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DAILY TELEGRAPH

UMBERTO ECO

inventing the enemy

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About the Book

Inventing the Enemy covers a wide range of topics on which Umberto Eco has written and lectured over the last ten years, from the discussion of ideas that have inspired his earlier novels – exploring lost islands, mythical realms, and the medieval world in the process – to a disquisition on the theme that runs through his most recent novel, *The Prague Cemetery*, that every country needs an enemy, and if it doesn't have one, must invent it. Eco's lively new collection examines topics as diverse as St Thomas Aquinas's notions about the soul of an unborn child, indignant reviews of James Joyce's *Ulysses* by fascist journalists of the 1920s and 1930s, censorship, violence and Wikileaks.

These are essays full of passion, curiosity, and obsessions by one of the world's most esteemed scholars and critically acclaimed, bestselling novelists.

About the Author

Umberto Eco has written works of fiction, literary criticism and philosophy. His first novel, *The Name of the Rose*, was a major international bestseller. His other works include *Foucault's Pendulum*, *The Island of the Day Before*, *Baudolino*, *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana* and *The Prague Cemetery*, along with many brilliant collections of essays.

Also by Umberto Eco

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UMBERTO ECO

Inventing the Enemy

AND OTHER OCCASIONAL WRITINGS

Translated from the Italian
by Richard Dixon

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

Introduction

THE TITLE OF this collection ought to have been the subtitle, *Occasional Writings*. It was only my publisher's proper concern—that such a pompously modest title might not attract the reader's attention, whereas the title of the first essay may arouse curiosity—that determined the final choice.

What are occasional writings and what are their virtues? They are generally on topics about which the author had no specific interest. He was, instead, encouraged to write each one after being invited to contribute to a series of discussions or essays on a particular theme. It captured the author's interest and encouraged him to reflect on something he might otherwise have ignored—and often a subject imposed from outside turns out to be more fruitful than one arising from some inner whim.

Another virtue of occasional writing is that it does not demand originality at all costs, but aims to entertain the speaker as well as the listener. In short, occasional writing is an exercise in baroque rhetoric, as when Roxane sets challenges for Christian (and through him, for Cyrano), such as "speak to me of love."

At the end of each essay (all written over the past decade) I note the date and occasion. To emphasize their occasional nature I should mention that "Absolute and Relative" and "The Beauty of the Flame" were presented during the Milanesiana festival of literature, an event centered on a specific theme. It provided an interesting

opportunity to talk about the Absolute at a time when the controversy over relativism was blowing up, though the second essay was quite a challenge, as I had never before felt, shall we say, fired by such a topic.

"No Embryos in Paradise" is based on a lecture I gave in 2008 in Bologna at a conference on the ethics of research, which was then included in a book titled *Etica della ricerca medica e identità culturale europea*, edited by Francesco Galofaro (Bologna: CLUEB, 2009).

Thoughts on the poetics of excess in Victor Hugo bring together three different essays and lectures. I brazenly presented my entertainment called "Imaginary Astronomies" in two different versions at two different conferences, one on astronomy and the other on geography.

"Treasure Hunting" gathers various contributions on cathedral treasuries; "Fermented Delights" was presented during a conference on Piero Camporesi. "Censorship and Silence" was delivered almost off the cuff at the conference of the Italian Semiotics Association in 2009.

Three essays appeared in three different issues of the *Almanacco del bibliofilo*, in three different years, and are pieces of real entertainment, inspired by three set themes: "In search of new utopian islands" was the theme for "Living by Proverbs," "Sentimental digressions on readings from earlier times" for "I Am Edmond Dantès!," and "Late reviews" for "*Ulysses:* That's All We Needed …"

The penultimate essay, "Why the Island Is Never Found," appeared in the 2011 issue of the *Almanacco del bibliofilo* and is the text of a lecture given on islands at a conference in Sardinia in 2010.

