Homo Hermeneuticus: Historical Narrative in the Semiosphere

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Introduction

Since ancient times, humanity has relied on induction, deduction or abduction, i.e. ratiocination or conjecture to read signs. Whereas the inductive method of reasoning infers a general principle or rule (not necessarily true) from observed particulars and deductive thought, arguments of which both premises and conclusion must be true, abduction concerns the creative networking of premises and conclusion to arrive at a particular case which may explain both premises and conclusion. Generally speaking, the latter is the method of hermeneutics.

The reading or interpretation of signs has always been one of the most prised of abilities or even occupations. In the context of 'The Book of God', divination, expositions, readings and interpretations of dreams, fortune, fate, oracle or holy writ occupied humanity since antiquity. Humanity's interpretive interest in the 'The Book of Nature' manifested in practices of pathfinding, ancient hunting and tracking techniques, the interpretation of symptoms of illness and cure and alchemy. Humanity developed the art of interpreting signs, the art of conjecture, suspicion, speculation and guess, in order to discover, gain access to or track down the unknown and unseen, the future, the past, the prey, the cause, the secret. Throughout human evolution, this art was constantly enriched and passed on to later generations. Whether in Greek mythology or Bushman tracking, the reading of the stars or the bones, the interlacing of signs or the decision at the cross-roads, *homo hermeneuticus* has not only viewed such interpretation abilities as part of its most valuable and important inheritances of knowledge, but also as one of the most important meaning generating machines. Prehistoric humanity developed it and used it for purposes of survival (cf. Sebeok 1997:281f). Modern man used it to ensure his control and dominance. Confronted with complexity and multiplicity, postmodern humanity uses it to both uncover existing networks of meaning and through creative abduction, to weave new ones. As such, semiotics de-

veloped, is still in progress and will hypothetically never end.

If postmodernity is that human condition where humanity experiences the 'victory of life over art' (Eco 1997b:29), then, primarily, humanity is confronted with the complexity of life, that irreducible multiplicity and entanglements of chance actions and interactions (cutting across cultural, hierarchical and historical divides) which irreversibly escape human control. Semiotically and in analogy to the 'biosphere', Lotman (1990:123-214) coined the notion of the semiosphere[1] to capture the plural world of postmodernity. Comprising of signs, the semiosphere includes all the signs woven into systems and belonging to spaces (whether partially or wholly) but also those which are not accounted for. Different from the old universal-particular exemplar of the forest and trees, the semiosphere can be accounted for in terms of all those simultaneous syntagmatic and paradigmatic, synchronic and diachronic diversity and influences in a forest on a particular tree, a leaf (cf. Eco 1997d:58).

This notion of the semiosphere has moved Semiotics away from its earlier focus on the study of rule-governed systems as well as the semiotic distinction between significance (Barthes 1957) and communication (e.g. distinctions between code and message) (cf. also Eco 1979a). What was earlier perceived as unchangeable systems has been textualised–whether culture generally speaking or art or characters. Similarly, in learning, Lotman asserts, people are not socialised into systems or into obeying rules through 'grammatical learning'. Rather, since culture is a 'set of texts and a non-hereditary collective memory' governed 'by a *repertoire* of texts imposing models of behaviour .... to be followed and imitated' (Eco 1997d:56), texts are the means of socialisation[2].

[1] Lotman (1990:123-214) describes the semiosphere under the headings of: 'Semiotic Space'; 'The Notion of Boundary'; 'Dialogue Mechanisms'; 'The Semiosphere and the Problem of Plot' and uses his theory in his analysis of space in 'Geographical space in Russian Medieval Texts'; 'The Journey of Ulysses in Dante's *Divine Comedy*'; 'The "Home" in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*'; and 'The Symbolism of St. Petersburg'.

[2] This recognition has moved semiotics away from a communication or signification semiotics based on the supposition that there is an equilibrium between sign and system or code and message in equal exchange, to an interpretation semiotics. As such, it moved away from a sign-based postal-package semiotics to a text-based interpretation semiotics. This move is particular to boundary or contact zone culture typified by the 'weakening of centripetal forces in linguistic ... and socio-cultural life' and the 'polylogism, plurilingualism, multiaccentuativity and pluriavailability of signs' in postmodernity. Interpretation semiotics, therefore, centrally accounts for the 'irreducibly other', plurivocality, ambiguity, polysemy, dialogism, as theorised by Bakhtin and Levinas and the difference between the interpreted and interpretant sign as theorised by Peirce (cf. Rossi Landi 1961 in Petrilli 1997:125). The crisis and dissolving of centering systems, meant that 'interest shifted to the engendering of texts, their interpretation, their drift of interpretations, productive pulsions, to the pleasure itself of semiosis' (Eco 1984:xv).

Confronted with complexity and multiplicity, it may seem as if postmodern culture, as determined by the semiosphere, is delivered over to the contradictory, the irrational, the illogical, the lie, the senseless. However, in addition to the repositories of encyclopedic knowledges and interpretative skills and practices of those reading 'The Book of God' or 'The Book of Nature', the science of Semiotics has, since its earliest inception, aimed at expounding the ways and means in terms of which humanity deals with signs as texts, texts as signs, the world as a text and texts as possible worlds (cf. Eco 1992:23). It is the interpretative skills developed within a general semiotics which not only account for how one may deal with chaos but also how one may develop meaningful systems/networks within multiplicity.

Since the early 1980s, Umberto Eco, Professor of Semiotics at the University of Bologna, has set his mind to precisely this problem. Whereas his earlier interests included the interpretative movement away from the focus on authorial intention and new critical text analysis to that of the reader (cf. his *Opera Aperta* 1962; translated in part as *The Open Work* 1989b), a structuralistically oriented general semiotics developing semiotics socially and ideologically (cf. *The Theory of Semiotics* [1976]1979a) and his distinction between popular culture with its closed texts and open works (*The Role of the Reader* 1979b; '*Casablanca* or the Clichès are having a Ball' 1985) of late, he turned to historical narrative to both explore and theorise postmodernity and semiotic interpretation. It is in this context that Rocco Capozzi has brought together his *Anthology*.

The *Anthology*

The *Anthology* comprises five essays by Eco, twelve exploratory and critical essays on semiotics generally and more particularly on Eco's work and ten review essays of Eco's novels. Eco's (1997a; 1997b, 1997c; 1997d; 1997e) five essays address seven main issues: 1) the institutional positioning of semiotics; 2) the distinction between modernism and post-modernism as a distinction between innovation and repetition; 3) a further development of isotopy and the distinction between use and interpretation as regards the limits of interpretation; 4) Lotman's (and by implication his own) movement away from a structuralist perception of the distinctions between signification and communication and code and message; 5) and finally his authorial response to the model readers of his first novel who turned out to be smarter than himself.

Subtitled 'A Pretext to Literary Semiotics and Interpretation', Capozzi's choice of articles for his second section further explores those points brokered by Eco in the first five essays. The most notable further expositions of Eco's Semiotics concern his interest in 'open works' and popular culture (Seed; Perron & Debbèche), his reading

of Peirce (Petrilli), a further development of his theorising in terms of Bakhtin (Seed; Petrilli), an exposition of intertextuality (Rifaterre), a bolstering of his critique of hermetic reading (Doležel; Rauch; Buczynska-Garewicz; Longoni) and the nature of the limits of interpretation (Capozzi). Critiques of Eco's work primarily comes from Deely on the idealist–realist split in his work and Tejera on seven issues related to semiotics. Kevelson challenges Eco to change his opted aesthetic form, that of the novel, to that of drama. This, she argues, will rid Eco of his 'quest for certainty' exemplified in his opting for the synthetic form of the novel and allow him to engage paradox–more closely aligned to Peirce's own quest.

