

Umberto Eco's Semiotics

Umberto Eco's Semiotics:

Theory, Methodology and Poetics

By

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Six Walks in the Fictional Woods by Umberto Eco, translated by Anna Cancogni, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1994 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

To my “teacher” of semiotics: Eero Tarasti

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INTRODUCTION

Umberto Eco has made an enormous contribution to communication sciences, philosophy, and other related disciplines. His multiple discussable scientific contexts (either from the scholarly, narrative or artistic viewpoints) get more complex to define if matters treated are elaborated on simultaneously, out of their multi-and interdisciplinary context. One of the methodologically significant issues to discuss in this respect is his interdisciplinarity, which contributes to the overall cohesive treatment of the semiotic method and renders the reader conscious of the clarity and reliability of the theoretical paradigms and approaches to semiotics that he discusses.

My task in this book is to render the semiotic approaches visible, analysable, and applicable in the shape as they are used in some of Eco's theoretical works, which I intend to analyse to emphasise the component of poetics. Specifically speaking, I shall focus on his following four works: *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* [see: (Eco 1994a; 1994b)] and *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* [see: (Eco 1979; 1984)], in the first two chapters of the present book, as well as *Theory of Semiotics* [see: (Eco 1975; 1976)] and *The Open Work* [see: (Eco 1962; 1989)], in the last two chapters of the present text. My aim in this book is to provide a determined theoretical "formula," in the metaphorical sense of the word, which would unite all mentioned components for the sake of the "openness" of a work of art.

This book shall therefore attempt to present some of Eco's theoretical paradigms, which principally pertain to structural and interpretative semiotics, and provide for a comprehensive semiotic theory, which not only would assist academics and scholars but, it is hoped, be an integral part of the professional literature for students of communication sciences and semiotics.

A significant part of the philosophical production of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries [such as, for instance, in: (Peirce 1960)] can provide firm arguments concerning Eco's knowledge of cognitive processes as well as semiotic processes taken from the theoretical point of view [such as is,

for instance, described in: (Eco 1997)]. These represent an innovative approach in the framework of a diversity of social aspects he treated in his works, whether theoretical or narrative. Thus, one can conclude that not only semiotics but also philosophy and linguistics form the basic theoretical methodology of his contribution.

I shall also attempt to raise significant scholarly discussions on the procedures which pertain to the term *poetics*, in close relation to semiology and semiotics, as research methodologies. By the term “semiology”, I intend Saussure’s explication of the sign’s concept in its behaviour in given circumstances [see: (Saussure 1959)] on the one hand, whereas on the other, by the term “semiotics”, I intend its definition as a discipline for a cognitive interpretation of meaning, at least as Peirce and semioticians after A.J. Greimas foresaw it.

The issues mentioned above impose justifying “the ontological” [such as described in (Deely 2009)] status of semiotics as well as its “epistemological” one, [at least, such as described in (Greimas 1973) and (Greimas and Fontanille 1993)], with the sole aim of rendering poetics and the openness of a work of art a cognitive and interpretative semiotic meta-theory. Hopefully, the last assertion will enable Eco’s works “readability” in its multiple shapes, such as shown in Barthes’ (1992) text theories. It should, in turn, be understood that such theoretical and methodological perspectives shall also encompass determined instances of the historical development of the semiotic method, without which I consider that one cannot fully explain Eco’s theory under discussion. In conclusion, therefore, by the abovementioned perspective, I will deploy the Structural method principally, recently regarded as “classical semiotics” [see: (Tarasti 2000)].

1. Poetics as a challenge of the semiotic method

If we take a closer look at the works of an Eco-like theoretician, we may conclude that poetics is not treated at all, or that it is implicit or undisclosed [in the sense of Eco’s ‘absent structure’, see: (Eco 1968)]. On the contrary, I consider that a conclusion that emerges from a range of semiotic processes (described in Eco’s books which I have earlier emphasised) is precisely the concept of “poetics”. Therefore, one can comprehend the term “poetics” as a methodology in this instance, especially if one considers one of Eco’s theoretical postulates: *all works of art can be read as a text, disregarding the field they come from*. [my paraphrasing and italics: (Eco 1962); see also: (Todorov 1981)].