"Thoughts on WikiLeaks" is the reworking of two articles, one that appeared in *Libération* (December 2, 2010) and the other in *L'Espresso* (December 31, 2010). Finally, returning to the first essay, "Inventing the Enemy" was delivered as one of a series of lectures on the classics organized at the University of Bologna by Ivano Dionigi.

These few pages seem rather scant, now that Gian Antonio Stella has so splendidly developed the whole question over more than three hundred pages in his book *Negri, froci, giudei & co.: L'eterna guerra contro l'altro* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2009), but never mind—it would have been a shame to let it sink into oblivion, seeing that making enemies is a continual and relentless occupation.

Inventing the Enemy

SOME YEARS AGO in New York I found myself in conversation with a taxi driver whose name I had difficulty in placing. He was, he explained, Pakistani and asked where I came from. Italy, I replied. He asked how many of us there were and was surprised we were so few and that our language wasn't English.

Then he asked me who our enemies were. In response to my "Sorry?" he explained patiently that he wanted to know who were the people against whom we have fought through the centuries over land claims, ethnic rivalry, border incursions, and so forth. I told him we are not at war with anyone. He explained that he wanted to know who were our historical enemies, those who kill us and whom we kill. I repeated that we don't have any, that we fought our last war more than half a century ago—starting, moreover, with one enemy and ending with another.

He wasn't satisfied. How can a country have no enemies? Getting out of the taxi, I left a two-dollar tip to compensate him for our indolent Italian pacifism. And only then did it occur to me how I should have answered. It is not true that we Italians have no enemies. We have no outside enemies, or rather we are unable to agree on who they are, because we are continually at war with *each other* —Pisa against Lucca, Guelphs against Ghibellines, north against south, Fascists against Partisans, mafia against state, Berlusconi's government against the judiciary. It was a pity that during that time the two governments headed by

Romano Prodi had not yet fallen; otherwise I could have explained to the taxi driver what it means to lose a war through friendly fire.

Thinking further about the conversation, I have come to the conclusion that one of Italy's misfortunes over the past sixty years has been the absence of real enemies. The unification of Italy took place thanks to the presence of Austria, or, in the words of Giovanni Berchet, of the *irto, increscioso alemanno*—the bristling, irksome Teuton. And Mussolini was able to enjoy popular support by calling on Italy to avenge herself for a victory in tatters, for humiliating defeats in Abyssinia at Dogali and Adua, and for the Jewish plutodemocracy, which, he claimed, was penalizing us iniquitously. See what happened in the United States when the Evil Empire vanished and the great Soviet enemy faded away. The United States was in danger of losing its identity until bin Laden, in gratitude for the benefits received when he was fighting against the Soviet Union, proffered his merciful hand and gave Bush the opportunity to create new enemies, strengthening feelings of national identity as well as his own power.

Having an enemy is important not only to define our identity but also to provide us with an obstacle against which to measure our system of values and, in seeking to overcome it, to demonstrate our own worth. So when there is no enemy, we have to invent one. Look at the generous flexibility with which the skinheads of Verona would, just to identify themselves as a group, choose anyone not belonging to their group as their enemy. And so we are concerned here not so much with the almost natural phenomenon of identifying an enemy who is threatening us, but with the process of creating and demonizing the enemy.

In the *Orations Against Catiline*, Cicero had no need to convince the Roman senators that they had an enemy since he had proof of Lucius Catiline's plot. But nonetheless he builds up a picture of the enemy in the second oration,

where he describes Catiline's friends, reflecting on the main accusation: that they were tainted with moral perversity.

> Individuals who spend their time feasting, in the arms of loose women, torpid with wine, sated with food, crowned with wreathes, oiled with unguents, weakened by copulation, belch out in words that all good citizens must be killed and the city must be set on fire … You have them under your very eyes: not a hair out of place, smooth-faced or with a well-trimmed beard, dressed in tunics down to their ankles and with long sleeves, wrapped in veils and not togas … These "youths," so witty and refined, have learned not only to love and be loved, not only to dance and sing, but also to brandish daggers and administer poisons. (oration 2, sections 1–10)

Cicero's moralism was much the same as Saint Augustine's, who condemned pagans because, unlike Christians, they attended circuses, theaters, and amphitheaters, and celebrated orgiastic feasts. Enemies are *different* from us and observe customs that are not our own.

