jesus in Leonardo's *Last Supper*" (116). But there are two other illustrations of Garibaldi, and in the last one he seems less like an "Apollo" (also Dumas' words) than the narrator's description of him as "of modest stature [with] short bandy legs" (118).

Drawn caricatures are frequently used to exacerbate stereotypes. Visual signs have a more immediate impact than verbal signs since they are not made of complex correlational codes, i.e., they do not have to be learned.<sup>15</sup> Their greater comprehensibility makes them easier to accept as reliable, as truthful. They can also be used to reach more people (as Eisner does with his visual narrative). *The Prague Cemetery* contains a number of the images used to fuel some of the ugliest stereotypes of the bloodthirsty and conspiratorial Jew. They are interpolated in an assortment of illustrations of other fictions and distortions: a levitating priest, an 1885 ad for Cocaine Toothache Drops made in Albany NY using children playing with a toy house, a woman arched backwards in a seemingly acrobatic epileptic seizure, heretical rites, a mixed bag of picaresque and sinister characters, the enigmatic and seductive Babette of Interlaken (also mentioned *Foucault's Pendulum*), among others.

The caption below one of the illustrations reads "a middle-aged man with an excessively normal face" (255). Had the caption read "a young man with a strange face," it could have fit the illustration just as well. Does the

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picture show “a middle-aged man with an excessively normal face” or does the verbal description define the picture? The choice depends on the reader’s awareness of the interaction between verbal and visual signs. The uncritical reader will take the text as readerly (*lisible*); the one aware of the deceitfulness of signs as writerly (*scriptible*), to use Barthes’ terms.

### Language is Rhetoric

During his years at Basel, Nietzsche composed a series lectures on rhetoric, *Description of Ancient Rhetoric* (1872-73). Few other modern thinkers — Barthes’s “L’ancienne rhétorique” comes to mind (1970) — have left us such a thorough synthesis of ancient rhetoric, the discipline that reigned in the West for more than two thousand years,<sup>16</sup> and which evolved as a formidable metalanguage that has *discourse*, the written or spoken forms of language, as its object language.

In his third lecture on rhetoric, “The Relation of the Rhetorical to Language,” Nietzsche writes: “The full essence of things will never be grasped. [...] Instead of the thing, the sensation takes in only a *sign*. That is the *first aspect*: *language is rhetoric* [*die Sprache ist Rhetorik*] because it desires to convey only a *doxa* [opinion], not an *episteme* [knowledge]” (1872-73:23). This aphorism erases the distinction between “actual words and tropes,” between “*speech and rhetorical figures*” (25). The *first aspect* of language is a function of the distance that separates the thing-in-itself, via our sensory system, from the *sign*.

Nietzsche’s statement that *language is rhetoric* has baffled some scholars. The source of the equivocation, it seems to me, lies in the distinction between rhetoric as figurativeness and rhetoric as metalanguage. This is how Nietzsche’s third lecture begins: “We call an author, a book, or a style ‘rhetorical’ when we observe a conscious application of artistic means of speaking; it always implies a gentle reproof. We consider it not *natural*, and producing the impression of being done purposefully” (1872-73:21). He is referring to the rhetorical, and to rhetoric by extension, in the sense of stylistic embellishment, of figuration, of ‘color.’ He compares this effect to language’s *first aspect*. “There is obviously no unrhetorical ‘naturalness’ of language to which one can appeal” (21).

Language is rhetoric *especially* when it is less rhetorical. It is ordinary speech that often “desires to convey only a *doxa*”—the automatic use of language ends up as “dictionary of washed out metaphors.”<sup>17</sup> Truths built on this vocabulary, writes Nietzsche, “are illusions about which it has been forgotten that they *are* illusions, worn-out metaphors without sensory impact, coins which have lost their image and now can be used only as metal, and no longer as coins” (1873:250). Rapt by signs in his Paris apartment on the rue de Rome, Mallarmé, Nietzsche’s contemporary, likened this kind of signs to a “worn coin placed silently in my hand,” an image Merleau-Ponty uses to illustrate “empirical language” (*Signs* 44).

