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## PHILOSOPHY, TEACHING AND SEMIOTICS: An analysis of the teaching and learning process in the work *The Name of the Rose*

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**Abstract:** This communication intends to discuss the teaching of philosophy in relation to literary text through the semiotic pedagogy presented by the character

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Guilherme de Baskerville in the plot *The Name of the Rose*, in which Friar Guilherme teaches his disciple Adso de Melk to interpret the world and life through signs. To achieve this, firstly, there will be an exposition of the emblematic episode of the Brunello horse at the beginning of the work where Guilherme presents his semiotic method of discovering enigmas that seemed to have no solution. This semiotic methodology is gradually being taught to his disciple Adso, who absorbs it as an instrument in the process of philosophizing to solve practical problems in life. In a second stage we will discuss the drama of the mysterious deaths in the monastery presenting the philosophical meaning in relation to the symbols of the apocalypse and the places in the physical space of the monastery such as: stables, pigsties, library, garden, chapel. Parallel to this, the path and evolution of teaching and learning carried out between master and disciple through readings of hyper-coded signs and meta-abduction will be presented. In this sense, the literary text presents a contact with philosophy considering that what cannot be grasped through pure theory is more accessible through the narrative and its figures. The closed space of the monastery will be reinterpreted in this study in comparison with closed environments of postmodern society such as luxury condominiums where total independence is sought from those outside the walls, consolidating a harsh social division between poor and

rich. Therefore, the semiotic pedagogy present in Eco's narrative presents not only a reinterpretation of the medieval cultural encyclopedia, but a semiotic instrument that can teach the student of contemporary society to better interpret the signs and meanings of the current world, especially those of the digital world of artificial intelligences. Finally, we will consider that the enlightened subject of the late Middle Ages harbors perceptions that are contrary to his conservative dogmatic reality and that coincide with aspects of the postmodern subject of the 'pensiero debole', who disbelieves in grand narratives.

**Keywords:** Teaching; Philosophy; Semiotics.

## **1. Historical description: closed environment and open narrative, memory and semiotics**

The story takes place at the end of 1327. The Franciscan friar William of Baskerville and his young Benedictine novice assistant Adso of Melk arrive at an abbey in northern Italy, possibly in an area that lies between the confines of France, Piemonte, and Liguria. Here are two delegations, one of Pope John XXII and the other of Emperor Ludovico the Bavarian, gathered in neutral camp to discuss the extremist positions on the poverty of Christ of exponents of the Franciscan order

(fraticelli, spirituals). According to Bausi (2011) we are faced with several paradoxes, as Eco structures elements of postmodernity, but writes a novel in the medieval; he is an advocate of open work, but the story takes place in a closed abbey; Its characters are mostly religious, however they expose relativist, materialist and atheist ideas and conceptions. In the closed and cold space of the abbey there are important personages; some are the result of Eco's narrative invention, others are real historical characters such as Michele de Cesena, general of the Franciscans, Ubertino, Bernardo Gui and many others. Therefore it is full of religious of all kinds: friars and fraticelli, Franciscans, Dominicans, flagellates and other religious belonging to minor orders. The most important thing is that everyone is in confrontation and divided on whether to sustain or refute the poverty of Christ and the Church: But, "the question is not whether Christ was poor, it is whether the church should be poor. And poor does not mean owning or not owning a palace, as well as maintaining or abandoning the right to legislate on earthly things" (ECO, 2018a, p.374).

For Boff (1985), the movements gathered around the ideal of poverty sought a return to the ideal of a poor and humble church, opposing the imperialist and clerical church. Amazed by the context in which the character found himself, Adso declares:

The peninsula, in which more than in any other country the clergy boasted power and wealth, had generated, for at least two centuries, movements of men aimed at a poorer life, in controversy with the corrupt priests, from whom they refused even the sacraments, meeting in autonomous communities [...] (ECO, 2018a, p. 87).