Otherwise, generally speaking, the theory of general semiotics [in the sense as illustrated in: (Eco 1976; 1975)] gives us one of the solutions for Eco's posed theoretical propositions: "the science of signs" [so defined by Saussure; see: (Saussure 1959)], represents a methodology, i.e. a scientific methodology, which is capable of solving problems to such a point that, for instance, mathematics would make exact, when it expresses itself in numbers.¹ Differing from the assertion above, one would ask: what happens if artistic expressivity is in question? How does semiotics treat such a field? Is semiotics always capable of solving problems that do not express exactness or preciseness? However, we must remark that a determined transformation of reality and other functions of "subjectivisation" of its components may occur in the arts field. I mention this element because of the examples of concrete works of art, especially in Eco's elaborating the narrativity component, which, as hopefully will be seen, shall be elaborated on in the following sections of this book.

As Eco frequently states, otherwise, arts may have an implicit nature regarding a message's transmission [for instance, in the shape of an "absent structure", see: (Eco 1968; 1976)] besides their explicit one. Such a perspective can support semiotics' interpretative and cognitive capacities. Consequently, each *interpretative attempt shall overcome essential semiotic functions to reach cognising and interpretation results, thus implying multiple semantic outcomes*. In my view, adding the meaning component or offering more than one choice enables new provisions to the semiotic method, by which it renders itself a science with solid cognitive competencies. I intend to say that demonstrating a semiotic process (emerging from an essential "semiotic function") results in meaning outcomes. This is one of the theses that shall be explained in later sections of this book.

Let us now explain the situation described above. Only if we correctly interpret meaning, even if one word, for instance, (or concept, a phenomenon of any other possible chosen social context) were in question as an object of analysis, we succeed in reaching exact semantic results. To clarify: the complex process of encoding and decoding the message, or multiple messages (which is a subject matter of "semiotics proper"), is not sufficient in the arts field, in the narrowest sense of the word. If one wanted to reach exactness as an empirical result in various artistic expressivities given as an object of analysis, one would also give a cognitive and interpretative value to the possible emerged semantic units. In conclusion, we cannot fully

¹ I intend here the sense of a basic communicational process, such as can be instanced in: (Shannon and Weaver, 1948).

understand Eco's theory if semiotics does not overcome its basic definitional status, as, for instance, foreseen by a basic "semiotic function" [a term defined by: (Piaget 1969), as well as by other semioticians: such as Saussure, because of the "signifier" and "signified" dichotomy; see: (Saussure 1959)], and does not reach its interpretative competencies [my paraphrasing (Eco 2001)].

1.1. Which are Eco's other scientific dimensions?

If one discusses a work of art that is poetic (or attempts to become "poetic"), then one finds oneself in the field of the philological sciences and the philosophical sciences. However, it is also true that if one treats the matter semiotically, the scientific field of our discussion must comprise more than one discipline. For this reason, in Eco, one cannot treat issues one-dimensionally, as we mentioned at the beginning.

Otherwise, the above assertion proves the thesis that one cannot call Eco a language expert or a philologist only, as it may be seemingly "apparent". "The science of signs" (like I have earlier emphasised, according to Saussure) and its methods to render meaningful units as semantic results not only explains the verbal sort of communication (if one intends issues in their general comprehension) but the nonverbal one as well. Alternatively, as it might otherwise be expressed: "language is only one of the many semiotic systems" [see: (Saussure 1959)].

To advance the above-mentioned theses, one should refer to the field of language above all other related matters, to conclude that not only in the linguistic field (within its microstructures, as Eco frequently expressed himself) can one find the tiniest elements which would finally contribute to *concretising the abstractions*, as modern philosophers would express themselves. Almost all social contexts chosen as possible objects of analysis hold the eligibility and the applicability of determined semiotic methods and approaches. The last two paragraphs are purposely mentioned: I aim to show the multiplicity of semiotic methods and their results, including Eco's contribution to them. In other words, it would mean the following: semiotics cannot use a single methodological approach but must use more of them. This last assertion naturally depends on the "semiotic object" discussed.