The epitome of difference is the foreigner. In Roman bas-reliefs the barbarians appear as bearded and snub-nosed, and as is well known, the word itself alludes to a defect in language and therefore in thought (*bar-bar*, "they are stuttering").

From the very beginning, however, the people who become our enemies often are not those who directly threaten us (as would have been the case with the barbarians), but those whom someone has an interest in portraying as a true threat even when they aren't. Rather than a real threat highlighting the ways in which these

enemies are different from us, the difference itself becomes a symbol of what we find threatening.

See what Tacitus has to say about the Jews: “All things that are sacred for us are profane for them, and what is impure for us is lawful for them” (which brings to mind how the English dismiss the French as frog eaters or how the Germans condemn the Italians for excessive use of garlic). The Jews are “strange” because they abstain from eating pork, do not put yeast in bread, rest on the seventh day, marry only among themselves, are circumcised—not (of course) for hygienic or religious reasons but “to show they are different from others”—bury their dead, and do not venerate our caesars. Having demonstrated how certain real customs are different (circumcision, Sabbath rest), the writer can further emphasize his point by adding legendary customs to the picture (they make sacred images of a donkey and despise their parents, children, brothers, their country, and the gods).

Pliny the Younger can find no particular allegations against the Christians, since he has to admit they are not involved in committing crimes; in fact, their actions are virtuous. Nonetheless he sends them to their death because they do not sacrifice to the emperor, and this stubbornness in refusing something so obvious and natural establishes their difference.

Then, as contact between peoples becomes more complex, a new form of enemy arises: he is not just the person who remains outside and exhibits his strangeness from a distance, but is also the person within, among us—today we would call him the foreign immigrant—who behaves differently in some way or speaks our language badly. He appears in Juvenal’s satire as the cunning, swindling, brazen, lecherous Greek, capable of debauching even his friend’s grandmother.

The Negro, due to the color of his skin, is a stranger wherever he goes. The entry for “Negro” in the first

American encyclopedia, published by Thomas Dobson in 1798, states:

> In the complexion of negroes we meet with various shades; but they likewise differ far from other men in all the features of their face. Round cheeks, high cheek bones, a forehead somewhat elevated, a short, broad, flat nose, thick lips, small ears, ugliness, and irregularity of shape, characterize their external appearance. The negro women have the loins greatly depressed, and very large buttocks, which gives the back the shape of a saddle. Vices the most notorious seem to be the portion of this unhappy race: idleness, treachery, revenge, cruelty, impudence, stealing, lying, profanity, debauchery, nastiness, and intemperance, are said to have extinguished the principles of natural law, and to have silenced the reproofs of conscience. They are strangers to every sentiment of compassion, and are an awful example of the corruption of man when left to himself.

The Negro is ugly. The enemy must be ugly because beauty is identified with good (*kalokagathia*), and one of the fundamental characteristics of beauty has always been what the Middle Ages called *integritas* (in other words, having all that is required to be an average representative of a species; by this standard those humans missing a limb or an eye, or having lower-than-average stature or "inhuman" color were considered ugly). That is why the giant one-eyed Polyphemus and the dwarf Mime immediately provide us with a model for identifying the enemy. Priscus of Panion in the fifth century describes Attila the Hun as small in stature, with a broad chest and large head, small eyes, a thin graying beard, a flat nose, and—a crucial feature—a swarthy complexion. But it is curious how Attila's face is similar to the physiognomy of

the devil, as Rodolfus Glaber described him more than five centuries later—gaunt face, deep black eyes, forehead furrowed with wrinkles, flat nose, protruding mouth, swollen lips, thin narrow chin, goatish beard, hairy pointed ears, straight disheveled hair, canine teeth, elongated skull; he was also of modest stature, with a slender neck, protruding chest, and humped back (*Histories*, book 5, part 3).