Of the ten review essays, three deal with Eco's first novel (de Lauretis; Richter; Sebeok), three with his second (Bondanella; Coletti; Hutcheon), three with his third (Bouchard; Miranda; Capozzi) and one with all three to various degrees (Zamora).

Focusing more one Eco's work itself, this review article selectively points to contributions the *Anthology* makes to understanding some of his own concerns and approaches. This may be useful in addressing the issue of 'Historical Narrative in the Semiosphere'.

The Rationale for the Change in Eco's *Oeuvre*

There are primarily two reasons for the new direction in Eco's *oeuvre* since the early 1980s. Firstly, Eco's pun on the inside cover of the Italian edition of *The Name of the Rose* (1983a), 'di ció di cui non si puó teorizzare, si deve narrare'–what cannot be theorised must be narrated[3]–captures his commentary on theory's incapacity of ever being able to fully grasp the full complexity of the literary, cultural, historical, sociological, scientific text. Alternatively, it puns on the explanatory power of narrative which reveals 'narrative solutions to venerable theoretical problems' (our natural inclination to tell stories when incapable of rationally explaining something) or the lure not only Eco's but all narratives have for us–our fondness for being seduced by narrative (cf. Capozzi 1997a:227f; Miranda 1997:374).

The second reason arises from Richard Rorty's (1982) grouping of Eco and Peirce together with Derrida and other deconstructionists. As those who believe that everything is language relative and make the production or writing of philosophy a 'genre', for Rorty, it means to be the result of the pragmatic dissolving of truth. Through his second and third narratives, Eco has aimed to expose the ungroundedness of Semi-

[3] In terms of its style, the pun also plays on Wittgenstein's statement in *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* ([1922]1990), 'Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen'–whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.

ology developed from Saussure as alchemism and hermeticism in distinction to his own version of Semiotics arising from Peirce. Derrida's statement that 'the text is all we have, and all we can speak about' without any referential relationship with the world of objective referents, the view that there are no connections, especially that between a text and its historical context, between rationality and the world of objective referents, literary and scientific culture (Rorty 1982; cf. also Miranda 1997:366,368ff) is countered by Eco[4]. Eco's approach in his last two novels (but also present in the first) is to show how emplotted infinite semiosis implodes in an *ad infinitum* vortex (Miranda 1997:366).

Miranda (1997:367-374) shows that Eco uses a genealogical, a theoretical and a narrative argument to define his own theoretical space over and against the others he has been grouped with. On the first, he shows Derrida's fallacious reading of Peirce arises from him not acknowledging Peirce's rules (such as his distinctions between three types of signs and his identification of a 'final interpretant' related to 'Habit' or 'Law') for 'infinite semiosis'. On the second, Eco points out that Peirce's pragmatism is still related to the notion of 'purpose'; that, contrary to Derrida's still being caught up in Jameson's 'prison-house of language', Peirce's Semiotics is contextually related to a 'specific universe of discourse' (developed by Eco's notion of the encyclopedia); and that his own preference for the dialectic between *intentio operis* and *intentio lectoris* in the *intentio auctoris*, *intentio operis* and *intentio lectoris* interdependence, means that the rights of the text have to be respected, especially as it concerns the

[4] This point is made by many of the contributors but none more pointedly than by Hanna Buczynska-Garewicz. She criticises hermeticism for confusing Heidegger's notion that Being cannot be collapsed into something (which means a distortion of Being in being turned into an entity) with Peirce's idea that the sign does refer to something, has the dimension of an entity (and not Being) and focuses on the human activity of interpreting signs. Countering the ontologising of the relativity between signifier and signified she points to the importance of the object of the sign. Even though already involved in semiosis, the sign (and its object) is subject to the rules related to the immediate, dynamic and final interpretants. Furthermore, Peirce's distinction between icon, index and symbol are then each a particular type of referring to an object. Against deconstruction's embracing of the infinite, random and free-play process of differing/deferring, 'ecriture', or the writing of new texts which in turn are subject to the same law of ecriture, Buczynska-Garewicz points to Peirce's development of the *logic* between interpretants as the 'logic of culture'. From this follows that sign-production is not time-relative (or imprisoned in the present) but facilitates the 'growth of knowledge' both logically and rationally as it develops from earlier (past) signs and with a view to future habits of action. As 'cognitive process' it is a truth-directed process and not 'purposeless immediacy'.

Model Reader inscribed in the text (Eco 1990:6)[5]. While still strongly advocating the rights of the reader, Eco's asking interpreters to respect the rights of texts or to cooperate with the text (i.e. its 'system ruled by an internal coherence') means that, depending on the degree to which the empirical reader matches the Model Reader, s/he will produce interpretations of which it may be difficult to say whether some are better than others, it can be said that some interpretations would be wrong (Eco 1990:21,148). Eco's third strategy is to use the novel form for theoretical purposes thereby subverting 'writing' as philosophising medium. Where all texts become writing and therefore philosophy for Derrida, all texts become theory for Eco (Miranda 1997:373).

The publication of Eco's novels more or less coincided with seminars and the publication of theoretical texts dealing with issues explored in his novels. *The Name of the Rose* (1983a) is related to *The Sign of Three. Holmes, Dupin, Peirce* (1983b), focuses on excessive interpretation and turns on Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four*, with William of Baskerville, the 'detective' in *The Name of the Rose*, the fourth in the theoretical text. *Foucault's Pendulum* (1989a) develops the still modernist focus on excessive interpretation in the first novel into interpretation running amuck and relates to Eco's critique of hermetic interpretation as developed by poststructuralism in *The Distorted Idea: Esoteric Interpretations of Dante* (student research for Eco's course on hermetic semiosis in 1986); *The Limits of Interpretation* (1990); *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (1990). Eco's third novel, *The Island of the Day Before* (1995a) develops similar hermetic thinking and relates to his *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (1994). In this theoretical work, each of the 'walks' explores the fiction of other authors and can be used as compass by the reader to navigate (as if it were a hyper-text) the narrative (cf. Miranda 1997). Apart from having written three novels which can be enjoyed as historical mystery novels, as detective fiction, a love story, a *Bildungsroman* or a seafaring novel, it is this alternate purpose–to create an 'intricate postmodern metafiction' in which the novel as medium is used for a 'metanarrative discourse' (Richter 1997:256; Miranda 1997:363)–which weighs heaviest with Eco.

[5] In support of Eco's critiques of deconstruction, Doležel (1997) points to Eco's view that even for open texts, limits are set for the Model Reader, especially concerning the text's actual world encyclopedia; Rauch (1997:144-146) points to Eco's (1990:21) view that 'symbols are anchored to their context' and that they are not 'paradigmatically open to infinite meanings'; Longoni (1997:212,216) distinguishes between the 'text of the world' (inviting infinite interpretation) and the 'world of the text' which limits it. Eco (1989c:68) himself has shown that even for the most open of works, limits are set, even if only in the ironic rethinking of the already said.

Eco's Novels

As investigated, argued and developed in his theoretical works and the articles Rocco Capozzi brought together in his *Anthology*, Eco's main argument in his novels, as it relates to the notion of the 'Historical Narrative in the Semiosphere', is double-edged. On the one hand, against modernist homological consciousness and in line with his earlier work on the distinction between open and closed works, 'high' literature and popular culture, it argues that everything belongs to the semiosphere or that everything can be semioticised or textualised. On the other hand, and against hermeticism, it does not follow from this assertion that everything can be connected to everything else (*tout se tient*).

