Umberto Eco's *The Prague cemetery*: A game of double co-incidence

Author:
Maria Spruyt[1]

Affiliation:
[1]Research Fellow,
University of Zululand,
South Africa

Correspondence to:
Maria Spruyt

Email:
marie.spruyt@telkomsa.net

Postal address:
PO Box 39, Thornhill Plaza
0882, South Africa

Although classified as a literary novel with a fictional plot, *The Prague cemetery* is crammed with historical information on 19th century Europe, with the focus on the rise of anti-Semitism during this period. The overwhelming amount of data has been criticised as distracting from the plot and creating difficulty for the reader in making sense of the storyline. This article examines the role of the reader in deciphering the twisting of historic events and fiction in *The Prague cemetery*, that is, a literary text packed tight with historical data intertwined with a fictional story, loaded with signs, symbols and hidden meanings that have to be decoded. It is demonstrated, firstly, that a Model Reader with encyclopaedic knowledge will be able to decode the hidden meanings in the text; secondly, that the nonmodel, or empirical reader, who does not actualise all of the meaning-content, will not be hindered in his understanding of the story and thirdly, that the author's intentions will duly be accomplished.

Umberto Eco se *The Prague cemetery*: 'n Spel van die dubbelsinnigheid en toeval. Umberto Eco se *The Prague cemetery* is wyd gekritiseer oor die digtheid van die inhoud, wat sentreer om die geskiedenis van Europa in die 19de eeu en die opkoms van anti-Semitisme in daardie tyd. Die groot hoeveelheid data kan die leser oorweldig sodat die storielyn dalk daaronder kan ly. Hierdie artikel ondersoek die rol van die leser, wat sin moet maak van 'n teks, waarin tekens, simbole en verskuilde betekenisse gedekodeer moet word, maar ook die storielyn moet kan volg. Daar word eerstens aangedui dat die modelleser met ensiklopediese kennis in staat sal wees om die verskuilde betekenisse te dekodeer; tweedens, dat die niemodelleser, wat nie al die inligting kan absorbeer nie, die storie tog nog sal kan geniet en derdens, dat die doelwit van die skrywer ontsluit sal word deur blootlegging van die verskuilde betekenis wat die teks onderlê.

Introduction

To Umberto Eco, professor of semiotics and master of codes, signs and hidden meanings, as well as conspiracies are favourite subjects mainly 'because of the paranoia that allows them to flourish'. In an interview with Stephen Moss (2011) he says that the paranoia of the universal conspiracy is more powerful because it is everlasting. 'You can never discover it because you don't know who is there. It is a psychological temptation of our species.'

The theme of a Zionist conspiracy in *The Prague cemetery* (2011) is not new. In *Foucault's pendulum* (1988) Eco unveils a plot by secret societies to take over the world. Anthony Burgess of the *New York Times* (1989) describes it is as 'an encyclopaedic detective story about a search for ... men who not merely seek power over the earth but power of the earth itself'. Like conspiracies in general the novel is a formidable collection of information. *The Prague cemetery* is no less so. According to Moss (2011) it is 'a gathering of complex artifacts of Eco's postmodern aesthetic at work in a traditional literary form featuring the forgery of *The protocols of the elders of Zion'*. Moss asked the author why the protocols seems to interest him: 'From lies to forgeries the step is not so long, and I have written technical essays on the logic of forgeries and on the influence of forgeries on history. The most famous and terrible of those forgeries is the Protocols' (Moss 2011).

The Prague cemetery also brings into the play the conventions applied in Eco's graphic novel *The mysterious flame of queen Loana* (Eco 2005; Spruyt 2009). In the blurb on the back cover of *The Prague cemetery* the novel is pronounced to be 'an inspired twisting of history and fiction'; a literary exercise in an historical setting. As in *Queen Loana* the text is interlaced with graphic images so that the reader not only have to contend with the elements of fiction (plot, character, theme, setting), but also with historical events combined with graphic art. The author uses a narrative formula, combining intertexts and writing to explore certain historical events from a specific era.

These events form the background against which another narrative unfolds, that of a fictitious character who becomes involved in the historical events of the time so that disparate influences are consolidated into a postmodern historical and literary format.