In comparisons with characters from other novels, it is clear that it is not difficult to relate William and Adso to Arthur Conan Doyle's famous pair of investigators, Sherlock Holmes and Watson: "we immediately suspect that William is a figure analogous to Sherlock Holmes, since in the abbey he investigates a series of crimes" (BURGESS, 1985, p. 185). In this case, as in other detective novels, the investigator follows a series of false leads. This technique in search of a solution to crimes is necessary for the development of all the details of the narration and create a series of tensions that enrich the plot. While Guilherme follows the false clues, the text presents several grafts on the historical context of the time and the lives of several characters such as Ubertino, Remigius, Salvatore, Severino, Nicolas and the girl with no name. After reading the first chapters, one realizes the importance of the various analyses and discourses, monologues, thoughts,

fears, desires, loves, dreams, presented in the worldview of each character. Soon, the reader is faced with a profusion of speeches, debates, and polemics about God, faith, religion, philosophy, politics, power, the clergy, and the methods of the inquisition. In addition to the various debates, there are references to historical figures, such as St. Francis of Assisi, Friar Dolcino, Joachim of Fiore, and many other religious, thinkers and heretics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In this sense, "The name of the rose unites the structures and techniques of the historical novel with those of *the metaphysical giallo*<sup>2</sup> and the self-reflexive narratives in vogue in its publication" (CAPOZZI, 1985, p. 157). Finally, in a complex architectural and symbolic analysis, many pages of the book are dedicated to the description of the abbey and the library, showing a true exposition of medieval aesthetics<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Police metaphysics becomes the pleasant place in the narrative in which Eco seeks to express his theory. "The political novel represents a history of conjecture in its pure state [...] Basically, the basic question of philosophy is the same as that of the detective story: whose fault is it?" (ECO, 2018b, p. 549).

<sup>3</sup> Medieval aesthetics is a theme that is at the heart of Eco's writings. In *The Name of the Rose* it appears mainly in artistic manifestations such as: the relief of the church portal, the architecture of the abbey, the relics of the crypt, the illuminations of the monks and in Gregorian chant, or the work itself as an intertextual labyrinth in which one can enter and not leave. Eco's first studies on the subject is his own thesis *The Aesthetic Problem in Thomas Aquinas*. In another text, Eco states that,

Another key to reading the work is the contrast between the closed environment and the open narrative, as well as the confrontations of the sociocultural context. The abbey with its importance and all its rules appears as a closed and isolated place, only Remigius and Salvatore have contacts with the people of the place to receive supplies. Most of the friars and administrators of the abbey had no contact with society outside the walls, with the urban centers, although these are in constant development, therefore, they are isolated from all the transformations of society, so one of the monks, Aymaro of Alexandria says:

We are here, and down there in the cities they are acting... in the past from our abbeys the world was governed [...] We are harvesting wheat and raising chickens, and down there they exchange silk arms for pieces of linen, and pieces of linen for sacks of spices, and all together with good money. We keep our treasure, but treasures are

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"in the Middle Ages there is a conception of purely intelligible beauty, of moral harmony, of metaphysical splendor, and that we can only understand this way of feeling if we penetrate with great love into the mentality and sensibility of that time" (ECO, 2010, p. 18). In the work *Scritti sul pensiero medievale* (2012) there is a collection of practically everything that Eco wrote about medieval aesthetics.

piled up below. And even books. And more beautiful than ours (ECO, 2018a, p.159).

In fact, the abbey has at least two groups in constant clashes, one is those who want to open the abbey and the library to the renaissance world that is emerging, the other totally conservative defends tradition even committing murders. A central theme is also the wisdom of William of Baskerville, in his action as a researcher and in his speeches he always resorts to his vast knowledge of philosophical and scientific texts, making explicit and implicit references to various authors such as William of Ockham (semiotics), Roger Bacon (science) and Marsilius of Padova (political philosophy). He also uses instruments considered pioneers in that context, such as compasses and glasses: "[...] he stuck his hands in his habit [...] he took out an object [...] a fork in order to correspond to his eyes, two oval metal circles expanded, which enclosed two thick glass almonds" (ECO, 2018a, p. 111).

In the dialogues with Ubertino and Severino arborista, Guiherme demonstrates that he knows the chemistry of his time and the power of herbs, always referring to Roger Bacon, "you know that I venerate Roger Bacon more than any other among my masters (ECO, 2018a, p. 100). In the dialogue with Severino in the laboratory, he records: "on shelves, a series of ampoules, jars, vases, full of substances of various colors were



extended" (ECO, 2018a, p.100). On the other hand, with the art of reading the signs he develops a true semiotics that he learned from his friend William of Ockham, "I heard that he is now close to a friend of mine who is from the curia, William of Ockham (ECO, 2018a, p. 93). Science<sup>4</sup>, logic, and knowledge of the books will be the three instruments that will help William solve the mysteries of the abbey. Once Guilherme and Adso understand that the mysteries of the crimes are related to the library and its staunch guardians, they begin to intertwine the facts with the mystery of a forbidden text hidden in the heart of the library. However, not all critics of the work agree with the performance of this character, for Zecchini (1985), for example:

Guilherme de Baskerville is what no medieval man could be: he is the synthesis of the probable components of an ideal medieval man interpreted with the eyes of our contemporary through the distorting lens of the a posteriori interpretation of historical events (ZECCHINI, 1985, p. 329).