My purpose in this "Introduction" is to mention some of the scientific fields and aspects specific to Eco's work. His theoretical works that I aim to elaborate on have a multi-dimensional character, which is otherwise a generally known fact: a fact that places this author in the field of science

and the non-scientific field: even in the field of mass communication. Such a kind of multidimensionality, consequently, represents an auxiliary device, a sort of "bridge" for transformability and change of his discourse from one sort of modelling to another, after a detailed "micro-reading" of the given text [see: (Eco 1968)].

1.2. Some other dimensions of Eco's intellectual work

I hope that it can easily be understood from what we have said that we are approaching the "multidimensionality" (the term is used in the metaphorical sense of the word) of Eco's creative work. One of the issues that concern more than one dimension of a theoretical understanding is, for instance, the modern sort of prose writing: explicitly speaking, the "stream of consciousness" and other literary tools which are semiotically analysable and shall be explicated, especially in Chapters One and Four of this study.

Otherwise, according to some of his critics, he is a writer, whereas he is a scientist and a theoretician to others. We have generally said that it is difficult to determine his scientific interest precisely. It can be remarked, however, that not only is he permanently creating, but also that his *innate natural capability*, (as Chomsky says) can propose a discourse that overcomes the binary oppositions of structuralism, post-structuralism, or generative grammar, a discourse which is closely related to *the intertext, the multi-coding and over-coding of the message*, thus making his contribution a firm ground to argue the omnipresence of the semiotic method [see: (Chomsky 1984); (Eco 1976)]. Due to such described circumstances, the following question may be advanced: is this only semiotics, or does it overcome its possibilities? My aim in this study shall also be to comment upon the applicability of semiotics' interpretative possibilities: a fact that shall be elaborated in Chapters Two and Three of the present book.

Speaking specifically then, (and I am referring here to the possibilities of the "encoding" of the message) the message is *information* as well (either processed or unprocessed, as shall be seen later) [see: (Eco 1976; 1968)], as it serves for an informational exchange process above all other processes. Consequently, the information can be transmitted to the other side of the communication channel [see: (Eco 1968); (Shannon and Weaver 1948)]. In this *Eco's dimension*, he tries to answer the following questions: when does the information become a message? Moreover, the crucial and most vital question is: why do some parts of the information arrive at the target more quickly, and others more slowly, and does the implicitness that messages hold have any "secret" in them?

1.3. The field of linguistics

Let us now focus on some of the “fields” or “disciplines”, which we consider that concern Eco’s intellectual contribution. Verbal communication is usually expressed through language usage. It is a social phenomenon whose development is explicitly challenging for a semiotician if one regards it within the frames of the twentieth century.

If structuralism, for instance, [see: (Saussure 1959)] has mainly used binary oppositions, post-structuralism, and generativism [see: (Baker 1986)] have established the principles of a multi-dimensional approach similar to Eco’s, thus enabling a possibility for the multiple discourses of an author either as an art writer or as a theoretician and a scholar. Consequently, it is logical to conclude that one can discuss Eco as an artist or theoretician. Eco’s double discourse of “acting” represents a relation of contradictoriness in the Greimasian (1973) sense of the word. One can conclude that there is *no other way of analysing Eco’s contribution except if all dimensions (part of his “theory”) are treated simultaneously*. Thus, our analytical discourse becomes more complex, in the same way as the author explains himself in his *Absent Structure* (Eco 1968), specifically related to the issues of the encoding and decoding processes. The next question can be advanced: what is the role of a linguist or a literary expert regarding the above-mentioned facts?

Eco gives particular importance to the *source* of creation of a work of art, in both narrative and theoretical works. The place of a philologist in the case of Eco’s contribution would be exactly there, i.e., at the point of classification of documented and non-documented facts within a written text. In conclusion, a philologist should work, analyse, and have a cognitive approach to the works of the Middle Ages to have proper access to Eco’s works.

1.4. The field of literature

Literature is the field that is frequently treated in Eco’s works. This part of the “Introduction” aims to present some of his views about literary semiotics. The following sections of this study shall represent an object of analysis for further elaboration.