When Liutprand of Cremona is sent by Emperor Otto I as envoy to Byzantium in 968 and encounters a hitherto unknown civilization, he finds the Byzantine emperor devoid of *integritas:*

> I came before Nicephorus, a monstrous being, a pygmy with an enormous head, whose small eyes gave him the appearance of a mole, with an ugly short broad thick graying beard, a neck as long as a finger … the color of an Ethiopian, "whom you wouldn't want to bump into in the middle of the night," fat belly, thin loins, thighs too long for his small stature, short legs, flat feet, and dressed in a fetid, threadbare peasant's garment faded with use. (*Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*)

Fetid. The enemy invariably stinks, as the French psychologist Edgar Bérillon wrote at the beginning of the First World War (1915) in *La polychésie de la race allemande*. In this volume he demonstrated that the average German produced more—and fouler smelling—fecal material than did the Frenchman. If the Byzantine stank, so too did the Saracen. In *Evagatorium in Terrae sanctae, Arabiae, et Egypti pere-grinationem*, the fifteenth-century monk Felix Fabri notes that "the Saracens exude a certain horrible stench, for which they perform continual ablutions of various sorts; and since we do not smell, they do not care if we bathe together with them. But they are

not so indulgent with the Jews, who smell even more … Thus the stinking Saracens are pleased to find themselves in the company of those like us who do not smell."

For Giuseppe Giusti, it was the Austrians who stank. Arriving at the Basilica of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan, he recorded these impressions:

> I enter, and find it full of soldiers,
> those soldiers from the north,
> Bohemians and Croatians,
> lined up like poles in a vineyard.
> .....
> I drew back; since standing there
> amid that rabble, I must admit
> a feeling of disgust, of suffocation,
> of filthy breath, which, by your calling,
> you can scarcely feel: even the candles
> (excuse me, your Excellency)
> on the altar of that fine house of God,
> seemed to reek of tallow. (*Sant'Ambrogio*, 1845)

The gypsy inevitably stinks, given that he feeds on carrion, as Cesare Lombroso tells us in *L'uomo delinquente* (1876, volume 1, chapter 2), and so does James Bond's enemy Rosa Klebb in Ian Fleming's *From Russia, with Love* (1957). She is not only a Soviet Russian but, worse still, a lesbian:

> Outside the anonymous, cream painted door, Tatiana already smelled the inside of the room. When the voice told her curtly to come in, and she opened the door, it was the smell that filled her mind while she stood and stared into the eyes of the woman who sat behind the round table under the centre light.
>
> It was the smell of the Metro on a hot evening—cheap scent concealing animal odours. People in

Russia soak themselves in scent, whether they have had a bath or not, but mostly when they have not …

Tatiana was still cheerfully reviewing the situation when the bedroom door opened and "the Klebb woman" appeared … wearing a semi-transparent nightgown in orange crêpe de chine … One dimpled knee, like a yellowish coconut, appeared thrust forward between the half-open folds of the nightgown in the classic stance of the modeller … Rosa Klebb had taken off her spectacles and her naked face was now thick with mascara and rouge and lipstick …

She patted the couch beside her.

"Turn out the top light, my dear. The switch is by the door. Then come and sit beside me. We must get to know each other better." (chapter 9)

The Jew has been described as monstrous and smelly since at least the birth of Christianity, given that he is modeled on the Antichrist, the archenemy, the foe not only of man but of God:

This is how he looks: his head is like a burning flame, his right eye is bloodshot, his left is a cat-like green and has two pupils, his eyelids are white, his lower lip is large, his right femur is weak, his feet large, his thumb flat and elongated. (*Syriac Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, fifth century, volume 1, part 4)