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<sup>4</sup> The work presents Guilherme as an innovator also in the field of natural sciences and new inventions. "[...] Such progress, which was essentially more quantitative than qualitative, was not negligible. Diffusion of instruments, machines and techniques, known in Antiquity, but considered more as rarities or curiosities than innovations, such is the positive aspect of technical evolution in the medieval West" (LE GOFF, 2018, p. 191).

It is also clear that right from the beginning Guilherme and Adso are impressed by the size and importance of the library. After the speeches with Alinardo and the Abbot, the library is understood as mysterious, labyrinthine and impenetrable: "the library was full of secrets and especially books that had never been given to the monks as reading" (ECO, 2018a, p. 171). Already in the first meeting between Guilherme and Jorge in the *scriptorium*, it is clear that the latter blind man talks about forbidden books, disapproves of laughter and the comic "laughter is something very close to death and the corruption of the body" (ECO, 2018a, p. 132). He does not appreciate Adelmo's drawings and miniatures because they made use of the comic: "[...] comedies were written by pagans to make viewers laugh, and in this they were bad [...] laughter shakes the body, deforms the lines of the face, makes man similar to the monkey" (ECO, 2018a, p. 166).

In this sense, "Jorge de Burgos represents that tradition that prohibits laughter, however, [...] since he recognizes that laughing is inherent to the human being, he begins to terrify those who laugh" (GOÉS, 2009, p. 218). Guilherme understands that there is a secret place in the library called *finis africae*. Jorge's rigid and structured plan is consummated and along with the deaths, the fire and the destruction. His zealous defense of a dogmatic truth

represents the ruin of the conservative part of the late Middle Ages. Not even Abbot Abbone escapes George's murderous mind: "And the abbot? William asked. Is he the one who is agonizing on the secret ladder? Jorge had a moment of hesitation: Are you still alive? He asked. I thought he had already run out of air" (ECO 2018a, p. 491).

George destroys the book, the library and the abbey that kept the secret. But, before eating the poisoned text and causing the fire that destroys everything, he still argues with Guilherme about the danger of laughter and that book. This discussion closes a series of dialogues between intelligence and different ideologies held by Guilherme and Jorge, Guilherme and Bernardo Gui, Bernardo Gui and Remígio.

For a more complete understanding of the structure of the novel, it is necessary to pay special attention to the "terrible story of Adso de Melk" (ECO, 2018a, p. 41), written and narrated by Adso himself at an advanced age. In this aspect, the function of memory takes on a fundamental dimension. After many years, Adso returns to the place of the great events of his youth in search of anything that has stood the test of time. However, he only finds: "[...] larvae of books, apparently still healthy on the outside, but devoured on the inside: yet sometimes half a leaf was saved, an incipit, a title appeared..." (ECO, 2018a, p. 526).

Having almost nothing real in the outside world, therefore, it remains to rely on memory to reconstruct the history of which it was a witness and writes in the hope that its future readers will have some benefit and pleasure. Laughter and pleasure in reading means for Eco inferences or leaps outside the text that will happen according to the encyclopedic capacity of each reader. Adso leaves his work as a testimony without knowing how it will be interpreted: "I leave this scripture, I don't know to whom, I don't know about what else" (ECO, 2018a, p. 526). In this sense, the work itself is an attempt to make the truth laugh because it addresses classic themes of human existence without pointing out absolute answers, it is a labyrinth in which one can easily become disoriented in the great intertextual network.