This article explores the role of the reader (Eco 1979) and the Model Reader (Eco 1984) in making meaning of a literary text. The article demonstrates that the Model Reader, with encyclopaedic knowledge, would be able to identify signs in the text that require a reinterpretation of the surface meaning, and by uncovering the intentions in the text, he will also be discovering the author's intention. The not so competent reader, on the other hand, would still be able to enjoy a good story.

A theory of signs

In *The theory of signs and the role of the reader* (1981) Eco describes a theory of communication as linked to a theory of signification, and a theory of signification, in the first place, as a theory of signs. A sign becomes meaningful only when it is inserted within a larger context (Eco 1981:37). Through the process of interpretation, the context of the sign grows. In a text more can be said than what one proposes and something new can always be said, because signs are the starting-point of a process of interpretation which leads to an infinite series of progressive consequences (Eco 1981:44). To understand how a text can be generated and interpreted, one needs a set of semantico-pragmatic rules, organised by an encyclopaedia-like semantic representation, which establishes how and under which conditions the reader is entitled to collaborate in actualising what the text really says (Eco 1981:43); so the text becomes an extension of a virtual text that consists of the reader's world knowledge, or an encyclopaedia-like set of information that allows him to make further inferences. What the reader has to do, is look for possible contexts to make the original impression understandable and reasonable. The very nature of signs postulate an active role on the part of their interpreter – he has an essential function in the process of making meaning of the text. It becomes a process of textual cooperation, a process that is more than the sum of the author's words and the reader's meaning (Eco 1981:29).

The text and possible worlds

Eco's theory of textual cooperation assumes that the reader is capable of actualising the various meaning-contents of the text in order to decode the possible worlds of the narrative. However, the text itself is not a possible world. It is a part of the real world and 'a machine for producing possible worlds' (Eco 1979:chap. 8), including that of the story being told, its characters and the reader's expectations. According to the philosopher Saul Kripke (Ryan 2013), the actual world presents an autonomous existence and all other worlds are the product of mental activities, such as dreaming, imagining, foretelling, promising, or storytelling. A text is therefore open: all interpretations of it are potentially unlimited, but not every act of interpretation has a happy ending. Interpretation

assumes the semantic actualisation of everything that the text means, as a strategy, with the cooperation of a reader with ideological (encyclopaedic) competence (Eco 1985:237). Hammack (2014) describes literary texts as fields of meaning, and these are understood as open, internally dynamic and psychologically engaged fields between mind, society and life, while literature that limits one's potential understanding to a single interpretation, is a closed text.

Interpreting a text

Guillemette and Cossette (2006) refer to the concept of an empirical reader, who 'deduces a model image of something that has previously been verified as an act of utterance and which is textually present as an utterance' (Eco 1985:80–81). This reader views the text pragmatically and will, for instance, find publicly displayed structures he recognises from the story, even though they might have been the inventions of the author. The ideological reader, or Model Reader (developed by Peirce, 1931, cited by Guillemette & Cossette 2006), has the ability to fill in gaps in the story to the best of his knowledge, using his encyclopaediae, social background, cultural conventions and knowledge of the world. The author in fact anticipates a Model Reader who is able to cooperate in the text's actualisation in a specific manner, and who is also able to deal interpretively with the text in the same way as the author produced the text (Eco 1979:7).

However, as Guillemette and Cossette (2006) point out, although the Model Reader is created by the text, he is not the one who owns the only correct interpretation. A text may count on a Model Reader who is capable of trying out several interpretations when he is confronted with several *fabula* or possible worlds. The Model Reader, in essence, is 'a textually established set of felicity conditions [...] to be met in order to have a macro-speech act (such as a text is) fully actualized' (Eco 1979:11). The Model Reader actualises the meaning of everything that the textual strategy intends to say. On the other hand, if the reader's ideological competence includes the opposition of spiritual values (connoted as 'good') and cultural conventions ('bad'), he will be inclined to actualise the textual content in a certain manner. The text might apprehend this competence and lead the Model Reader to establish more complex structures than this simple form of opposition (Guillemette & Cossette 2006). Divergent decodings may occur, moving away from the author's intention with the focus on the reader's intention. The text may nevertheless convey elements of which the author was unaware, and still result in interpretive cooperation that has a happy ending (Eco 1985:73–74).