Even though both these arguments are, to different degrees, present in all three novels, *The Name of the Rose* (1983a) still engages the first and *Foucault's Pendulum* (1989a) and *The Island of the Day Before* (1995a) concern the second more overtly. In terms of the neoplatonic-nominalist or metaphysics-physics, 'transcendental connectedness and nominalist fragmentation' binaries, the first, even though ultimately exposed as error, still works with the idea of a secret or veiled schema behind the welter of reality detail. The second novel implodes the schema throughout and the third is set somewhere in between (cf. Zamora 1997:343). In opposing these extremes, Eco's passion for history in all three novels is tempered to a degree by what Harold Bloom called the 'anxiety of influence' (exemplified in the Romantic compulsion to reject the cultural past in the name of originality). He drains historical epochs of information and then creatively/novelistically employs such information for his own metadiscursive dialogues.

Eco historically positions all three of his novels at time-historical 'weak points', points of cultural chaos, insecurity, transition–where the old has lost its authority and the new has not yet dawned. The dehiscence of structures create feelings of looming doom or apocalypse, i.e. in its sense of cataclysm and catastrophe (which may switch to wonder and excitement about the different as in the third novel). Through such positionings he not only draws analogies between time-historical epochs but more importantly creates novelistic machines through which he can comment (or write commentaries) on modern and postmodern culture.

***The Name of the Rose* (1983a)**

Situated historically in one week of November 1327, the first novel deals with a series of murders in a Franciscan abbey. Politically the murders draw unwanted attention to the Franciscans who aspired to stay neutral in the conflict between Louis the Bavarian (Emperor) and John XXII (Pope). Aiming to solve the murders, William of Baskerville, also a Franciscan, plays detective and in the process teaches Adso, a young priest,

about the interpretation of signs. Through creative abduction he hypothesises that the murders are modelled on the prophecy of the seven angels and seven trumpets in Revelation 8:6–10:10. Ultimately, and by chance, however, he finds out that there was no overt plot. What happened is that the poison the librarian put on the pages of Aristotle's *Poetics of Comedy* to deter other monks from reading it, in fact killed the monks who did.

Positioned at the time-juncture of the collapsing of traditional orders in the High Middle Ages, the first novel treats the politics of Emperor and Pope, Louis the Bavarian and John XXII, as more fatal and contaminating than the 'Black Death' itself (carried by rats and lice). In this, Eco produces a series of mirrors for looming Western apocalypse. Even more than the looming threat of global atomic destruction, the East-West cold war is figured in Louis the Bavarian and John XXII's struggle. Abductively, either may be equated with the old USSR, the Warsaw Pact and socialist movements in the Third World on the one side and the US and NATO, the ideology of capitalism on the other. Threatened by the possibility of loosing independence in the conflict between Emperor and Pope, the Franciscan monk's own symptomatic postulating of an apocalyptic schema for solving the murders may figure his desire for divine intervention. Alternatively, it may equally be equated to the unaligned's inclination to join heretic movements: 'simple' people, the landless peasants, (e.g. the Fraticelli, Catharists, Waldensians, Arnoldists, Patarines; 'the communists' in the West and 'the capitalists' in the East). Such people, Eco suggests, do not join these movements because they perceive heretic movements to propound the truth, but because they feel themselves not socially and intellectually protected by systems in society. They find hope in the promise of 'at least violently overthrowing the order that excludes them'. The US and USSR paranoia about the competition between capitalist and communist hegemony was not real for the people. For Eco, it seems, their overall drive was that of a 'hunger of inclusion within the international polity' (Richter 1997:268; Eco 1983:196-207).

Eco's sublime commentaries in his novel also extend to the attraction 'terrorism' has for intellectuals and on clandestine political organisations such as the CIA, MI5 and KGB. Concerning the first, Eco appears to criticise those liberals in Europe (e.g. Ubertino of Casale and in our century, many more) who preach revolution but do not actually join in, i.e. for their 'hypocritical habit of theoretically advocating anarchic violence while remaining noncommittal about terrorism of the Black September type' (Richter 1997:269; Eco 1983:41-64). Secondly. Similar to the inquisition, the East's and West's clandestine operatives twist and turn people's words against them, invariably find them guilty and put them to death for crimes they have not committed. As in his other novels, we do not find Eco indulging in sermonising, moralising or giving history lessons for that matter. Cunningly, he creates systems of mirrors 'by

which the present and the past are allowed to reflect, distort and parody each other' (Richter 1997:270).

If Eco's strategy for generating his analogical commentaries in his first novel is to create an authentically as possible medieval cultural situation resonating with modern/postmodern culture, his narrative technique is not appropriate to the period–different from a strategy employed by Mary Renault and Robert Graves. Eco's detective-protagonist (William of Baskerville) and his pupil in semiotic abduction (Adso) are modelled after Sherlock Holmes (of Irish descent like William) and Watson (whose middle phonemes creates 'Adso'), decidedly modern men placed in a medieval past. Except for points of contact with *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the novel's plot, however, is not modelled after any of Doyle's novels but rather on the classic mystery novels of the 1930s. Even so, these resonances are superficial. Positioned somewhere between pastiche and serious narrative, the novel's anachronistic and mirroring strategies implode the iterative structure and denouement of (popular, modernist) detective fiction. As such, it is a novel which aims to end all detective as well as mystery fiction (Richter 1997:258,261). When the reader is unable to access relevant information, the incongruities related to the labyrinthine library, a locked room, information contained in maps, cryptograms, clues in a variety of foreign languages and unbreakable alibis turn into jokes–carnivalising semiotic detection and the mystery novel. The iterative structure of popular (detective) serialised fiction (whether of a Sherlock Holmes, a Columbo or James Bond–closed narratives; cf. Eco 1979b) is refracted, preventing the reiteration of the same structure. In analogy to Robbe-Grillet's *The Erasers*, Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *The Pledge* and Jorge Luis Borges's 'Death and the Compass', the plot and denouement, again, employs the three main postmodern detective fiction strategies aiming at deconstructing the form: the detective projects a final murder but cannot foresee that it will be his own; while the detective is made to believe that the victim is dead, he is not, and the detective is ultimately manipulated to become the assassin; the detective lays a trap but it does not work–causing much anguish over years–because the murderer was killed by pure chance before he could be caught in the act. The first is present in the self-destruction of the Abbey; the second in the inadvertent murders; and the third in the apocalyptic plan which propels the plot but which turns out to be wrong-headed (Richter 1997:271-274).

Throughout the novel, William and Adso (and with them the reader) assume that there does exist some occulted (apocalyptic) system or master code which is able to explain all the phenomena encountered by the characters–truths beyond the murder mystery, as is also found in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, William Faulkner's *Absolom, Absolom!* and Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*. In terms of his neoplatonic faith, the younger Adso still believed in a level of meaning beyond the objects and events perceived, that there is still a level of transcendental signification, a level of meaning

beyond the name of things: signs may still be read and meaning does still exist, no matter how elusive or tragic (Zamora 1997:329). The novel, however, concludes with William of Baskerville's finding: that there was no 'apocalyptic plan', 'there was no plot ... and I discovered it by mistake'. Acknowledging that, his mistake was not to, pursue the issue of the murders in the Abbey with the science of signs but to have succumbed to what amounts to ontological structuralist abduction (whereby he attempted to explain the murders with the construction of an apocalyptic plan of the antichrist). William confesses of having been stubborn and having pursued 'a semblance of order, when I should have known well that there is no order in the universe'. Reflecting on the way in which one constructs a net or ladder to attain order in the universe, he concludes that 'you must throw the ladder away, because you discover that, even if it was useful, it was meaningless' (Eco 1983:487f).