The Antichrist will be born from the Jewish people … from the union between a father and a mother, like other men, and not, as some say, from a virgin … At the beginning of his conception the devil will enter the mother's uterus, by virtue of the devil he will be nurtured in the mother's womb, and the power of the devil will always be with him. (Adso of Montier-en-

Der, *Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist*, tenth century)

> He will have two flaming eyes, ears like those of a donkey, the nose and mouth of a lion, so that he will set men to acts of most criminal folly amid the fires and most shameful voices of contradiction, making them deny God, spreading into their senses the most horrible fetor, mutilating the institutions of the church with the most ferocious greed; sneering with an enormous grimace and showing horrible teeth of iron. (Hildegard of Bingen, *Liber scivias*, twelfth century, volume 3, part 1, section 14)

If the Antichrist comes from the Jewish people, his model must inevitably reflect the image of the Jew, whether in terms of popular anti-Semitism, theological anti-Semitism, or the bourgeois anti-Semitism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Let us start with his face:

> They generally have a bluish face, hooked nose, deep-set eyes, protruding chin, and strongly pronounced constrictor muscles around the lips … Jews are also prone to diseases which indicate a corruption of the blood, such as leprosy in the past and now scurvy, which is akin to it, scrofula, bleeding … It is said that Jews always have bad breath … Others attribute these effects to the frequent use of strong-smelling vegetables such as onion and garlic … Yet others say it is goose meat, to which they are very partial, that makes them dark and melancholic, given that this food is thickly coated with sticky sugar. (Baptiste-Henri Grégoire, *Essai sur la régénération physique, morale, et politique des juifs*, 1788)

Later, the composer Richard Wagner was to complicate the picture with his considerations of voice and manner:

> There is something foreign about the outward aspect of the Jew that makes this nationality supremely repugnant; instinctively we wish to have nothing in common with a man who looks like that … It is impossible to imagine the representation of an antique or modern stage-character by a Jew, be it as hero or lover, without feeling instinctively that there is something incongruous, indeed ridiculous, in such a performance … But what repels us above all else is the particular tone with which the Jew speaks … Our ears are particularly offended by the shrill, sibilant, strident sounds of this idiom. The Jew uses words and constructs his phrases in a way quite contrary to the spirit of our national language … When we listen to him, our attention dwells involuntarily on how he speaks rather than on what he says. This point is of the greatest importance in explaining the expression produced by the musical works of the Jews. Listening to a Jew talking, we are inevitably offended by the fact of finding his discourse devoid of all truly human expression … It is natural that the inherent aridness of the Jewish character which we find so distasteful finds its greatest expression in song, which is the liveliest, most authentic manifestation of individual feeling. We might recognize the Jew's artistic aptitude for any other art except that of song, which nature herself seems to have denied him. (*Judaism in Music*, 1850)

Hitler proceeds with a greater delicacy, bordering almost on envy: "In regard to young people, clothes should take their place in the service of education … If the beauty of the body were not completely forced into the background

to-day through our stupid manner of dressing, it would not be possible for thousands of our girls to be led astray by Jewish mongrels, with their repulsive crooked waddle" (*Mein Kampf*, 1925, translated by James Murphy).

From facial appearance to customs: this brings us to the Jewish enemy who kills young children and drinks their blood. He appears very early, for example, in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, where there is a story, much like that of Saint Simonino of Trento, of a young boy seized while passing through the Jewish quarter while singing "O alma redemptoris mater." His throat is slashed and his body thrown into a pit.