The Prague cemetery has been described as difficult to read and understand as a purely historical novel. The question arises: Would the average (empirical) reader, with limited encyclopaedic knowledge, be able to follow the events and attitudes of politics in Italy in the 19th century and still be interested in the main character's convoluted exploits in the Italian unification process, the Franco-Prussian war, the Paris

Commune, or the Dreyfuss affair (Moss 2011)? Or would it be left to the Model Reader to push through to the end of the narrative in an attempt to analyse the hidden meanings supposedly buried in the narrative?

The textual body and graphic images

In a discussion of Eco's graphic novel *The mysterious flame of queen Loana*, Spruyt (2009) cites Eisner (1985), who defines the graphic novel as a deployment of images and words, each in carefully balanced proportion within the limitations of the medium, so that the reader not only have to contend with the elements of fiction (plot, character, setting, theme) but also the syntax or grammar of graphic art, that is perspective, symmetry, colour, font, etcetera. The graphic novel, according to Eisner (1985), is often regarded as a museum of art, literature, and history, all rolled into one. Hammack (2014) refers to illustrated novels as border-crossing tenets described by the Interstitial Arts Foundation. The term 'interstice' combines 'the Latin roots "inter" (between) and "sistere" (to stand)': literally, to 'stand between' or 'stand in the middle'. These arts aim to transform the reader's experience of reading. The 'in-between' is regarded as that hypnagogic place where 'inner landscape and outer landscape can blend', where the fantastic and the realistic converge. By constructing his narrative so that it requires nonlinear reconnoitring between its textual body and its illustrations, the author uses nostalgic artifacts to serve as signs on paper.

By the mapping of the interstices, by means of illustrated texts, the reader embarks on a journey that is more interior, philosophic and imaginative. According to Kroll (2010), cited by Hammack (2014), these types of interstices encourage thinkers, writers and teachers to recognise the text as a form of travel guide that prepares readers to explore new frontiers (inside and outside) themselves. Hammack (2014) describes these frontiers as a blending of inner landscape and outer landscape where the fantastic and realistic converge. From this premise further questions arise: Does *The Prague cemetery* offer the reader orientation in both external and internal space, and allow him access to data from what might be construed as a collective world mind? Or, in the words of Kroll, explore new frontiers (inside and outside) themselves? Would the empirical reader be confined to external, realistic space and the new frontier open to the Model Reader only? What is the new frontier that *The Prague cemetery* offers the erudite reader?

A Model Reader for *The Prague cemetery*

Taking into consideration what is expected of the Model Reader, *The Prague cemetery* requires, in the first place, that he should be able to contextualise the political, philosophical and cultural setting of Europe in the 19th century. Secondly, that he should be aware of the activities of theosophical and occult societies at the time; thirdly, that he would be able to follow the narrative intertwined with the historical setting, and by doing so discover what it is that is being left unsaid and needs to be decoded. To assist the reader in making sense of the twisting plot and story in *The Prague cemetery*, the author provides information as endnotes (Eco 2011:433) under the ironic heading *Useless learned explanations*. The subheading 'History' provides details of the characters involved; for instance, that the only fictitious characters in the story are the protagonist, Simone Simonini, as well as his grandfather, Captain Simonini. All the other characters except a few minor ones actually existed. In 'The story and plot' the author covers the linear progression of events from Simonini's birth to the end of his diaries – the 'final imbalance between *story* and *plot* ... or *fabula* and *sjuzet*'. The author also provides a diagram of the parallel development of plot and story, complete with a timeline from 1830–1898. Under 'Later events' (from 1905–1939) he outlines the publishing history of *The protocols of the elders of Zion*, first by the Russians, then the *The Times* in London and eventually the appropriation of its contents by Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf*. This section ends with the statement that *The protocols of Zion* is 'the most circulated work in the world after the Bible' (Eco 2011:437).

So the author has gone to great lengths to assist both the competent and less competent reader in following the threads used to weave this colourful tapestry of history, as well as the fictional times and lives of Simone Simonini and his alter ego Abbé Dalla Piccola. These two voices are complemented by that of the Narrator, who fills in gaps in their memories and summarises certain sections of the text. The competent reader will have certain expectations of an Eco novel and may at this stage already become suspicious of the careful layout provided by the author and the three different voices required to clarify (or obscure) the message. What is he not saying? What is his intention?