With the final message, Adso suggests readers to look for all the meanings of the Latin verse "stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus"<sup>5</sup> (ECO 2018a, p. 526). Thus it becomes clearer that it is in the novel itself, considered as an open work, that one should look for the texts that can suggest and explain the meaning of the book, as much as one will be able to find the reader. This possible explanation can appear from various areas such as theology, history, philosophy, law, aesthetics. Adso's words are a suggestion to the reader that he has read a

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<sup>5</sup> The old rose is in the name, we have only names.

story much more complete than a simple *detective story*, born around a forbidden book and its dangerously poisoned pages. In this sense, the work itself can be labyrinthine because the flood of quotations can leave the reader astonished and unable to point out any interesting path, so there remains a relativism, skepticism and absolute nihilism<sup>6</sup>.

In this research we will have the work of reading the open work, finding the various clashes and philosophical sources present in the text and considering the literary strategies of the model author. Since the work presents sources that range from Greek philosophy to contemporary times, we will not be able to decode and problematize all the philosophical theories present in the text. That is why we emphasize only those that are directly linked to semiotic theories and the notion of subject that is

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<sup>6</sup> From our analysis we realize that Guilherme and Adso go through an existential transformation during the plot, and the two come to an end with many characteristics of nihilistic subjects. Nihilism here is understood from Nietzsche's perspective where, "nihilism is the historical process in the course of which the supreme traditional values - God, truth, the good - lose their values and perish" (ABBAGNANO, 1998, p. 758). It is further defined as, "radical nihilism is the condition of the absolute unsustainability of existence, when it refers to the higher values that are accepted, we also add the knowledge that we have no right to fix a beyond or an 'in-itself' of things. (NIETZSCHE, 2001, p. 25).

born from the confrontation between medieval and postmodernity.

## 2. SEMIOTICS, CRIMES AND POLITICS: CONJECTURES AND METABDUCTIONS

Even before the philosophical clashes between the representations of the characters in the work *The Name of the Rose*, a surprising fact draws attention at the beginning of the plot. It is the escape of the horse Brunello from the monastery, which becomes an important occasion for the character William of Baskerville to demonstrate his semiotic skills grounded in and influenced by Charles Peirce's theory of abduction and unlimited semiosis (1974, 2005). Other philosophical influences also appear, such as the nominalism of William of Ockham (1989, 2002); Wittgenstein's language games, philosophy and mysticism (2017, 2009). Theory of signs and philosophical clashes surround all the events of the work, "at the beginning of the book Guilherme introduces us to the secret of his method of semiological investigation" (KERMODE, 1985, p. 194). For Peirce, for example, abduction can be understood as:

[...] the process to form explanatory hypotheses. It is the only logical operation to introduce new ideas; since induction

does nothing more than determine a value, and deduction involves only the necessary consequences of a pure hypothesis (PEIRCE, 1974, p. 52).

Throughout the plot William of Baskerville<sup>7</sup> always appears reasoning in a logical and investigative way, he tests various investigation strategies, as in the case of the marks left by the horse Brunello and the various crimes and enigmas of the monastery. In this way, his secretary and narrator of the plot, Adso de Melk, presents him as "such an acute man, and with regard to the facts of nature, he knew how to distinguish the minimum inequality and the minimum kinship between things" (ECO, 2018a, p. 158).

At a certain point, he himself presents part of his biography in conversation with Ubertino<sup>8</sup>:

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<sup>7</sup> In the course of the text, we will present the *ethos* of some characters in a summarized way to help in the general understanding of the problem of the thesis. Ethology is presented here as, "the science that studies the human characters, customs and behaviors of living beings that inhabit the same environment. Aristotle uses this term to indicate the characteristics of the characters that populate the literary text" (D'ONOFRIO 2004, p. 30).

<sup>8</sup> Ubertino di Casale was a Franciscan friar in Genoa around 1273, and from his convent he was sent to Paris, where he continued his studies for almost ten years. After that time, he returned to Italy where he met John of Parma, who was the superior of the spiritual Franciscans. After occupying various positions, he left his post to devote himself to

[...] eighteen years have passed. I returned to my land. I also studied at Oxford. I studied nature [...] I found very wise friends. Then I met Marsilio, I was attracted by his ideas about the empire, about the people, about a new law for the kingdoms of the earth, and so I ended up in that group of our confreres who are advising the emperor (ECO 2018a, p. 98).