***Foucault's Pendulum* (1989a)**

Historically, Eco's second novel draws on thematics ranging from Torah, the Judaeo-Christian Holy Scriptures, Jesus Christ, the Templars, the Holy Grail, telluric currents, 'The Protocols of the Sages of Zion', Dante, the Free Masons, various esoteric groups, astrology, alchemy and Kabbalah to Hitler, IBM, the Eiffel tower, the art of combination, vanity presses and Self-publishing-authors (SFA's), films such as *Casablanca* and *Indiana Jones* and the pendulum of Jean Bernard Léon Foucault (1819-1868). After the three protagonists chance on the interdependence of alchemy and science during the Renaissance, they decide to make fun of occult, cabalistic and esoteric believers–mystics, members of secret societies–by artificially (with the help of computer generated hermetic semiosis) and on the basis of *tout se tient*, generating a 'secret' plan ultimately believed by the diabolicals indulging and publishing their paranoid overinterpretations. Similar to the growth of cancercells (in Diotallevi's body), the plot degenerates cancerously: Belbo dies as a result of the hermeticists' fanaticism and Casaubon awaits their arrival to kill him for not providing them with the missing information (which does not exist) in the plot.

Radically opposite to *The Name of the Rose* (and also *The Island of the Day Before*), *Foucault's Pendulum* is not a culturally-situated past-historical narrative analogically commenting on the present. Informed by the post-1968 pluralising cultural revolution through which the West was not only more radically opened to third world struggles for independence but also to French poststructuralist irrationalism, hermetic drift and the occult, it is positioned in the poststructuralist centreless present which does not only not respect either past or future but also withdraws 'from the world of things into a universe of words[/language/texts] in order to reconstruct the form of the world' (Eco 1989c:77,84f). Modelled after the Kabbalists' perception of creation as

that of a 'symbolic textuality' without a centre and their belief in the 'world-generating capacity of language', the novel's 'universe of words' is not connected to 'the realities of lived experience'. If it does make connections, they are not 'credible' (cf. Zamora 1997:335). Similar to Eco's (1995b:68) view that James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* is already postmodern, such texts can be understood only if it is read not as 'the negation of the already said, but [as] its ironic rethinking'.

It is especially in this second novel which Eco picks up on some issues in James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* and develop them for his own postmodern purposes. These include issues such as: the book being representative of 'an epoch in transition' where neither science nor social relations obey the orders and schemas of previous more secure epochs and where the book itself is not capable of providing an alternative. In such a situation, the only thing that the book can do, is

> paradoxically to define the new world by assembling a chaotic and dizzy encyclopedia from the old one and filling it with explanations that once seemed mutually exclusive. Through this clash and the Big Bang of these oppositions, something new is born.

As such, it

> rebels against the narrow-mindedness of modern methodologies which permit us to define only partial aspects of reality, thus eliminating the possibility of an ultimate and total definition (Eco 1989c:83).

Similar to *Finnegan's Wake*, this may be compensated for by 'an assemblage of partial and provisional definitions that syncretically collide and combine in an enormous "world theatre"', mirroring the cosmos. For this purpose, 'language selects terms from the most disparate cultural heritages and makes possible their coexistence through the connective tissue of a language', 'accumulated materials' offering the entire wisdom of humanity which is not that of an eternal truth or 'the whole of History' but 'a form of the world in language'. The 'encyclopedic totalizing impulse', the 'vision of the world as a vast theatre of ideas, as a non-hierarchical aggregation of texts', here, aims to counter 'narrow-mindedness of modern methodologies which permit us to define only partial aspects of reality' (Eco 1989c:83f). In Eco's novel, rotation 'is the slippery sign of a centering logos', the image Eco 'uses ironically to mirror the lost "directional center" in/of his novel' (Zamora 1997:335). It refers to the mystery in the heavens, where 'the mystery of absolute immobility was celebrated' (Eco 1989c:332). Unabashedly, Casaubon talks about 'some transcendental signified–the unmasking and discrediting of which will drive the plot forward', till it ends up at the end where the pendulum only signifies itself (Zamora 1997:332).

Casaubon, the main character in *Foucault's Pendulum*, is aptly named after Isaac Casaubon (1559-1614), the Swiss philologist and Kabbalist who convincingly showed that the *Corpus Hermeticum* held to be a mystical text dating from the time of Hermes Trismegistus (before 1000 BCE) has nothing Egyptian about it and was composed after the beginning of the Christian era. David Robey's proposal that it is possible that Casaubon also refers to a character composing a book, *A Key to all Mythologies* in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* is outrightly rejected by Eco (cf. Bondanella 1997:288), but does resemble the element of mythological play in the novel (Hutcheon 1997:319; Zamora 1997:333).

Characters and events resonate with Eco's own experiences during WWII as well as of publishing houses in Turin and Milan early on in his academic career. The computer which mechanically generates the (postmodernly) hermetic plot, Abulafia, is named after Samuel ben Samuel Abulafia (1240-c.1292), a thirteenth century Kabbalist and Jewish mystic who studied the infinite combinations in the Torah and developed the number and letter system which influenced Kabbalistic thinking. Following the Kabbalistic interpretation generated by the computer, the book itself is divided into the ten sections of the occult Tree of the Sefirot (Keter, Hokhmah, Binah, Hesed, Gevurah, Tiferet, Nezah, Hod, Yesod, Malkhut) quoting Belbo's locked computer files.

The novel artificially constructs a four-dimensional or virtual reality. Randomly amalgamating all possible esoterically inclined conspiracies (on the basis of 'Suspect, only suspect'–Eco 1989:377f–and exagerating E.M. Forster's 'Connect only connect' to a point of implosion), the three protagonists fabricate a universal mega-conspiracy plot spanning Western history from the pre-Christian era to the current postmodern condition and involving virtually all major esoteric societies (cf. Pynchon's *Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow* for similar ultra-plotted texts). Being drawn into it not only believing that the plan is true but that they themselves are in reality part of it, that they have been destined to reunite the members of the plot gone astray in time, the diabolicals enfabulate themselves into the artificially created plot to occupy and live its space-time. In the tradition of the 'followers of the veil' (such as Gabriele Rossetti 1783-1854; Eugène Aroux 1773-1859; and Luigi Valla 1878-1931 in their reading of Dante) the diabolicals presuppose that there is a non-literal hidden message under the veil of difficult verse, uncovering intricate conspiracies and secret messages, even linking Dante to Free Masonry, Rosicrucianism and the Knights Templars. Such an interpretation, however, belies the historical facts that the Rosicrucian philosophy dates from the beginning of the seventeenth and Free Masonry from the beginning of the eighteenth centuries (cf. Bondanella 1997:286).

Here, we have Eco creating a virtually real world (by randomly connecting anything with anything) with real people concretely and actually entering into its emplotted excesses, enfabulating themselves as the plan's protagonists, believing to

be destined to occupy and live its space-time. Other than his first novel, it is not the cultural condition of an exhausted epoch in the past which Eco uses to mirror current conditions. It is also not merely a current situation resonating refractedly or specularly with a multiplicity of mirrors from the past. Rather, as virtual reality, the plan is the networked result of the converged focusing of virtually all occulted speculations from the past. Eco (1986b:222) humorously describes its 'illogic' and irrationality, seeing the world only inhabited by symbols or symptoms, as 'cogito interruptus'.