The plot (1885/1886)

The plot is the storyline, plan, scheme or structure of the main story in a literary work: a semiotic fabrication, says Geoffrey Sauer in an article in *Humanitas* (1990). In *The Prague cemetery* the plot centres around Captain Simone Simonini, sixty-seven years old, who not only has an identity problem but also finds his memory to be failing. In a priest's quarters, adjacent to his own and to which he has access, he finds correspondence addressed to Abbé Dalla Piccola, as well as a personal note: 'I know I am Abbé Dalla Piccola ... [B]ut clearly I'm not, given that I have to dress up to look like him' (p. 24). Simonini suspects that he has some strange connection with the Abbé but he has memory lapses and cannot make sense of the situation.

During a meeting with a certain Dr Froïd who is studying illnesses such as hysteria, depression, trauma, melancholy and personality disorders, he learns of the 'talking cure'. The doctor suggests that speaking to a trusted person at length may bring a forgotten trauma to light. Simonini decides to rather opt for writing a diary to bring the past back to mind

(p. 44). Maybe this will also reveal what the connection between him and the Abbé is.

That Froïd is a pseudonym for Freud, is an important sign for the more profound reading of the story. Sigmund Freud, in his book *Studies on hysteria* (Breuer & Freud 1895/1983), describes many of his patients as having been victims of sexual abuse in childhood. This could in later years result in a Multiple Personality Disorder (Richmond 1997–2013) which is recognised by the patient showing the presence of two or more distinct identities, each with its own unique and enduring way of relating to the world and self. At least two of the identities recurrently take control of the person's behaviour. Classic examples, according to Richmond, is finding new clothes in his closet he does not remember buying, or having a complete loss of memory for what happened in a previous time span. Treatment, according to Freudian methodologies, included 'genuine, honest emotional encounters' with a psychologist (Richmond on 'Personalities', 1997–2013).

Simonini closes shop for a month and starts writing his diaries on 24 March 1897. The first thing that he finds out about himself is that he hates: Jews, Germans, Italians, priests (especially Jesuits), Freemasons, and women – *Odi ergo sum*, 'I hate therefore I am' (p. 16). On the night of 26 March 1897 he finds a reply to his notes from the Abbé. A two-way communication process commences between the two characters, the one filling in gaps in the memory of the other one. Where memory or recollection fails, the Narrator steps in to summarise or bring the reader up to date. By following the doctor's suggestion to retrace his past, Simonini takes the first step in the healing process. He now at least knows who and what he really is – a vile and detestable person.

Simonini's writing of his diaries and the Narrator's contributions take place against the vast background of historical events from 1830–1898. Simonini's trials and tribulations take place in the foreground, weaving in and out of the events happening around him. The significance of his life and (fictional) contribution to historical events unfold as the story progresses; by the careful unravelling of what is happening in both the foreground and the background and how these two settings interconnect, the Model Reader is in a position to decode the text.

Decoding the text

One deduction that the Model Reader may make at this stage is that Eco's novel serves a dual purpose – as a text to be decoded by the competent reader and as a good story to those who are 'gullible and easily influenced by the media' (p. 434). *The Prague cemetery* has been attacked by some readers for its anti-Semitism, but Eco argues that the protocols can easily be found on the Internet and that 'weak readers' who misunderstand his purpose will be misled elsewhere. 'You are not responsible for perverse readings of your book', he says. 'Catholic priests said don't give *Madame Bovary* to a

young girl to read because she might be seduced by adultery' (Moss 2011). This is confirmed by Tait (2011) who quotes from *Foucault's pendulum* (1988:118) that maybe only cheap fiction gives the measure of reality; that Proust was right, life is better represented by bad music than by a *Missa Solemnis*, and that the dime novel shows the world as it actually is – or at least the world as it will become. The Model Reader will therefore disregard the trivialities that may fascinate the 'weak reader' and focus on the signs, codes and hidden meanings.