We call “a style ‘rhetorical’ when we observe a conscious application of artistic means of speaking,” yes, but this is not the only function of rhetoric. Nor is persuasion. Persuasion, Nietzsche points out in his first lecture, is “the effect, not the essence of the thing” (5). The art of persuasion (*peithein, dicendo persuadere*) is also the knowledge of means and technique of persuasion (*peithous episteme*), a critical, reflective tool that enables Nietzsche (and us) to talk about language. Rhetoric is not only a *techne* to aid in the craft of language; it is also a metalanguage devised to reflect on discourse.

Rhetoric is the West’s most ancient metalanguage. But its place in the development of semiotics, the metalanguage embracing the full spectrum of signifying processes, is often overlooked. We need go no further than Jakobson’s work on metaphor and metonymy to see the momentous effect it had on contemporary semiotic research, which, as Eco showed, “found its definitive stature at the beginning of the sixties” (1977:44). It is less surprising that Nietzsche’s contributions are seldom mentioned in this important chapter in semiotics. As Fuentes writes, “few other thinkers — perhaps no other — have been so frequently accused of saying things that they never said, and so frequently dispossessed of the things they did say.”<sup>18</sup>

We have said that a particular aspect of postmodernism, reminiscent of some of Nietzsche’s ideas on truth and lying, informs the theory behind *The Name of the Rose*. Reflecting on his first novel, but probably already working on *Foucault’s Pendulum*, Eco considers the problem of writing “a novel that was not escapist and, nevertheless, still enjoyable” (1984:65).



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Seeing postmodernism as a sort of metahistorical "*Kunstvollen*, a way of operating," he mentions Nietzsche's description in *Thoughts Out of Season* (*Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*) about "the harm done by historical studies" in periods of crisis (66).

In "The Use and Abuse of History" (1874), one of the essays in the collection, Nietzsche considers the value of transforming history into art as a way to redeem humanity from the dangers of "an excess of history" (38). One of these dangers is "the belief, at all times harmful, that we are late survivals, mere Epigoni" (39). "Art has the opposite effect to history: and only perhaps if history suffer transformation into a pure work of art, can it preserve instincts or arouse them. Such history would be quite against the analytical and inartistic tendencies of our time, and even be considered false" (58).

"Every man and nation," writes Nietzsche, "needs a certain knowledge of the past, whether it be through monumental, antiquarian, or critical history, according to his objects, powers, and necessities" (30). But history is also a semiotic construct that inevitably creates an arbitrary, partial, image of "the past." And yet, some of the very functions of language—Nietzsche singles out irony, myth, and art—give us the means to break free from its entrapments.<sup>19</sup>

Eco adds to these "metalinguistic play, enunciation squared" and puts them into practice in historical novels that enthrall as they instruct. Eco's "postmodern" notion of ironic rethinking, which is tied to his definition of semiotics, is in a way present in the writings of the young Nietzsche. Eco wants us to reflect on the fictionality of fiction; Nietzsche wants us to consider the 'fictionality' of language itself, its disconnectedness from the real. Beware, he tells us, of "the obligation to lie according to an established convention, to lie collectively in a style that is mandatory for everyone" (1873:250).

Writing in 1946 about "Politics and the English Language," George Orwell states: "Political language [...] is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind" (120). He understood that language was an instrument for "expressing" as well as for "concealing or preventing thought" (119-20).

Eco's work advances this notion in the complexities of postmodernity. Both as a novelist and critical thinker he digs deeper into the many functions of signification, from naming a thing to inventing the enemy.

