

## **Decrypting the Encrypted Worlds: In Selected Works of Dan Brown and Steve Berry**

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**ABSTRACT:** Since the publication of Text Worlds by Paul Werth, Text World Theory has enjoyed a sustained level of attention, scrutiny, and development thanks to the work of other scholars. The interest that Text World Theory has generated over the past two decades has not only ensured the survival of the theory following the loss of its creator, but has furthermore become a canonical stylistic-analytical framework. This particular theory along with Semiotics is used to decrypt various discursive elements of the two worlds belonging to two different genres of fiction namely, *Inferno*, a scientific fiction and *Templar Legacy*, a historical fiction respectively to prove how the world built for the plots are similar to each other.

**KEYWORDS:** Text-world theory, Semiotics, Represented world, Discourse.

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Text World Theory is a cognitive linguistic theory of discourse processing proposed in its initial form by Paul Werth. The foundations of the theory were first set out in a series of articles published during the 1980s and 1990s. Werth's work on the theory was cut short due to his death in 1995. However, Werth was near completion of a manuscript for a monograph on Text World Theory at the time of his death and this manuscript was seen to be of such significance to the scholarly community that the work of preparing it for publication was taken on by colleague and fellow linguist Mick Short. The monograph, posthumously published in 1999 under the title *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse*, contains Werth's fullest explication of his Text World Theory.

While Text World Theory borrows some of its basic architecture from possible worlds theories – most notably, the concept of a “world” as a representation of a particular state of affairs – it departs from these theories considerably in its own treatment of meaning. As an experientialist, usage-based approach in which linguistic meaning is derived in part from extra-linguistic local and cognitive contexts, the theory assumes a rich but highly indeterminate structure for the worlds resulting from any particular use of language. Possible worlds, by contrast, are rigidly specified, minimalistic worlds, which contain only as much information as is needed to solve the particular logical problem for which the worlds have been constructed, and nothing more.

All text-worlds are established from a mixture of world-building elements (WB) and function-advancing propositions (FA). World-building elements represent the deictic and referential elements which define the time, location, and characters. On the other hand, function-advancing propositions are the events, actions and states which drive discourse forward.

As we know, Language can be defined as a system of communication that uses symbols and signs to deliver its meaning. In fact, symbol and signs are something that usually found in daily life as a vehicle of language to shape a concept or an idea. Study of these kind of symbols is known as semiotics. The meaning can be intentional such as a word uttered with a specific meaning, or unintentional, such as a symptom being a sign of a particular medical condition. Signs can communicate through any of the senses: visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, or gustatory.

Text World Theory is intended as a practical tool in the analysis of discourses. Therefore, the best way to develop an understanding of how the theory works is to apply it in analysis. Using the Text World along with semiotics, the Encrypted world of *Templar Legacy* and *Inferno* are analysed and compared in the following chapters, to see how similar or different they are from each other.

### **DECRYPTED WORLD OF *INFERNO* and *TEMPLAR LEGACY***

The world of *Inferno* is analysed and the discursive elements are discussed upon to find various elements which help in forming a ‘mental image’ for the readers. *Inferno*, a science fiction, is a 2013 mystery thriller by Dan Brown, is the fourth book in the Robert Langdon series, which includes *Angels and Demons*, *The*

*Da Vinci Code*, and *The Lost Symbol*. It was number one on the *New York Times* Best Seller list for hardcover fiction and combined print and e-book fiction for the first eleven weeks of its release and is stayed on the E-book fiction list for the first seventeen weeks. A film adaptation was released in 2016.

Below is a short extract from Chapter 15 in *Inferno*, in which Langdon, in his mind tries to extract the information of Dante's hell imagery and its significance in ongoing chaos from a painting in Sienna's kitchen-

"Inferno di Dante," Sienna whispered, her expression rapt as she inched closer to the stark image of the underworld now projected on her kitchen wall. Dante's vision of hell, Langdon thought, rendered here in living color. Exalted as one of the preeminent works of world literature, *The Inferno* was first of three books that made up Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*- a 14,223 line epic poem describing Dante's Brutal descent into the underworld...Dante related offerings".(*Inferno*:25;321)

This extract tries a wide description of Dante's hell as presented in the 'stark image' of the painting found in the kitchen of Sienna. This further helps creating in forming an epistemic subworld which is accessible by different participants which are attributed to Langdon. This epistemic subworld helps in providing a representation of the painting and the overall significance.

He pounded his fist again into the stone. Templars had first forged their destiny in forgotten caverns with the determination of zealots. He would do the same. The great devise was out there. He was close. He knew it" (*Templar Legacy*:14:124).