Eco's ironic development of 'overinterpretation' resonates with Harold Bloom's (1975a) 'misreadings' which also related Peirce and Kabbalah in *Kabbalah and Criticism* (1975b). Following a strategy also used in his first novel, Eco's quoting from ancient sources and from ancient languages (including Classical Hebrew) mainly serves as anachronisms seducing the reader (whether able to translate these quotes or not) into an overinterpretation of the novel itself while the plot itself is, like Poe's letter, there for all to see. To set the process of overinterpretation in motion, Eco's quote from Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim's *De occulta philosophia* (which dealt with magic, numerology and the power of sacred names) in the preface provides the initial push. This is taken further by the second quote (which can be read to either push the reader further along the overinterpretation trajectory, or already sounds caution: 'Superstition brings bad luck') and the third in Hebrew which reads:

> And here as the infinite light continues in a straight line across the vacuum mentioned above, it does not immediately go downward but continues little by little. That is, at first it begins to emit a line of light and immediately the line expands until it changes into something like a spherical wheel (Zamora 1997:332).

What Harold Bloom (1975a:28) called the suspicion that there is 'an immutable knowledge of a final reality that stands behind our world of appearances', is precisely what Eco attacks and which is the object of derision in both *The Name of the Rose* and *Foucault's Pendulum*. Explicit in the first novel's apocalyptic schema, the Kabbalah in the second is only a foil for Eco's ironising of the process through which such schemas come into being. In following David Lodge's and Malcolm Bradbury's *critifictional* novels, Eco develops this genre by merging the popular detective story with fictionalised academic life (especially the deconstructionists), evolving (growing) a kind of cosmic 'whodunit'. For his Model Reader (whether reading for pleasure or as a second reading reader), Eco posits a reader at ease with literary theorists, diabolical conspirators, occult philosophers as well as detectives. His facetious portrayal of academics in general, universities, publishing houses and especially Self Financing Authors (SFAs) is pointedly ironic because the publisher Garamond and the Manutius

Press (publishing the manuscripts of SFA's for financial gain) signify Claude Garamond (1499-1562) and Aldo Manuzio or Manutius (1450-1515) who invented the elegant type still used by many publishers today, and the famous Venetian Press (with the anchor and dolphin symbol still used by Doubleday Books today) respectively.

Similarly ironic is Eco's choice of the title. Even though he holds that 'Foucault' in *Foucault's Pendulum* solely refers to the inventor of the pendulum which proved the rotation of the earth experimentally, Jean Bernhard Léon Foucault (1819-1868), it also intertextually resonates with some of Michel Foucault's work, either ironising it or extending his ironies *ad absurdum*. These issues include: his idea that: 1) 'resemblance' practices are limited to the Rennaissance paradigm before the advent of science; 2) knowledge generated by resemblance (and tabulated in taxonomies and columns) is poverty stricken; 3) resemblance is the inversion of irony; 4) matter (focus on the body), speech and the passive intellect are feminine; 5) something will replace Western man as the generator of power/knowledge; 6) there exist (secret) discursive histories waiting to be uncovered; 7) textualised power/knowledge exists everywhere; 8) and that its 'strategies' position and manipulate.

In tracing the vast history of hermetic semiosis and randomly constructing a plot from it, Eco shows that resemblance is not to be limited to the Rennaissance (it spans early Christianity and postmodernity) nor that it is poverty stricken or that science has done away with it. It is rather extremely rich, able to generate master narratives. As such, resemblance is not the inversion of irony but can itself ironically be developed. On Foucault's hope that something will replace Western man as the generator of power/knowledge, Eco shows that the best current candidate, the computer and artificial intelligence, is unable to do so–Casaubon must still use an index card system to assist computerised research. Moreover, it does not ensure the separation of science and alchemy. This links up with Eco showing how Western man, the representative of mind, writing and the active intellect is the one desiring and responsible for the creation of order and cosmic plots. The same is true of Foucault's writing of (secret) discursive histories, still working with the notion of the 'occult parenthood' of some things. In the process of his novel, Eco shows that many more (hermetic interpretive) strategies than those identified by Foucault exist and that there are instances (currently including master narratives of nation, race, ethnicity, religion, capitalism) where people cannot defend them against textualised power/knowledge. As a 'paramount laboratory for semiotic research into textual strategies', *Foucault's Pendulum* (like *Casablanca*) can serve as '... a palimpsest for future students of twentieth-century religiosity' (cf. Hutcheon 1997).

It is, however, the tendency of suspicion, hermetic semiosis and the resultant emplotting/enfabulation, which leads to the death of the protagonists. This follows the dictum, that 'things perceived as real ... are real in their consequences' (Bondanella

1997:297). And as Casaubon waits for his killers and reflects on the fact that there is no 'secret cosmic plot', he summarises the rules of arriving at the plan:

> Rule One: Concepts are connected by analogy. There is no way to decide at once whether an analogy is good or bad, because to some degree everything is connected to everything else .... Rule Two says if *tout se tient* in the end, the connecting works .... Rule Three: The connections must not be original. They must have been made before, and the more often the better, by others. Only then do the crossings seem true, because they are obvious .... But if you invent a plan and others carry it out, it's as if the Plan exists. At that point it does exist (Eco 1989a:618f).

As part of this overall strategy in misleading his Model Reader into overinterpreting the novel, Eco, for this novel, exposes the Model Reader who colludes with the Diabolicals (not believing in the plot's artificiality) to be the murderer. The novel, then, is detective fiction exposing the 'totalizing mind' as culprit (Hutcheon 1997:313) showing the need of identifying the limits of interpretation[6].

***The Island of the Day Before* (1995a)**

Eco's third novel is historically set between 1614 and 1643. Already having discovered how to calculate latitude, the controlling figure is that of longitude. This piece of information would vitally enhance charting 'the very New World'. After his arrest in Paris, Richelieu's generals offer Roberto de La Griva his freedom on condition that he uncovers the British attempt to find the fixed point through which longitude may be measured. Roberto sets out on the Dutch ship the *Amaryllis* to spy on the Englishman Dr. Byrd. He discovers that he makes his measurements on the basis of the belief that like atoms attract and by applying the 'Weapon Salve' to a sample of a dog's blood whose wound is kept open. After the ship is shipwrecked, Roberto's float takes him to another abandoned ship, the *Daphne*, off a small island in the South Pacific. A few days after his arrival, he finds a German Jesuit Father Caspar Wanderdrossel on board.

[6] Rather than indulging in hermetic semiosis (or authorised readings concerning the authorial intention), Eco's (1990) limits to interpretation are set by the reader's 'active collaboration' or cooperation with the text, respecting a text's own 'semiotic strategies' concerning the text's own possibilities and limits to conjecture (created by its contextuality) as these relate to 'intertextual references', 'inferential walks', 'possible worlds' (Barthes 1980:80; Capozzi 1997a). 'Contextuality' relates to immediate, dynamic and final interpretants as possibilities for linguistic, stylistic, ideological, cultural and historical encyclopedic information. Limits are set by the epoch's historicity.

He tells Roberto that the fixed point has been found and lies between the ship and the Island, dividing yesterday and tomorrow. After Caspar drowns in a primitive submarine in which he tries to reach the island, Roberto starts to write a novel to give order to his chaotic life. Through hermetic semiosis, his delirium about his beloved, his evil brother, the island, the fixed point and the *Wunderkammer* on board (with a collection of all the unfamiliar things and animals found in the New World) he finally sets off to swim along the longitudinal line and disappears into the sea. Through many events, Roberto's novel finally landed in the hands of the modern narrator who writes the novel.