We have, therefore, a plot that involves its main character in clashes, on the one hand, linguistic gnosiological and, on the other hand, in political and theological conflicts. The meaning of William's presence in that abbey<sup>9</sup> was to be "a mediator between the Franciscan

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preaching in this region, becoming the leader of the spirituals of Tuscany. Because of the fanaticism of the movement, especially the Fraticelli were accused of heresies by the pope. Years later, he left the order and asked permission to retire to a Benedictine convent. But as he went on with his doctrines, he was finally excommunicated by Pope John XXII. After this, Ubertain probably fled to Germany under the protection of Louis IV of Bavaria.

<sup>9</sup> The abbey is the widest space where the entire plot is developed, "whatever the literary text, it is fundamental to capture its meaning the survey and analysis of the spatial elements" (D'ONOFRIO 2004, p. 99). Inside it is the library complex, chapel, vegetable garden, pigsties, etc... which will be fundamental for the understanding of the whole work, because "the Benedictine abbeys developed a fruitful cultural roll by transmitting tradition and producing books throughout the high medieval" (ROSSI, 1985, p. 265).



order and the pontifical see" (ECO, 2018a, p. 180). In the plot, the minorities<sup>10</sup> were being accused of heresy by Pope John XXII<sup>11</sup> for defending the poverty of Christ and a new social order with the participation of the people, in turn, were defended by the emperor<sup>12</sup>.

Despite being a religious, Guilherme's personality is forged by a strong skepticism: "Uncertain of my truth, even if I believe in it" (ECO, 2018a, p. 240). In his research activity, he has a deep knowledge of the Aristotelian logic of deduction and induction, however, he seeks to formulate hypotheses outside traditional logic. His

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<sup>10</sup> According to Eco, a group of Franciscan branches that emerged from the Perugia chapter that defended the poverty of Christ sometimes confused with other groups such as fraticelli that used violence, revenge and bloodthirsty madness to achieve their goals (ECO, 2018a, p. 94, 183, 260, 374-375).

<sup>11</sup> Jacques d'Euse (John XXII) was the second of the Avignon popes, during which time the pontifical see due to conflicts with the King of France Philip IV (the Fair) was stabilized in Avignon. "John XXII, elected pope in the conclave of Carpentras on August 7, 1316, was an authoritarian pontiff, concentrator of powers and convinced of *the plenitude potestatis papae* (plenitude of papal power). It articulated centralism and doctrinal rigidity" (CAMASTRO, 2002, p. 9).

<sup>12</sup> Louis IV (1282-1347), known as 'the Bavarian', was Holy Roman Emperor from 1328 until his death. With "Sachsenhausen's appeal delegitimizes the political and moral powers of the Avignon papacy [...] considers John XXII an Epicurean heretic who does not believe in the future life and inverts the values of truth, not putting into practice the knowledge of Christ who did not present himself to the world *in habundanciam diviciarum* (with abundance of vices)" (CAMASTRO, 2002, p. 9).

disciple Adso confesses: "attending my master, I had realized, and I realized more and more in the days that followed, that logic could be very useful as long as it was possible to enter it and then leave it" (ECO, 2018a, p. 294). The way Guilherme uses logic is totally different from his opponents, Abbone, Jorge and Bernardo Gui, whom we will get to know gradually. While he uses the instruments of logic as momentary utensils, his opponents use it as a dogmatic rule. Despite being a character set in the Middle Ages, Guilherme reasons with some contemporary thoughts. Logic seen as an instrument of momentary use, a network, for example, is an idea of Wittgenstein's philosophy (2017) where "the various networks correspond to different systems of describing the world" (WITTGENSTEIN, 2017, p. 123). During his stay at the abbey,<sup>13</sup> he behaves like a person who sees the world and life as a net, or a ladder, incorporating the mystical silence of the first Wittgenstein, "that he is mystical, not as the world is, but that he is" (WITTGENSTEIN, 2017, p. 128). Guilherme always sees laughter, the comic, comedy as a privileged channel to communicate the truth, since these channels are forbidden in the monastery, therefore, silence

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<sup>13</sup> It is worth remembering that the abbey and the library, which we will study later "[...] constitute polysemic images: they are at the same time *a topic* of the literary and philosophical imaginary, epistemological metaphors and operators of symbols" (FORCHETTI, 2013, p. 191).

remains. In an analogous way, the first Wittgenstein was right that only scientific language would be the clearest and, reaching its limit, should be silent. In this sense, one of the intentions of the novel forged by intertextuality is the one presented by Lottarulo (1985) in which: "The narrator researcher and the reader must throw away the ladder after they have climbed, and thus recognize that the meaning of the narration is a mystical sense" (LOTTARULO, 1985, p. 90).