The diaries reveal Simonini's traumatic childhood – that his legacy from his father, grandfather and tutors was mistrust, bitterness and resentment towards the world, with 'a morbid self-love which eventually became a philosophical conviction' (p. 84). Another effect of his childhood is his love for (preferably) gourmet food. He eats like a glutton where and whenever he can; when he is not plotting or scheming for and against the government or secret societies, he is eating. He stoops at nothing, not even murder. During an altercation the priest Abbé Dalla Piccola becomes his first victim – he disposes of the body in the sewer underneath his apartment, a grissly and unsettling experience.

Simonini's living quarters in Paris and office, from where he works as a dishonest solicitor and a forger of documents, exit on the one side of the building and a priest's on the other side. After one of his sleeping bouts he is surprised to find a priest's cassock in his room. In the gloom of the passage that leads to the priest's quarters he finds more costumes and wigs, clearly clothes in which one can masquerade as different persons. Eventually he finds out that he and the Abbé Dalla Piccola, whom he killed years ago, are the same person; that he enters his own quarters as Simonini, the murderer, schemer and plotter, and leaves it through the priestly quarters as a demure and pious priest. So in 1869, Simonini's alter ego is born.

The fact that Simonini needed to create an alter ego for himself could be explained by the Jungian theory of archetypes. Along the journey to manhood which, according to De Laszlo (1959), cited by Brozo (2002), is associated with a kind of 'right inner passage to become fine young men and honourable adults', positive male archetypes are an adolescent boy's guides along this inner journey. These images of masculinity, derived from the work of Jung (1964) and Arnold (1995), 'may be thought of as signposts along a boy's psychic journey to claim or reclaim an honourable masculine identity' (Brozo 2002), such as Pilgrim, Patriarch, King, Warrior, Magician, Wildman, Healer, Prophet, Trickster and Lover. Simonini has to move through the inner passage that connects his rooms to those of the priest to, in fact, become the priest, a person who could claim for himself an honourable masculine identity – an identity that he has been deprived of by his traumatic childhood.

Simonini's distressing childhood and his excessive hatred towards Jews eventually involves him in the (fictional) forging of *The protocols of the elders of Zion.* According to Tait

(2011) the eventual publication of the protocols was effective beyond imagination. It was used to incite pogroms during the Russian civil war; afterwards, it was taken westwards by white Russians and bolstered the view of the revolution as a Jewish plot. When Hitler came to power, it was adopted as a standard piece of Nazi propaganda; it became 'a warrant for genocide'. Cohn (1967) states that the Protocols has infiltrated the collective unconscious to such an extent, that it has become an international war of propaganda to convince the world of the evils of Judaism. This had a powerful effect not only on history but also the collective subconcious of nations.

In 1905 *The protocols of the elders of Zion* is published by the Russians and its contents spread worldwide (p. 437). All this of course, takes place against the background of unfolding history, plots and counter-plots, wars and revolutions.

'Who is Diana Vaughn?'

It will now be clear to the Model Reader that there is a plethora of signs and hidden meanings in the novel that need to be decoded, for instance, the events involving Diana Vaughn (p. 294). To fully understand the Diana phenomena, chapters three and twenty-two have to be read together. Simonini meets a Dr Du Maurier in chapter three and learns about a patient Diana who suffers from mental illness. Simonini is intrigued by her; she has two states of mind, one of them a licentious, lewd seductress, the other the virtuous Diana. He promises to send priest Abbé Dalla Piccola to see her as he deals with such cases. In chapter twenty-one (the diary entry for 13 April 1897) Simonini meets Léo Taxil, a (real) French journalist, a member of a Masonic Lodge and a compulsive liar who tells hair-raising stories (p. 282). At the end of the chapter he is confused by his dealings with Taxil, goes to bed and wakes up two days later.

Dalla Piccola of course also meets Léo Taxil and they join forces to publish a mammoth work *Le Diable* under the pseudonym Dr Bataille, with material plundered from every possible source. According to Taxil, this would appeal to a readership who always wanted more and to people who read for 'simple pleasure, then quickly forget what they have learned' (p. 309). It is during this time that the expression 'anti-Semitism' is coined and the mistrust of the Jews becomes a doctrine (p. 316).