Ending in 1643, Eco's third novel is positioned at the threshold of the Baroque described by both Walter Benjamin and Michel Foucault as 'Western History's most dramatic moments of religious, social, and philosophical decenterment' (Bouchard 1997:352). In this 'period of creative chaos', the shift from 'medieval forms of wonder to modern forms of reason' takes place (Zamora 1997:340). From conflating wonder and empirical science, the time produced (Christian) thinkers who moved culture from the context of medieval superstition to scientific reasoning. Roger Bacon (c. 1214-c. 1292) already advanced the scientific method and is quoted to have asserted, for example, that 'goat's blood was not essential for fracturing diamonds' and to have provided the proof: 'I saw it with my own eyes' (Eco 1986b:64). This overlapped with Aquinas' (c. 1225-1274) integration of Aristotelian categories into Christian theology in the later Medieval period. In 1643, this paradigm shift was still only gaining momentum–1633 saw Galileo (1564-1642) being placed under house arrest (which lasted till his death) by the Inquisition for teaching the Copernican system; 1634 saw Descartes withholding from publication his *Le Monde* which taught the same system; 1642 is not only the year of Galileo's death but also the year of Newton's birth (1642-1727)–aiming at expanding mathematics to all forms of human knowledge, thereby intending to provide scientific certainty to it. By positioning the novel at the threshold of this major change, the time when wonder and science, the transcendental signified and scientific data were still thought to be reconcilable and non-contradictory, Eco positions it somewhere between his first and second novels: between the Neoplatonic belief that there is a transcendental schema behind the welter of physical phenomena and nominalist fragmentation (which through resemblance, can connect virtually everything to everything else, independent of the things they refer to).

As such, the third novel is positioned at that moment when culture in essence and reality 'imperceptibly' deviates 'from empirical orders prescribed for it by its primary codes' and discovers that these codes are not only not 'the best ones' but also not 'the only possible ones' (Foucault 1970:xx). The Reformation, the Edict of Nantes, the discovery of the New World, the Copernican revolution, Galileo's experiments, the clash between pre-Socratic/Lucretian and Aristotelian substantiality/scholastic

metaphysics, caused the crumbling of inherited models of theological representation. The thirty years war with its alternating hegemonies of the French, British and Spanish together with the mercantile mode of economic production which eroded the feudal order decentred accepted political and social codes (Bouchard 1997:352f). In terms of Foucault (1974:xvii), Roberto's story is the story of the breakdown of 'familiar models of classification', of the experience that the 'tabula' or taxonomical grids enabling 'thought to operate upon the entities of our world', is totally inadequate in the face of the 'heterotopia of reality'. Breaches or the severing of connections between the order of words and the order(s) of the world, the crumbling of an ethical and genealogical world, effect Roberto experiencing that the difference between good and bad armies, villains and heroes are not absolute. By way of a materialist philosopher and in the midst of fracturing structures, he learns that the 'earthly paradise' of his youth, is over (Eco 1995a:52).

In the place of this familiar world comes a fluid ambiguous space, where different knowledges mutually relativise one another–'a territory of forked paths' (Eco 1995a:52). In this world, the narrator's emphasis of Roberto's problems with vision, more than an old wound or the plague, foregrounds the problems one has in perceiving 'ordered classifications and crisply defined contours' in a world bereft of order. Like 'an embarrassed Adam' (Eco 1995a:41), Roberto discovers even more troubling examples of difference inhabiting his semantic universe. The result is that the signs which he can draw on in his own European culture, are inadequate not only in describing the evolving European culture itself but also the physical universe with which he is confronted–the fauna and flora of the New World (Bouchard 1997:353). The only thing he can do, is to use analogies from his own linguistic system to describe what he experiences. Evenso, this world seems to be an inverse of his own: whereas frailty characterises plants, strength animals and bright colours edibility in Europe, the inverse is true in the New World (Eco 1995a:101). This makes for an unstable world, exhibiting laws totally at odds. When interpretive grids fail in the face of new and different cultural labyrinths, the semiotic consciousness awakens and signs thought to be exclusionary are shown to be linked and new messages are generated in a process of unlimited semiosis. With this awakening also comes the development of 'aberrant practices of interpretation', a play with the poetic value of words which not only excludes content but also merely results in 'gibberish', 'uncontrolled connotation' (Eco 1995a:102).

Similar to his critique of hermetic semiosis in his second novel, connotative drift or the '"nomadism" of semiosis' which Eco does not deny in principle, can become instances of 'epistemological fanaticism' where the 'excess of wonder leads to overestimating the importance of coincidences'. It is for this reason that he has introduced the notion of 'pragmatic semiosis' where not only plausibility (as the plausibility to a world/reality) but also the 'contextual strictures' in sign production and in-

ferential walks must be acknowledged. In this, he articulates the humanist notion of the rational modus with Peirce's three types of sign and his notion of the Final Interpretant, Habit or Law. Miranda's (1997) interpretation of the 'orange dove' is the best example in the *Anthology* of how this is done[7].

In addition to the many pleasures Eco's works effect, not least through his dry wit and passion for history and semiotics, Eco excels as teacher. The educational value of his novels as the latest examples in the developing of polyphonic critifiction is exemplary: his metadiscourses (especially concerning paranoid detection/interpretation also indulged in by policemen, intelligence organisations, secret agents, detectives, medical practitioners and professional readers: students, professors, reviewers and Eco himself as Model Reader of his own works), his novelistic demonstration of how to deal with historical narrative in the semiosphere (especially concerning encyclopedic knowledge), how to develop (many of his own) theoretical concepts narrationally (abduction, the interpretation of signs and structures and the inferential walks taken intertextuality in the novels, unlimited semiosis, 'hermetic drift', possible worlds and the infinite relations of rhizomes, his homage to metaphor), his novels as 'cosmological events', his challenging the reader to become detective, participating in exposing the lie, the apocryphal, the fake, the anachronistic, the pseudo-allegorical, the unwonted analogy through semiotics and his ventriloquist teaching practice in the novels. Due to the creative nature of his work, the novels also invite dialogue[8].

[7] Holding that the orange dove is the 'key' to Eco's third novel, she traces Eco's inferential walks concerning this metaphor from the names of the characters and the names and types of ships referring to the Dutch composer, Jonkheer Jakob van Eyck (who also composed a piece 'Orainge') through Eco's description of the dove as an 'emblem' and his relating it to a Gastalt game on the basket, ladder, sieve, column, network (the dove as musical score, fuga) (Eco 1995a:345f) (cf. also Capozzi 1997b on intertextuality, metaphors and metafiction as cognitive strategies in the novel).

[8] As Petrilli shows, much is to be said for Ponzio's matching of Peirce and Bakhtin. In boundary or contact zone situations, dialogism as well as Peirce's notion of the interpretant as something more than the sign, arise from the recognition that signs are 'not things, but processes, the interlacing of relations which are social relations'. Founded on the idea of *renvoi*, the 'logic of excess, of otherness', deferral from the interpreted to the interpretant sign (Ponzio in Petrilli 1997:127f) means that dialogism (as does dialogue itself) arises because nothing is the same, self-evident or given in the semiosphere. The non-correspondence between two interactors means that the interpretant sign always says something more because it enriches the interpreted sign. As such, Peirce's 'dynamic interpretant' (through which we know something *more* and not something *else* as in hermetic semiosis) is then analogous to Bakhtin's 'responsive understanding': 'Being heard as such is already a dialogic relation. The word wants to be heard, understood, responded to, and again to respond to the response, and so forth *ad infinitum*' (Bakhtin 1986:127). Like Barthes' (1980:75f; cf also Eco 1989:4) theorising of the text, this is a dynamic process and especially present in (the text's) performance (cf. Barthes 1980:80).