The Jew who kills young children and drinks their blood has a very complex genealogy: the same model existed earlier in Christianity, in the creation of the enemy within—the heretic. A single example is enough:

> In the evening, when we light the lamps and commemorate the passion, they take young girls initiated into their secret rites to a particular house, they snuff out their lamps as they wish no one to witness the indecencies about to take place, and give vent to their licentious practices on whomever it might be, even upon sister or daughter. Indeed they believe they are pleasing the demons by violating the divine laws that forbid union with those of the same blood. Once the ritual is over, they return home and wait for nine months to pass: when the time comes for the godless children to be born of a godless seed, they assemble once again in the same place. Three days after the birth, they seize the wretched children from their mothers, cut their tender limbs with a sharp blade, fill cups with the blood that spurts forth, burn the newborns while they are still breathing by throwing them on a pyre. Then they mix blood and ash in cups to obtain a horrible concoction with

> which they contaminate food and drink, secretly, like someone poisoning mead. Such is their communion. (Michele Psello, *De operatione daemonum*, eleventh century)

The enemy is sometimes seen as different and ugly because he belongs to a lower class. In *The Iliad*, Thersites ("crooked, lame in one foot; his shoulders rounded and bent over his chest; his head pointed and sprouting tufts of hair," book 2, line 212) is socially inferior to Agamemnon and Achilles, and is therefore jealous of them. There is little difference between Thersites and Edmondo de Amicis's character Franti in his novel *Cuore (Heart*, 1886): whereas Odysseus attacks Thersites, drawing blood, society punishes Franti with imprisonment.

> (25 October): And beside him there's a tough, cheeky-looking fellow called Franti who has already been expelled from another school … (21 January): Only one boy could laugh while Derossi was talking about the king's funeral, and that was Franti. I hate him. He's evil. When a father comes to school to reprimand his son, [Franti] thinks it's funny; when a boy cries, he laughs. He's frightened of Garrone, and thumps the builder's son because he's small; he torments Crossi as his arm is paralyzed; he taunts Precossi, whom everyone likes; he even pokes fun at Robetti, in the second year, who walks on crutches after having saved a young child. He goads everyone who's weaker than him, and when it comes to blows, he gets vicious and hurts people. There's something repulsive about that low forehead, those dark eyes, which he keeps half-hidden beneath the peak of his waxed cotton cap. He fears nothing, laughs in the teacher's face, steals when he can, lies brazenly, is always arguing with someone, brings large pins to

> school to prick his classmates, he rips buttons off his jacket and off those of other boys, and plays with them, and his school bag, exercise books, textbooks are all crumpled, torn, dirty, his ruler dented, his pen chewed, his nails raw, his clothes creased and torn from fighting … The teacher sometimes pretends not to see his mischief, and that makes him worse. When he tried to treat him kindly, he insulted him; when he scolded him, he covered his face with his hands, as if he were crying, and he was laughing.

The born criminal and the prostitute are obvious examples of ugliness, due to their social position. But with the prostitute we enter another world, that of sexual enmity or what might be called sexual racism. For the male who dominates and writes, or by writing dominates, the woman has always been portrayed with hostility from the earliest times. Let us not be deceived by angelic descriptions of women. On the contrary, precisely because great literature is dominated by sweet, gentle creatures, the world of satire—which is that of the popular imagination—continually demonizes the woman, from antiquity, through the Middle Ages, and up to modern times. From antiquity, I will limit myself to one example from Martial: “You, Vetustilla, who have outlived three hundred consuls; you have but three hairs and four teeth and have the chest of a grasshopper, the legs and color of an ant. You walk about with a forehead more wrinkled than your gown and breasts like cobwebs … Your eyesight is like that of owls in the morning and you smell like he-goats; your buttocks are like those of a withered duck’s bottom … Only the funeral torch can penetrate this vagina” (*Epigrams*, book 3, no. 93).