Through the discourses like the one aforementioned and some more, the desperateness of the quest to find the Great Devise is quite evident.

The whole journey is based on the search for the clue left by Saunière in his codes throughout the place before his death, that lead to source of his wealth and also the direction for the Great Devise that the league of Templars seeks. Just Like the mystic portrayal of Dante's *Inferno*, here too in Steve Berry's *Templar Legacy*, this also shows the cryptogram as a guiding light for the secrets he himself encoded.

This character is actually based on real life figure of priest located in the same place as mentioned in the novel, the small village Rennes-le-Château. François-Berenger Saunière (11 April 1852 – 22 January 1917) was a Roman Catholic priest in the French village of Rennes-le-Château, in the Aude region, officially from 1885 until he was transferred to another village in 1909 by his bishop. He declined this nomination and subsequently resigned. From 1909 until his death in 1917 he was a non-stipendiary Free Priest (an independent priest without a parish, who did not receive any salary from the church because of suspension), and who from 1910 celebrated Mass at an altar constructed in a special conservatory by his Villa Bethania. Saunier's refusal to leave Rennes-le-Château to continue his priesthood in another parish incurred permanent suspension.

The motivation of the antagonist of the 'Represented world' is clear. To find the solution for ever growing population on Earth, particular focus on exploitation of planet's resources beyond its capabilities ,and to put an end to humanity's exponential himself. The mode , A virus. It's up to Robert Langdon to solve puzzles using clues from Dante's *Inferno* to prevent this. Bio weapons is the major tool which is focused upon. Robert Langdon's antagonist the bioengineer named Bertand Zobrist, believable and, while a bit insane he wanted him to be methodical and convincing. The virus which is mentioned is as follows "Bertand's virus is a sterility plague. One third of the population will be infertile" (*Inferno*: 102:450)

Throughout the ongoing conversation between different characters , the author is able to create a believable yet far fetched virus into life. This representational virus is introduced to the reader , its origin and even the mode of transmission has been emphasized in a convincing way in which, Sinskey agrees.

The fastest spreading pathogen Zobrist could choose. Releasing an air bone virus underwater was unusual and yet there were many life forms that incubated in liquid and then hatched into air -mosquitoes, mould spores, the bacterium that caused Legionnaires' disease, mycotoxins, red tides, even human beings. Sinskey grimly pictures.... damp air (*Inferno*: 90:401).

Another prominent element which the author engages in creating his world is the usage of various symbols which in itself acts as a path finder or solution to the chaos. In this section, there are some symbols found in the realm of *Inferno* that are discussed and analysed.

The symbol itself is carved on the biohazard-tube seal which is acknowledged as a common image in Middle Age that is associated with the Black Death. Later, the storyline also mentions the presence of three-headed Satan in a mosaic of the Baptistry of San Giovanni that resembles the torturer for the damned. In result, the three gnashing mouths of Satan symbolize of how efficiently the plague ate through the masses .As the relationship between symbol and the recurring obstacle in the novel can be seen through the impact of Bertrand Zobrist's plague which is fast in curbing the population in the future.

Next symbol is of 'carnal malefactors'. The symbol represents second circle of Hell which the Hell consists of nine circles according to Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* part. This second circle is projected to the lustful which is one of the Seven Deadly Sins. The carnal malefactor itself is an eternal windstorm that blows the lustful as they are punished by their inability to control their desire. The desire reflected by the carnal

malefactors in the context of the novel can be seen through the social issue which is an overpopulation due to the inability of mankind to control their desire in procreation.

Then comes 'the eyes of death'. The refrain is found in the lower right corner of La Mappa of Botticelli penned as "the truth can be glimpsed only through the eyes of death" that later referring to Dante's Death Mask. This symbol is the first clue given by Bertrand Zobrist to find the plague which means that 'the eyes of death' itself symbolizes to the Dante's Death Mask that acquires Robert Langdon to peer into the back of the mask for finding the truth.

After examining this encrypted world on *Inferno*, the author, Dan Brown has used various discourses, between the characters as well as between the author and readers, and also employing symbols to create a world, a represented encrypted world to be exact, for the readers to engage and decipher its meaning and justify its presence.

Similarly almost similar technique of world building is employed in creating the world of *Templar legacy*, with some personal touches of the author of course. The *Templar Legacy*, a historical fiction, is a novel written by Steve Berry which is about Cotton Malone, an intriguing person. He is a lawyer/super spy/former US Government agent now retired in Copenhagen, selling books.

The novel taking place in present time is intertwined with the history of medieval ages, the Templar Knight's existence and their pursuit of lost treasure in the modern day. The Order still exists but they are hiding and disguised as regular monks. One of the marshals is in search for Templar's lost treasure and secret: The Great Device, the bones of Jesus Christ.