One can dialogue with Eco on his own theoretical notions and the way in which he exploits them for narrative and metadiscursive aims, his metadiscursive views (ranging from the breaking points in European history, the mixing of science and culture, international politics and ideological struggles to semiotic processes), his interpretation of hermetic semiosis, his views on the developing of art as life and life as art, his own analogical commentaries on historical epochs, his exploration of the historical worlds he stages in his novels, his interpretations of other thinkers such as Augustine, Bacon and Ockham through Peirce and Wittgenstein to Foucault and Derrida. Alternatively, his work invites readers to dialogue with these epochs and thinkers on their own terms.

Eco's gender representations in the novels, however, is another important area which attracts critical attention in the *Anthology*, most notably because this is the area in which he expounds his own philosophy.

Gender in Eco's Novels

De Lauretis criticises Eco's feminisation of philosophy a la Nietzsche, his novelistic ventriloguist teaching practice as patriarchal and his exclusion of the problem of gender from his epochal analogising in his first novel. Coletti, again, focuses on the purposes to which Eco employs the three main female characters in his second novel.

Following Spivak (1983:177), de Lauretis argues that if the idea has become female, then this means that the male deconstructor 'might find its most adequate legend in male homosexuality defined as criminality'. In *The Name of the Rose*, 'the brothers murder one another to secure the father's text' (de Lauretis 1997:249). The only woman in the novel, the nameless young woman with whom Adso experiences his 'igneous ardour' and the clarity the 'vital spurt' brings, ends up on the stake, with him continuing to desire and fantasise about her. Here, we find the relating of woman-mother-church-truth-death. This, however, is not the main object of desire. Rather, it is 'on the surface of the text', in the palimpsest body of the father with its numerous interpretants. The name of the father is not deconstructed in *The Name of the Mother*, de Lauretis (1997:251) suggests. It is continued in William's mediation of knowledge, in the teacher-pupil relationship between him and Adso, in the fact that Adso desires his 'knowledge, vision and power', his 'possession of the code', and William, Adso's desire, 'the writing which inscribes it and the manuscript which ... produces it as meaning'. Even in its palimpsestic mode, as *homo semeioticus*, man still stands in the sphere of male self-creation and in its latest version of the 'truth of non-truth', as males congregated as scholarly groups around father figures (cf. de Lauretis 1997:250-252). The alternative to this genderising of philosophy, de Lauretis suggests, is present in Eco's *A Theory of Semiotics*. The 'question of meaning production' is not here posed

'from within the philosophical brotherhood or in the name of the father', but rather 'from the field of social practices in their materiality and historicity'. Not the answer to the question 'Who Speaks?' or the 'whodunit' but the redressing of 'social practices in their materiality and historicity' is needed.

Concerning Eco's epochal analogies, de Lauretis (1997:255) appreciates his statement that the roots 'of all our contemporary "hot" problems' lie in the Middle Ages and that both the post-modern era and the Middle Ages are periods of political, cultural and technological transformation in which

> the whole deck of historical cards are shuffled. All the problems of the Western world come out: modern languages, merchant cities, banks, the prime rate, the rising of modern armies, the national state, as well as the idea of a supranational federation ... the struggle between the poor and the rich, the concept of ideological deviation ... the clash between state and church, worker unions, the technological transformation of labor [through such as windmills, horseshoes, oxen collars, more advanced rudders, compasses and stirrups] ... the rise of modern ways of computing with the acceptance of the Arab mathematics ... even our contemporary notion of love as a devastating unhappy happiness (Eco in de Lauretis 1997:254).

However, she bolsters her argument that Eco's novel is just another continuation of patriarchal discourse by pointing out that in this statement, Eco has again left out that crucible which either did not rise in the Middle Ages or went up in flames–the 'problem' of gender. This, she contrasts with Dorothy Sayers' *Gaudy Night* which, in some respects, has a similar plot to that of *The Name of the Rose*. Here, the woman murdering the man as narrative resolution changes the social reality instituted in the name of the father to that instituted by the name of the mother. Eco's theme of the reader being the murderer, then, is only applicable to the male world of male model authors and readers and not including women.

Focusing on Eco's employing the characters Lorenza, Amparo and Lia in his second novel to represent (true) reason in the face of the male weakness for (Medieval) hermetic thinking, Theresa Coletti explores how these characters represent alternatives: a healthy sense of difference and common sense (Coletti 1997:301).

The nameless woman in the first novel only figures as Adso's 'hermeneutic preoccupation', just figuring signifying processes (like language) in Adso's multiple inscriptions of her. Standing in for the 'forever unattainable transcendent signified' in the presence/absence binary, as body, she is materially put under erasure: unjustified death by the inquisition. As such, gender is erased from the novel and the patriarchal text ('the palimpsest of the symbolic body of the father across the cultural history of Western Europe') posited as object of desire.

Even though the three female characters in Eco's second novel have names and are portrayed in more detail, they do not fare much better than the one in Eco's first (they do not have any agency). In both books, it is men who 'produce books and ponder the meaning of words and things' and efface women with their male-authored plan.

Even though the body itself is not essentialised for the male characters in *Foucault's Pendulum*, for the female characters, it is. Lorenza's muscular playing of the pinball machine, brings Belbo to fall in love with her. Amparo is overcome by *umbanda* rite spirits when they enter her body against her wish. Lia again, provides Casaubon with the vessel in which his 'good primal matter' grows. More particularly the body of each is essentialised to a gendered groin, womb and belly respectively. Lorenza's mastery of the pinball machine is ascribed to her ingeneous use of the groin; Amparo's knowledge of her country and culture is said to emanate from her womb not her mind; and, as expert on the belly, Lia's is the archetype in the natural order of things.

Lorenza finds 'meaning' in four not distinct discourses: as sex object for Ricardo, as the unattainable transcendent 'eroticized idealization of otherness' (the groin) in Belbo's metaphysical quest, as the incarnation of Sophia (identifying woman with matter and wisdom's/women's imprisonment in the world) for Aglie and as dead thing with no further meaning beyond itself for Casaubon (Coletti 1997:304).

As the incarnation of European love of the third world, Amparo is the exotic other: a Marxist, Brazilian, descendent of Dutch settlers with Jamaican face, Parisian culture and Spanish name. Most susceptible to her native culture (that she does not even understand), the mind is unable to control the body (matter; she cannot avert possession at the *umbanda* rite) as well as negotiating the hybrid discourse of her comrades (ranging from references to Lenin through Amerindian fetishes on the walls, Brazilian cannibalism and African deities) (Coletti 1997:306). Despite her knowledge, Casaubon says, 'she [still] clung to that world with the muscles of her belly, her heart, her head, her nostrils' (Eco 1989a:162f) and is still positioned as slave. With his exposure and critique of Western hermetic semiosis, Eco ventriloquilly also rates *candomblé*, *umbanda*, soccer: ecstatic rituals which anaesthetise 'combative energy and [the] sense of revolt' of the 'disinherited'. This, he says and shows, despite appreciating the rites themselves as 'wiser ... truer, bound more to elementary pulsations, to the mysteries of the body and nature' (in 'Whose Side are the Orixa on?'; Eco 1986b). Even though she does not die like Lorenza, she exits the narrative in a similarly insignificant way: she simply walks out on Casaubon 'with a canvas bag, a volume of political economy under her arm' (Eco 1989a:216).