Thirty years after *The Name of the Rose*, Eco embarked on a self-imposed challenge that would take to its logical extreme the problem of writing "a novel that was not escapist and, nevertheless, still enjoyable" (1984:65). Around 2004 Will Eisner had shared with him what Eco called a "courageous, not *comic* but *tragic* book." The story of the *Protocols* was, as Eco wrote in the introduction to Eisner's book, "very much worth telling, for one must fight the Big Lie and the hatred it spawns" (2004:vii). "The grand old man of comics" had used the appeal of the graphic narrative to reach out with a story that not only sheds light on the past but also warns about future uncritical reception of political narratives. Eco's novel would reach an even wider audience.

I started writing about *The Prague Cemetery* approximately a year after Richard Dixon's English translation was published in the US (2011). In the months that followed I noticed a rapid growth in the information available on the Internet about the *Protocols* and the plethora of related subjects that come up in the novel. When Eco tells us that just about all the characters in his novel "actually existed, and said and did what they are described as saying and doing" he is inviting us to find out, he is challenging us to do research. And this research, if followed to the very end, takes us beyond the construction of hateful myths and fictions and into the very kernel of the sign, Nietzsche's "*first aspect*" of signification.

Nietzsche was only thirty when he realized that "the historical audit brings so much to light which is false and absurd, violent and inhuman, that the condition of pious illusion falls to pieces" (1874:58). Are we to attribute this solely to human nature, "to people's profound need to single out an Enemy," or is this exacerbated by essentially deceitful semiotic systems that help humans create seemingly irreconcilable differences? The ease with which humans can believe in patent lies—the *Protocols* is a prime example—displays the 'heard mentality' that Nietzsche fought to counterforce. But the fault does not only lie in the adoption of uncritically held beliefs. As Federico Nietzsche reminds us at the end *Federico en su balcón*,

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there are “men and women guilty of placing the lie at the base of human society” (2012:294).

New enemies are being invented today — they are needed to divert attention from the abuses of the new oligarchies, which are not only rich and powerful, but also interconnected. How are we to develop awareness of the complex machineries of disinformation? A general answer is critical thought, but critical reflection is part of the deception as long as it does not look at the signifying systems that make both disinformation and its awareness possible. Language can become an instrument of knowledge because it is able to reflect on itself, to stand under itself. A simple *informed pause* can eliminate *doxa*.

This metalinguistic and metasystemic capacity is becoming increasingly important in an information age populated with “screens” where the message is a function of the interplay of a number of different communication systems—visual, musical, written, spoken, et cetera. The revealer of lies in the information age must be cognizant of the properties and functions of different types of signs and sign systems. The Internet could prove to be the “most mystical” of all vertigoes, as Eco ironically suggests (2009:360), but whistleblowers in every country, new enemies of the state, are finding out that it is also today’s battleground for truth and lies. Information is power. Our reflective and creative faculties must overpower the control of information and dissemination of disinformation.

Eco’s first and last novels are structured around an awareness of immense lies: the mandatory lie of the Medieval Inquisition in *The Name of the Rose*, and, in *The Prague Cemetery*, that infamous fake, the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. Both lies are fueled by invented enemies; both are products of fallacious systems of belief. Eco’s novels turn these systems inside out exposing their underpinnings as he embarks on the game of reconstructing them with irony and critical distance. This double operation opens a space for reflection without destroying the enchantment of fiction.

Simonini is still among us, Eco warns us. So, too, are the avatars of the deep ideological divisions that nurtured the inquisition and of the political unrest that gave life to the *Protocols*. Eco’s work jumps the frame of the historical fiction and makes us conscious of the human lie behind so much

abuse, violence, and suffering in the world. He asks us to confront it with the full power of our critical and creative faculties — and we are creative, Nietzsche reminds us, “only through love and in the shadow of love’s illusions” (1874:58).