And who could be the author of this passage? “The female is an imperfect animal, stirred by a thousand passions that are disagreeable and loathsome even to think

about, let alone to discuss … No other animal is less clean than she: not even the pig, wallowing in mud, is as ugly as they are, and if anyone should wish to deny this, let him examine their parts, let him search out the secret places where, in shame, they hide the fearful instruments with which they remove their superfluous humors." If someone as irreligious and bawdy as Giovanni Boccaccio (in *The Crow*) could think such a thing, then imagine what a medieval moralist must have thought and written to emphasize the Pauline principle that, if such temptation could be avoided, it would be better never to experience the pleasures of the flesh. The churchman Odo of Cluny recalled in the tenth century that

> the beauty of the body is only skin-deep. If men could see beneath the flesh, with the power of the Boeotian lynx to penetrate visually within, they would be nauseated just to look at women, for all this feminine charm is nothing but phlegm, blood, humors, gall. Consider what is hidden in the nostrils, in the throat, in the stomach: everywhere, filth … and we are repelled to touch vomit and ordure even with our fingertips. How then can we ever want to embrace what is merely a sack of excrement! (*Collationes*, book 3, chapter 133, col. 556 and 648)

From what might be called this "normal misogyny" we come to the creation of the witch, a masterpiece of modern civilization. The witch was certainly also known in classical antiquity, and I will mention only the witches in Apuleius's *Golden Ass* and in Horace: "I myself saw Candia, wrapped in a black gown, barefooted and hair disheveled, howling with the elder Sagana. Pallor had rendered both of them horrible to behold" (*Satires*, book 1, no. 8). But in antiquity, as in the Middle Ages, witches and wizards were generally linked to popular beliefs and were thought to represent

fairly infrequent instances of possession. Rome at the time of Horace did not feel threatened by witches, and witchcraft in the Middle Ages was still regarded as a phenomenon of autosuggestion—in other words, the witch was someone who believed she was a witch, as the ninth-century *Canon episcopi* stated:

> Certain depraved women, having turned to Satan and been led astray by his illusions and seductions, believe and claim they have ridden certain beasts at night, in the company of a multitude of women, following Diana … Priests must constantly preach to God's people that these things are all raised in the minds of the faithful not by the divine spirit but by the force of evil. Satan, in fact, is transformed into an angel of light and takes possession of the mind of these poor women and rules over them due to their lack of faith and their incredulity.

And yet, at the dawn of the modern age, witches were said to meet in sects, to celebrate their sabbaths, to fly, to transform themselves into animals, and thus become the enemies of society, and as such to merit inquisitorial trials and death at the stake. This is not the place for examining the complex problem of the "witchcraft syndrome"—whether it represented a way of finding a scapegoat at a time of profound social crisis or the influence of Siberian shamanism or the phenomenon of eternal archetypes. What interests us here is the recurring model for the creation of an enemy—similar to the treatment of the heretic or the Jew. And it is not enough for men of science, such as Gerolamo Cardano in the sixteenth century, to raise their sensible objections:

> They are poor women of miserable condition, who scrape a living in the valleys feeding on chestnuts

> and herbs … Thus they are emaciated, deformed, ashen in color, with protruding eyes, and their gaze reveals a melancholy and bilious temperament. They are taciturn, distracted, and hardly distinguishable from those who are possessed by the devil. They are so firm in their opinions that anyone listening to their stories alone would be quite sure the things they say with such conviction were true, things that have never happened and will never happen. (*De rerum varietate*, book 15)

A new wave of persecutions began in response to the spread of leprosy. Carlo Ginzburg, in his *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* (1991, translated by Raymond Rosenthal), records that lepers were burned to death throughout France in 1321 because they had been convicted of trying to kill the whole population by poisoning water supplies, fountains, and wells: "Leprous women who had confessed to the crime spontaneously, or as a result of torture, were to be burnt, unless pregnant; in that eventuality, they must be kept segregated until their confinement and the weaning of their offspring—and then burnt."

It is not difficult to identify here the origins of every persecution of those thought to be spreading plague. But Ginzburg describes yet another aspect of this phenomenon: the contagious lepers were automatically identified with Jews and Saracens. Various chroniclers relate stories that accuse the Jews of aiding and abetting the lepers, and many of them were sent to the stake with the afflicted: "The local population took justice into their own hands, summoning neither priest nor bailiff: they closed the people in their homes, together with their livestock, goods, and chattels, and set fire to them."

One leader of such a group confessed he had been bribed by a Jew, who had given him some poison (made