"He sucked a few deep breaths of the dank air and thought back to the beginning .AD 1118. The Holy Land had finally been wrestled from the Saracens and Christian kingdoms had been established, but a great danger still existed. So nine knights banded together and promised to the new Christian King of Jerusalem that the route to and from the holy land would be safe for pilgrims... The Templars were granted by the pope a legal autonomy unmatched in the Western world" (*Templar Legacy*:56:421).

This piece of extract is a brief history of Templars, how it rose to power and its immense power it withheld in the era, through the mind of the antagonist of the world of *Templar Legacy*, De Roquefort. This extract is able to create a participant accessible subworld of Templar's history and legacy, which the character De Roquefort holds dear.

The Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon (Latin: *Pauperes commilitones Christi Templique Salomonici*), also known as the Order of Solomon's Temple, the Knights Templar or simply the Templars, were a Catholic military order founded in 1119, headquartered on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem through 1128 when they went to meet with Pope Honorius II. They were recognized in 1139 by the papal bull *Omne datum optimum*. The order was active until 1312 when it was perpetually suppressed by Pope Clement V by the bull *Vox in excelso*.

In the created realm, the several hundred members of a secret Knights Templar hide out in an elaborate abbey in French mountains, protecting themselves and some of the shreds of secret knowledge that once were a key to their power. Formed in the 12th century, Knights Templar were "warrior monks," pious men who had no personal property but carried simple swords and were driven fighters.

Location and country landscapes, another important element in the process of world building is, of course, one's world's physical landscape. Steve Berry encompasses the beauty and history of the whole country in his portrayal of his characters, plot and the mystery as well. The story undertakes in Southern France. Many museums and landmarks have been revealed as the containers for mystery as the story moves forward. Rennes le Chateau's sudden fame and decade long myth is in the centre of the journey.

For instance,

Malone marveled at the Pyrenees, which were so much like the Alps in appearance and majesty. Separating France from Spain, the crests seemed to roll to infinity, each jagged peak crowned with bright snow, the lower elevations a mixture of green slopes and purple crags. Between the summit lay sun scorched valleys, deep, foreboding, the haunts of Charlemagne, The Franks, Visigoths and Moors... (*Templar Legacy*:56:457).

Which, in a similar fashion, the protagonist Cotton Malone is very much well versed in geography and the history bounded to it.

The address from Lars Nelle's notebook has led them down one of the many rues. As they walked Malone thought of the fourteenth century, when Popes exchanged Rome's Tiber river for the French Rhone and occupied the huge palace on the hill. Avignon became an asylum for the heretics. Jews gaming houses and brothels flourished. Policing was lax and roaming after the dark could be life threatening. (*Templar Legacy*: 25:191)

Along with Cryptogram as a symbol, Steve Berry has been able to incorporate various symbols in his encrypted world, for the readers to engage in as symbols played a major role in the quest for treasure and Great devise. symbol which is a written text, *Lisez les Regles du Caridad*, which represents the Reading the rules of

Caridad. This reference is to a painting done by Juan de Valdes Leal. This later on, is decoded contains to decrypt the secret of Sauniere. Another symbol is where Gospels as narrated by Thorvaldsen, mentions different symbols in which Jesus was compared. Luke describes Jesus as Meek. A lamb. Mathegoes the other way, for him Jesus does not bring in peace rather sword. The symbol which is throughout constant is the "Great devise". The Great Devise is a factual cache of treasure and knowledge that was hidden away from the French King, Phillip IV, during The Great Purge in 1307 when the Templars were wiped out for political reasons.

This novel revolves around the pursuit for this device. The Symbol, The Shroud of Turin, also known as the Holy Shroud, is a length of linen cloth bearing the negative image of a man. Some claim the image depicts Jesus of Nazareth and the fabric is the burial shroud in which he was wrapped after crucifixion.

This, interestingly similar to the world created by Dan Brown in his book *Inferno*, Steve Berry employs both symbols as well as various discursive techniques to form his represented world in his work *Templar Legacy*.

One of the critical pillars of speculative fiction is world building – an author must craft a world the reader can believe in. World building is the process of creating a fictional world within the novel that can be as complex as designing an entirely new and unique location with exotic creatures, societies, religions and governments. World building can transport readers into an entirely different realm. Once the reader is immersed in the world, they will be able to suspend disbelief and fully engage with the entire story structure to enjoy a full experience.

Although belonging to two different genres of fiction, both novels namely, *Templar legacy* and *Inferno*, creates their own 'Represented world' employing almost similar techniques, symbols and dialogues.

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