## **NOTES**

1. Detective fiction had a start in close proximity to the theme of the double. Edgar Allan Poe, author of the first modern detective story, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841), was also a master of the *Doppelgänger* theme, “William Wilson,” for instance (1839).
2. The English version of the text listed in the references is 75 pages long.
3. A lecture Eco delivered at Bologna University on May 15, 2008, “Costruire il nemico” was published in 2009 (Milan: BUR). The essay was published in the English anthology bearing its name (*Inventing the Enemy*, 2012).
4. This is also true of Jean-Jacques Annaud’s film adaptation of Eco’s novel (*The Name of the Rose*, 1986).
5. To some extent this also applies to writers whose subject is contemporary events, and I’m thinking now of novelized journalism, such as Capote’s *In Cold Blood* (1966), Mailer’s *The Armies of the Night* (1968), or García Márquez, *Noticia de un secuestro* (1996).
6. “Obliquely” may convey the idea better than “crookedly” here. There are a number of articles on Nietzschean laughter, some of which are listed in Kress (2008:139n). Gunter finds the first reference to laughter in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). But perhaps the best gateway into the subject is a long note by Kaufmann in his translation of *Beyond Good and Evil*. “For Nietzsche laughter becomes less a physical phenomenon than a symbol of joyous affirmation of life and of the refusal to bow before the spirit of gravity” (231-33, 41n).
7. My colleague Eliza Glaze offered the following more literal translation: “The former rose stands in name [alone], we hold names empty/bare.”
8. Kaufman translates “Abbildung” as “image” (1968:45). All references to “On Truth and Lying” are to the translation in *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language* (trans. Sander L. Gilman, et al.).

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9. There is increased interest in the work of Florens Friedrich Chladni (1756-1827), a German physicist and musician. Examples of vibration patterns created in modern versions of the Chladni plate are posted in YouTube.
10. At the beginning of Fuentes' last novel, *Federico en su balcón*, Carlos Fuentes walks out one night to his balcony and strikes a conversation with Federico Nietzsche who is leaning over the rail of an adjacent balcony, hence the title: *Friedrich in His Balcony*. They agree to take turns recounting and discussing a series of interpolated tales that lead to wide-ranging philosophical reflections on life, politics, and art. Translations from Fuentes' novel are mine.
11. Eco's definition does not as easily apply to systems, such as abstract art or absolute music, where meaning is produced by the internal relation of its elements.
12. "That we may strike down the genius along with the eccentric does not disturb our mirth," adds Pete Gunter in "Nietzschean Laughter" (496).
13. The character who makes these comments does not mention their source. These opinions come from Dostoyevsky's 1877 essay, "The Jewish Question." Cf. Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew (Réflexions sur la question juive, 1946)*.
14. The acrimonious exchange between Ron Rosenbaum and Claude Lanzmann shows just how contentious this subject can be. Lanzmann, the acclaimed director of the landmark Holocaust documentary, *Shoah* (1985), called "obscene" any attempt to explain the holocaust. In the conclusions of *Explaining Hitler* (1998), where he reports the exchange, Rosenbaum offers an operative synthesis: "Not to resist all or any inquiry [...] but to resist the way explanation can become evasion or consolation" (395).
15. This is a general distinction; we do not need to dwell here on technical exceptions.
16. Approximately from the 5th century BCE to the 19th century CE.
17. Josef Kopperschmidt comments that Nietzsche is using one of Jean Paul's metaphors. He calls the process Nietzsche's metaphorization of perception (204).
18. Fuentes lists, and refutes, a number of common distortions, among them one that is particularly relevant to our discussion. "Nietzsche anti-

Semitic?" Fuentes quotes from Nietzsche's Letter 479 to Franz Overbeck: "For me it is a question of honor that it remain absolutely, unequivocally clear that I am opposed to anti-Semitism" (2005:284).

19. Writing about ideology, often the seed of history, Eagleton separates 'language' from 'discourse.' "Ideology," he writes, "is a matter of 'discourse' rather than of 'language'—of certain concrete discursive effects, rather than of signification as such" (*Ideology* 223).

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