Over the years Dalla and Taxil become intrigued by Diana's mumbling, utterances and hallucinations while in trance states, and eventually co-opt her without her knowledge as a fictitious female apostate and High Priestess from so-called 'Palladian' Freemasonry and a convert to Catholicism (simonmayers.com), who wishes to expose the 'satanic rituals' in Masonry. Her richly embellished *Memoires*, written by Taxil, are given wide publicity in English and Catholic newspapers. As Diana Vaughan, Taxil also publishes a book called *Eucharistic Novena*, a collection of prayers highly praised, even by the Pope. This complicity in committing fraud, of course, shows Dalla in another light – that he, too,

is not immune to the vagaries and transgressions of daily life. During a sexual encounter with Diana he becomes so enraged when finds out that she is a Jewess, that he kills her. One Boulan, who is present at the time of the murder, is also killed. Dalla disposes of both bodies in the sewer, next to that of the real Dalla Piccola, killed 25 years earlier by Simonini.

The trauma causes Dalla Piccola to revert to his real identity. He now knows who he is (diary entry for 17 April 1897). From this it can be surmised that Simonini carried the image of the wanton Diana (chapter three) in his unconscious mind since his childhood – but it is only as Dalla Piccola (chapters twenty-two to twenty-four) that he can interact and have sex with her. Simonini now realises that perhaps his personality had split, because he had needed someone with whom to converse ever since his childhood (p. 393). He 'kills' the Abbé for the second time and resumes his life as Simone Simonini. Dr Froïd's 'cure' seems to have worked.

The competent reader may now also recognise Simonini's obsession with food as a sign – that his compulsive eating habits may be a substitute for sex, taking into consideration his hate for females of all races, especially Jews. Freud's Psychosexual Stage Theory (Breuer & Freud 2002–2015) refers to oral fixation, for instance a personality preoccupied with eating and drinking, which releases tension through activities such as eating, drinking, smoking or biting nails.

The double entendre

A double entrende, in literature, is a figure of speech in which a spoken or written phrase is devised to be or is unintentionally understood in either of two ways. Typically one of the interpretations is rather obvious, whereas the other is more subtle (literarydevices.net), as in the case with names. The proper name Simon, for instance, translates into 'he has heard', or 'disciple', as in the biblical sense (behindthename.com), while 'simony' refers to the practice of selling holy relics, pardons or blessings (TheFreeDictionary. com). The surname Simonini can either be an endearment or belittlement, like '(poor) little Simon'. The proper name Dalla can mean any of the following: from the; by the; by; from, starting in, beginning at; since; out, away from; due to, caused by, and the surname Piccola 'small' or 'little one'. One possible meaning deduced from this is 'caused by the little one' a reference to Freud's views of childhood trauma and the harm it causes to the psyche.

The proper name Diana would also be recognised as a sign. The mythical Roman goddess Diana was a threefold divinity: Diana on earth, Luna, or the moon in heaven, and Hecate, or Proserpine in hell. The poets say she had three heads, one of a horse, another of a woman, and the third of a dog (tributesandtriumphs.org). The demon Haborym, described by Diana Vaughn in one of her supposed writings (p. 367), is a demon of fire and a duke of hell, who commands 26 legions. He appears holding a torch, riding a viper and has

three heads: a serpent, a man, and a cat (deliriumsrealms. com). The mythical Diana's nature was as varied as her many associations. As goddess of forests and hunting, she was considered to be pure and virginal. Yet she could also be arrogant and vengeful. As goddess of the moon, she had a changeable, unpredictable nature. As goddess of the dark world of the dead, she was unforgiving and bloodthirsty. Her varied personality traits are, of course, reminiscent of Diana Vaughn's mental state. It was while taking part in a satanic ritual as High Priestess that she seduced Dalla Piccola, which lead to her murder and an end to the double life of Simonini or Piccola.

'This bomb is going to cause one hell of a stir' (p. 403)

In the final pages of the novel Simonini gets ready to plant a bomb in excavations for the Paris Metro with the aim to 'once again, alone ... defeat an entire race' (p. 426). The sewer where the evidence of his crimes are becoming mummified and the underground labyrinth that will eventually become the metro system, in Jungian terms signify the subconcious mind and its archetypes (Jung 1964). The existence of the unconscious was first pointed out by Freud, who assumed it to be a personal thing contained within an individual. Jung, on the other hand, saw the personal unconscious as sitting atop a much deeper universal layer of consciousness, the *collective* unconscious – the inherited part of the human psyche not developed from personal experience. Simonini's apartment is on street level and represents the conscious mind (Spruyt 2009); underneath lies the sewer – his unconscious mind and burial place of his personal misdeeds. Below that the metro is being excavated – the collective unconscious with its neural pathways, a metaphor for tunnels and railway lines that will take passengers (and their knowledge) to all corners of Europe. The ending is left open: does Simonini, in fact, blow himself up in a final act of hatred against the Jews, or perhaps as redemption of his many sins?