In the surprising facts that we will analyze in the following pages, it will be clear that Guilherme also assumes a nominalist posture at various times when "things should not be multiplied unnecessarily" (ECO, 2018a, p. 128). Still for Lattarulo (1985) "the whole novel is placed in the context of the philosophical revolution constituted by ocamism" (LOTTARULO, 1985, p. 91). For Horia (1985) Eco exposes a nominalist structure in the novel from the first to the last page, in fact, the main nominalist ideas are present in the work; the first, of a logical and linguistic scope, "science has to do with propositions and their terms, and terms indicate singular things" (HORIA, 1985, p. 119). The second, in the social theological sphere, "there are no universal laws because it would imply an order starting from things and would mean that God was a prisoner of this order" (HORIA, 1985, p. 119). On the other hand, it must be understood that God is totally free and if it were not for the world it would have

another aspect. William of Baskerville is also a follower of Roger Bacon's science, for whom: "The new science of nature should be the new great enterprise of the learned" (ECO, 2018a, p. 238). In moments of deep anguish, always according to Adso, Guilherme:

[...] he was absorbed with a gaze lost in the air, as if he was not seeing anything [...] he had taken from his habit a sprig of those herbs that he had seen him collect weeks before, and he had started to chew them as if he were getting a kind of calm excitement (ECO, 2018a, p. 246).

At other times in his life he practiced a constant philosophizing, Guilherme decided not to do anything else: "as if the cycle of the stars had stopped, and he also with them [...] he stretched himself over the flood with his eyes open in the void and his hands crossed on his chest [...]" (ECO, 2018a, p.319). William was also accused of a deep intellectual pride. When he says goodbye to his mystical colleague Ubertino, he hears the following words: "goodbye, Guilherme, you are a crazy and arrogant Englishman, but you have a big heart" (ECO, 2018a, p. 420). Much of his time, Guilherme tries to account for the mission received by the abbot to unveil the deaths of the community, "the abbot stood up and presented Guilherme to the monks [...] and warned them that he had been asked

to investigate Adelmo's death" (ECO, 2018a, p. 133). He comes to believe in a murderer who follows the signs of the seven trumpets of the apocalypse, but ends up revealing the enigmas by chance. After failing his mission as mediator of the meeting and with the death of Severino, Guilherme focuses on the search for a mysterious book and the murderer:

[...] I find the most joyful delight in unraveling a beautiful and intricate plot [...] as a philosopher, I doubt that the world has an order, it consoles me to discover, if not an order, at least a series of connections in small portions of the world's affairs (ECO 2018a, p. 421).

Guilherme ends up apparently bankrupt in several aspects. His mission failed, he was unable to arrest the murderer and recover the book that made the truth laugh, the second book of Aristotle's poetics. With the burning of the library and consequently of the abbey, he reaffirms his skepticism: "the only truth is to learn to free ourselves from the insane passion for truth" (ECO, 2018a, p. 518). His disciple Adso, who also inherited his worldview, recounted the end of his life when they arrived in Munich:

[...] I had to separate, among many tears, from my good master [...] he gave me a lot

of good advice for my future studies, and he gave me the lenses that Nicola had made for him [...] I didn't see him anymore. He learned much later that he had died during the plague that spread across Europe [...] I always pray that God will forgive [...] the many acts of pride that his intellectual pride had made him commit (ECO 2018a, p. 524-525).

Now that we know William's biography, we proceed to analyze the semiotic philosophy that emerges from the astonishing event of the escapade of the horse Brunello. "When we observe Guilherme's way of reasoning, always made up of observations, hypotheses and deductions [...]" (CAPOZZI, 1985, p. 164); it can be seen that it follows what Pierce (1974, 2005) called attempts to guess or its three levels of hypotheses. By semiotics, Eco means "the discipline of the essential nature of the fundamental varieties of all possible semiosis" (ECO, 2015, p. 182).