If Lorenza and Amparo were represented as a groin figuring the transcendent

lost metaphysic and a womb, susceptible to the entry of spirits respectively, Lia's is that of the belly. Not worrying whether she sits in a 'housewifely pose', she embraces her body, touching and patting her belly where Casaubon's 'good primal matter' grows. Speaking with 'the wisdom of life and birth', Lia instructs Casaubon that 'the *secretum secretorum* no longer needed to be sought', but that it is rather 'in the bellies of all the Lias of the world'. By implication, alchemical mystery, hermetic systems and even Casaubon's mythologising of Lia in terms of the encoded analogies of life and creation and valorised sexual symbolism, are insignificant (cf. Eco 1989a:361,437f). As countervailing wisdom figure, as 'oracle of corporeality', Lia represents the ultimate natural symbol. 'Archetypes don't exist; the body exists', she says (Eco 1989a:362; Coletti 1997:310). Writing from the body, it is also she who, through common sense, deciphers the scrap of paper which Casaubon interpreted as containing a coded message of a secret group who through a secret plot wished to control the world with a cosmic plan as in fact a laundry list. Lia represents the order of 'common sense', the 'logic of the body', a 'logic of nature' which limits the interpretive excess of the diabolicals (Eco in Coletti 1997:310).

Despite this positive appreciation of Lia–which Eco says also represents his own views–she is nevertheless excised from the novel as not significant, similar to the other female characters. Coletti (1997:311) comments that the problem with Eco's representation of femininity is that, despite his positive appreciation of the body as 'ground of experience' and 'generator and end points of meanings', the fact that he plays out this view on female bodies, that he stereotypes genderised philosophy–'men seek transcendence through mind; women are bodily immanence and nature'–shows his sexism.

Lorenza's free and prostitute body is naturalised in the discourses of the 'virgin and temptress'; Amparo's racial body is that of 'the woman possessed'; Lia's procreative body is that of 'the earth mother'. All these stereotypes, place (wo)man in that position that Foucault (1970:49) described as 'the man of primitive resemblances .... the man who is *alienated in analogy*'.

As a way out of the hermetic vicious circle, these stereotypes or naturalisations, reveal not only Eco's desired escape from semiotics but also his inherently patriarchal, exploitative stance towards women, so much written about, that one wonders how it is possible that it could have escaped such a learned and vigorous reader as Eco. However, if one's stance remains naturalist and neo-neorealist, this may be one of its features–obviously not adequate in the context of the struggle to move away from stereotypes. Far from it. These women escape from hermetic semiosis, but in turn, have no agency and are positioned in stereotypical silence: one into death, the other, to indefiniteness and the last, to housewifely chores (Coletti 1997:311).

Conclusion

That Eco does not produce 'writerly texts' but cunningly devised 'readerly' ones, coaxing (and often misleading) his reader to play detective in tracking down his intertextual references and inferential walks, or to enter into dialogue with Eco's own interpretation of different times, or to dialogue with cultures from these times is the key to his novelistic *oeuvre*. A firm believer in Peirce's 'growth of knowledge', such an engagement with Eco's work not only informs about other times, analogies between postmodernity and earlier epochs or entice the reader to 'brush up' on Medieval, Rennaissance and Baroque encyclopedic knowledge. Most importantly, his novels themselves teach–concerning the ways and means as well as the do's and don'ts of interpreting historical narrative as both author and reader.

One can, however, also ask many further questions about Eco's work and about the importance it has for hermeneutics in Africa. On the first, we may ask: in which senses does Eco continue and further (in the growth of knowledge) colonising, patriarchal, discourses (even in his ironies)?; how does Eco expose his own desire for fixed transcendental systems and fixed points in a postmodern world regardless of his exposure and critique of hermetic semiosis? On the second and returning to the beginning: what constitutes the dangers and excesses in divination, expositions, readings and interpretations of dreams, fortune, fate, oracle or holy writ, pathfinding, ancient hunting and tracking techniques, the interpretation of symptoms of illness and cure and alchemy? Alternatively: what constitutes that which we can affirm and practice? And, finally, how can we use Peircean semiotics especially to explicate our answers on these issues and on our multiplicity of historical narratives in the semiosphere as they concern system, hermetic semiosis and change?

Despite its poor editing quality (blame the scanner?), Rocco Capozzi's *Anthology* provides an important signpost on the way. As branch of philosophy and retaining its general focus, Semiotics as field may not only assist all disciplines in reflecting on 'the problem of semiosis' particular to each[9] (Eco 1997a:4) but also with regard to how each field has developed historically–what was each field's encyclopedia, interpretive strategies and purposes at particular epochs in Africa. This would, amongst many other things, not only show how science has been stifled but also how it can be used to constructively interact with local culture[10].

[9] Eco has already in his *A Theory of Semiotics* (1979a:9-14) identified areas of research belonging to the semiotic field: zoosemiotics; olfactory signs; tactile communication; codes of taste; paralinguistics; medical semiotics; kinesics and proxemics; musical codes; formalised languages; written languages, unknown alphabets, secret codes; natural languages; visual communication; systems of objects; plot structure; text theory; cultural codes; aesthetic texts; mass communication; rhetoric.

[10] On this issue, Eco's (1987; 1990) exploration of Semiotics as the science of the lie or fake may prove important.

This, obviously flies in the face of the unfruitful division of natural and human sciences, i.e. due to the fact that the evolution of modern knowledge asks for ever greater specialisation thereby distancing scientists from lived experience; and in producing educated but not 'cultivated' scientists or cultivated but not 'educated' human scientists (Harari & Bell 1982:xii). Departing from the presumption and aimed at precisely exploring the passages between science and human science, i.e. the study of pockets of (local) knowledge, 'multiple times, spaces and cultural formations' and their 'sometimes connected intellection' (Serres in Harari & Bell 1982:xiiif) homological useless science may be transformed. In order to redress this situation encyclopedic knowledge must be developed–knowledge which not only focuses on a field but also on the world with its 'multiple dimensions of knowledge'. In addition, since theory on its own 'borders on terror' and science on its own on 'domination', they cannot be studied and developed divorced from moral and political exigency (Harari & Bell 1982:xvif).

Such an encyclopedic approach not divorced from morality and politics, similarly calls for the dehierarchisation of cultural formations, for departing from the presupposition that the world is principally not ordered but complex and disordered and for a readerly or journeying engagement with all forms of knowledge (Harari & Bell 1982:xix,xxvii,xxi). For Serres, this encyclopedic approach is not systemic or taxonomic, evolutionary and progressing towards a pre-established goal, unifying or totalisingly aimed at a unity of knowledge, bent on establishing immediate relations between different domains, mixing fields of knowledge or discovering 'farfetched analogies'; nor does it work with the borrowing, importing or exporting of knowledge between domains (Harari & Bell 1982:xxix,xxxvi). Together with the spatial metaphors of the bridge (connection), well (disconnection), the spa (place of renewal), prison (incarcerated space), the journey or passage full of chance and unforeseen incidents, of interference and requiring translation, of the challenge to find or make ways, of dealing with disorder and complexity, are more apt in describing how one deals with and develops knowledge encyclopedically (Serres 1982:42f; Harari & Bell 1982:xxxvif). All these spatial operators can be drawn together in the emblem of the labyrinth (Serres 1982:43) which for us, means, the network which is Africa.

Semiotic analyses of future and past, whether narrativised or not, may assist to facilitate the dynamic growth of knowledge and related practices, constructively engaging what has been called the African Renaissance. In this, not the aesthetisisation of life but the facilitation of aesthetics in life seems to point the way as hermeneutic and not hermetic.

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