Graphic art in *The Prague cemetery*

Clearly there is more in the twisting of history and fiction in *The Prague cemetery* than meets the eye. Simonini and Dalla Piccola share more than just one mind, their muddled personalities influence each other in various ways. Nothing is as it seems. Dalla writes in his diary '... our two stories are much more complicated than they seem ... I cannot bear this game of double co-incidence'. Therefore the Model Reader has to do what 'those who read for simple pleasure' cannot do – decode the signs and meanings hidden in the text and so unravel the twisted tale of mixed personalities, deception and intrigue on a grand scale.

The Model Reader will also know that the protocols has had a profound effect on the world at large. According to Moss (2011) the forgeries were extensively read and believed after its publication in Russia in 1903 [*sic*], although it was widely known to have been plagiarised from fictional sources. This is exactly what Eco does: he pieces together what little

is known of the origins of the text, and offers Simonini as the originator of the most toxic of all forgeries, for the enjoyment of the weak reader, those who are 'gullible and easily influenced by the media'. But are the times and lives of Simonini and Dalla Piccola only a means to the goal as set out above? For instance, what role does graphic art play in the novel? According to Hammack (2014) these types of art 'stand between' the text and the reader with the aim of transforming the reader's experience of reading. This transformation can be described as the period of drowsiness immediately preceding sleep, a time of 'hypnagogic hallucinations' (Merriam Webster Dictionary online), when the 'inner landscape and outer landscape can blend', and the fantastic and realistic converge. Eco uses graphic art as a nostalgic trip down memory lane for the average reader, and for the more erudite reader, it serves as signs on paper, allowing him to embark 'on a journey that is more interior, philosophic and imaginative' (Hammack 2014); 'to recognize the text as a form of travel guide that prepares readers to explore new frontiers (inside and outside) themselves' (Kroll 2010 cited by Hammack 2014). The 'double co-incidence' now becomes 'double understanding', a matter of ideological competence that includes philosophical and spiritual values. The text has indeed anticipated the competence which, on the one hand, addresses the values of 'good' versus 'evil', while on the other hand, it goes beyond this simple opposition.

Therefore, it is suggested that the tale of a country in turmoil, where leaders cannot be trusted, and nepotism, bribery and corruption prevail, murderous schemes, revolution and wars are plotted, finds a mirror image of the dualities present in the life of the individual. Is murder on a grand scale (the holocaust, for instance) more evil than the murder of a single person? Are forms of schizophrenia (mayoclinic. org) a malady that penetrates all societies via the collective unconscious, allows people to interpret reality abnormally, and results in combinations of hallucinations, delusions and disordered thinking and behaviour? Or in a lesser way, periodically disrupts the usual balance of emotions and thinking? Does good always prevail?

Conclusion

Jung was referring to the terrifying subject of the human condition when he wrote that:

> [W]hen it [*our shadow*] appears … it is quite within the bounds of possibility for a man to recognize the relative evil of his nature, but it is a rare and shattering experience for him to gaze into the face of absolute evil. (Jung 1964 cited by Griffith 2011)

In other words, to examine the issue of the human condition. This may be a shattering experience for the individual, as well as a nation. One possible solution is for the human mind to live on the very surface of existence; in other words, to live a superficial, escapist existence. On the other hand, 'Only by understanding how we are all a part of the same contemporary pattern (of wars, cruelty, greed and indifference) could we defeat those dark forces with a true understanding of their nature and origin' (Jung 1976 cited by Griffith (2011) – a case of

double understanding of the narrative in *The Prague cemetery*. It is suggested that an exploration into the dilemma of the human condition and especially humans' capacity to perform both good and evil deeds, is what the author's intention was; that it does not follow of necessity that history always repeats itself.

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Competing interests

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