William is always observing nature as a system of coded signs<sup>14</sup> and recognizes on the road when he arrives

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<sup>14</sup> From Eco's perspective, one can "conceive of the code as a double entity that establishes, on the one hand, semantic correlations and, on the other, rules of syntactic combinability" (ECO, 2018c, p. 79). This is because the purpose of a sign can be analyzed in itself or in perspective of its various combinations in diverse contexts.

at the abbey tracks (marks) of animals in the snow like those of a horse. This makes it possible to specify traces as events codified in a cultural and social encyclopedia<sup>15</sup> that lead him to infer that they are traces "significant relative to a certain class of animals" (ECO, 2015, p. 206). The display of marks in the snow in itself is simple, because if they are not recognized by Guilherme and taken as signs (symptoms or indications), it remains only a mark with no correlation with its content. The interpretative process requires a correlation between physical causes of marks caused by the horse and of an interpretative subject who in different existential situations will infer a falsifiable proposition. All this generates a semiotic phenomenon; according to Eco "semiosis is an action [...] which implies, a cooperation of three subjects, the sign, its object and its interpretant" (ECO, 2015, p. 182). At first, the concrete animal horse is not yet called into question, what Guilherme can already infer is that the trail refers, by previous habits, to a class of possible causes. Therefore,

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<sup>15</sup> The encyclopedia is a semiotic postulate. Not in the sense that it is not a semiotic reality: it is the recorded set of all interpretations, objectively conceivable as the library of libraries, where a library is also an archive of all the non-verbal information in some way registered, from cave paintings to cinematheques. But it must remain a postulate because in fact it is not describable in its entirety (ECO, 1991, p.113).

the semiotic relationship of marks with class of possible causes results in a series of possible illustrations.

For example, the circular mark on the bottom of a bottle of wine on wood or paper does not reproduce a complete image of the bottle or the quality of the wine, but only an image of the base of the bottle. In the same way, the base of Brunello's hooves (marks) left on the path exposes the shape of the hoof and can only be correlated with horses' hooves with further connection: "A mark is the projection of the pertinent traits of the possible cause, without yet having a clear correspondence between symptom and cause" (ECO, 2015, p. 207). Brunello's marks are recognized by Guilherme in their genus and species considering the cataloged code of marks at different levels. For this reason, he recognizes not only marks of a horse, but "the best galloper of the team" (ECO, 2018a, p. 61), due to the perfect symmetry of the gallop distance and the "small and rounded hoof" (ECO, 2018a, p. 61).

Deepening his repertoire as a semiotic detective, Guilherme tests other forms of signic interpretation: symptoms and indices. The cause of a symptom (indication, sign), "is a trace or component of the semema correlated to a given expression-symptom" (ECO, 2015, p. 207). Guilherme discovers symptoms (signs, traces) when he finds "newly broken branches at the height of five feet and long black manes" (ECO, 2018a, p. 61). He recognizes that the facts correspond to an external force that acted on



the matter, but the code still offers nothing about the nature of the cause (Brunello). On the other hand, the clues (proofs, evidence) "are objects left by an external agent in the place where something happened" (ECO, 2015, p. 207), Brunello leaves long black manes on the thorns, which leads Guilherme to infer the horse's "black skin", "the height of five feet" and its "sumptuous tail". Here something happens when the agent is recognized as physically connected, so that from its effective or possible presence one can deduce the effective or possible past presence of the agent.

According to Eco, for "the symptoms the encyclopedia registers a contiguity, present or necessary past between cause and effect" (ECO, 2015, p. 207), for example: hoof marks, broken branches at the height of five feet. The signs 'are complex symptoms' because it is first necessary to verify the presence of an indeterminate agent. Then consider this evidence as a possibly determined agent, conventionally recognized as the most likely possessor of the object left (black mane).

The code only says that if the mane is black it would be because some bearer of black manes left them there, but no encyclopedic information can give you certainty that the possessor was a horse. At first, the black manes still act as symptoms and not directly as indications. What the encyclopedia can tell you is that among so many horses, one left black manes there. So far Guilherme highlights

Re(senhas)

only the already known rules, marks, symptoms, indications that refer to a certain class of causes and thus is linked to hyper-codified abduction. In this type of abduction "the law is given automatically or semi-automatically [...] codified law [...] interpretation through codes presupposes an abductive effort, however minimal it may be" (ECO, 2015, p. 202). But having discovered those marks, "in that place and at that time of day" (ECO 2018a, p. 66), he could enunciate in an indicative way: "one of all possible horses had passed there" (ECO 2018a, p. 66). It is still a pragmatic and hyper-coded convention, but with openness to meta-abduction. So far, William knows only surprising facts disconnected through decoding abductions:

- A) that a horse passed through that place
- B) (unidentified) left round tracks in the snow
- C) (unidentified) branches broken five feet high
- D) (unidentified) black manes between the thorns

In this process of unveiling extraordinary events, Guilherme goes from hypercoded abductions to hypocoded ones. In these:

[...] the rule must be selected from a series of equiprobable rules made available to us by current knowledge of the world (semiotic encyclopedia) [...] the rule is selected because it is the most plausible among many, although without the certainty of

being the correct one, the explanation is only taken into account while waiting for subsequent verifications (ECO, 2015, p. 202).

The various visual enunciations that Guilherme experiences can form a coherent or disconnected text. To know the textual sequence, he needs to find a <sup>16</sup> textual topic that establishes a coherence between the still disconnected data. The choice of a *topic* is not a guarantee of a good result, Guilherme performs abductions to choose between possible readings.

Thus, he assumes a series of general codified intertextual conventions: 1) by stepping on the snow the horse leaves the mark of its hoof; 2) moving in the woods, it breaks the branches at the height of five feet; 3) the thorns retained the horse's black manes. In view of this, even if other phenomena could produce the same effect, Guilherme is in a position to 'experiment with his textual construction'.

From hypocoded abduction Guilherme moves on to metabduction. This "consists of deciding whether the

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<sup>16</sup> According to Eco "*topic* is a metatextual instrument, an abductive scheme proposed by the reader" (ECO, 2018d, p. 71). *Topic* can be understood at first glance as a theme, but the term theme "runs the risk of assuming other meanings" (ECO, 2018d, p. 71).

possible universe delineated by our first-level abduction is the same universe as our experience" (ECO, 2015, p. 203). Guilherme was not scientifically sure that his textual hypothesis was true, it was only textually credible because it interprets the data in an interconnected way. He knew that a horse had passed there leaving marks, signs and symptoms that could be interpreted by his affective world of experience. But the horse did not belong only to the world of William's experience, it belonged to the textual, encyclopedic world. World of beliefs, propositional world. The abductive process is a creator of worlds, "[...] The law must be invented *ex novo*. Inventing a law is not so difficult, as long as our mind is creative enough" (ECO, 2015, p. 203).

### 3. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Guilherme tries to guess, performs a metaduction by outlining a horse from the world of beliefs idealized by authorities of the time "Burudan and Isidoreo de Seville" (ECO 2018a, p. 62), which corresponds to the same horse from the real world that the saddler was looking for. His abduction succeeds, but William does not want to be a bearer of absolute truths: "We have not really seen him, have we Adso?" (ECO 2018a, p. 62). He is content to create possible worlds and be recognized, because: "he tolerated the vice of vanity when it came to giving proof of

shrewdness" (ECO 2018a, p. 62). The saddler and employees do not understand Guilherme's semiosis and are frightened, "they passed by us continuing to look at us somewhat stunned" (ECO 2018a, p. 62).

Finally, it is striking that the first enigma that Eco puts in the novel has a horse in the center and not a person from the monastery. This is a form of irony, as the subject Guilherme carries an intrinsic dualism: either he makes people laugh or he is silent, and thus states "that the horse is too intelligent to throw itself down the cliff" (ECO, 2018a, p. 61). This means that in an abbey of intellectuals controlled by a small group of old-fashioned monks, devotees of dogmatism and obscurantism, even a horse would be smarter. Brunello did not throw himself down the cliff, but Adelmo de Otronto, a very intelligent monk gifted with the technique of illumination, committed suicide by throwing himself from the wall. In addition, it may mean that in a closed environment and terrified by the presence of the devil, "the abbot looked around him, [...] as if the enemy wandered between those walls" (ECO 2018a, p. 67), even a horse tries to escape. It is also interesting that in the final pyrosis "brunello aurelado de fogo" (ECO 2018a, p. 517), he escapes definitively, and is one of the survivors, but not before running over the old Alinardo who was an enemy of Malachi and had been wronged in the past, losing his position as librarian. In the Christian tradition, the halo of fire is placed in the figure

of saints, so ironically the representation of Brunello can be interpreted as an intelligent and holy quality that should belong to monks, but in that abbey of crime, jealousy, envy, death, terror and corruption reigned.

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