Throughout his academic books, one can rarely find an explicit reference to literary theory (or a literary discipline). I mean that Eco’s reference to it is not similar to a literary critic’s or someone who would exclusively evaluate

the aesthetics of particular art creation. On the contrary, his analysis is concentrated on the reader, especially concerning the works I aim to treat in this study. A careful reader, according to Eco, an *empirical* reader [see: (Eco 1979)], would ask: how does the author approach literature? Or, in other words: why does the author not speak of that activity in a natural, understandable, and everyday language? Our answer would be poetics, which is present in the frames of artistic writing. Thus, Eco is a theoretician of arts or, better expressed, *an arts' semiotician*.

A new set of questions may then be advanced: which meaning, therefore, are we to choose, owing to the various capacities of an artistic expression? Which is the way to reach Todorov's (1981) "literariness" (a term to be explicated in the last chapter of the present text) as an integral part of Eco's theory? All these questions, naturally, do have their responses. Their results should be reached gradually by decomposing abstractions into concrete phenomena, as hoped for in the forthcoming sections of this book.

The complex and challenging way of responding to these questions requires a permanent reference to methodological approaches. When we have the elements, scientific facts, represented in the shape of a scientific process of proving, what remains is a process of analysis and synthesis. Since we already speak of a methodology, the following question can be advanced: which elements shall be the first to decompose in a concrete phenomenon, and how shall one come to a *combination of "semes" in the form of endless trajectories*, for instance, to reach meaningful taxonomies as a result [my paraphrasing, see: (Greimas 1973)]? The matter naturally considers Greimas's theory, which shall be an object of my discussion in Chapter One, further in the text.

Other theoreticians, however, have created their theories, which in turn are concerned with the different ways of *reading or micro-reading* a literary text. Differing from other theoreticians, however, Eco requires an openness of the work of whichever work of art: this means collaboration with the other side of the communication channel, with the one who can read, see, analyse, listen, and criticise it. This is one more argument why Eco is, above all, a semiotician, a semiotician of arts.

1.5. Why should the reader collaborate?

Let us now return to Eco's theory. I want to introduce here an essential element (which should also be regarded as a part of literary writing techniques), *which concerns how Eco proposes reading or writing a literary*

work, the “readability” of “embedded” texts into the main text [my paraphrasing and italics, see: (Eco 1994b; 1979)].

Speaking concretely: *the role of the reader or the collaboration with the reader* [see: (Eco 1979)] is present in almost all his theoretical works as an object of our analysis. For instance, in his *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (1994) and *The Role of the Reader* (1984), his primary preoccupation is exactly that collaboration. According to Eco, this circle, an “intimate” circle, is necessary for the existence of a work of art, which otherwise would have no validity without the reader and other related “subjects” within the reading process itself. The subtitle of Eco’s book tells us enough concerning this problem: “*the interpretative collaboration with narrative texts*” [see: (Eco 1979)].

1.6. Is Eco a text expert?

According to Eco, “[...], every text is a syntactic-semantic-pragmatic device whose foreseen interpretation is part of its generative process[...].” [my italics (Eco 1984, 11)]. The definition shall be explained here, elaborated and an object of possible changes or different conceptualisations. This is so because of the multiple kinds of their semiotic comprehension in Eco’s terms.

The text is a language production (or, as such, it is created based on some determined linguistic norms). We need some grammatical elements to create it. Such elements are part of a language or, better expressed, of the normative part of the linguistics of science. Before its creation, should one have a *context* for it? Should a relationship be created from the text and the context, an object of the semiotic analysis? The problematics in question shall deliberately be elaborated on in later sections of this study.

If we have clarified the grammatical level of which integral parts are the processes of lexicalisation and grammaticalisation (at least, according to Chomsky, among other related issues, as we shall see later) – what is left to analyse according to Eco (as well as according to other semioticians as discussed later) is the semantic level. The problem renders itself more complex at this point. The semantic level is not a linguistic one only, but also a communicative and philosophical one [such as explicated in (Peirce 1960)]. What does this mean? What happens is a semiotic process of decomposing meaning units and rendering such units explicit. It must be remarked that we treat issues from a general viewpoint at this point of our study, not from a specific one. To reach meaning, we do not need any

interpretation (naturally, when treating it on a purely semiotic level); however, we need to transmit the message through the encoding and decoding processes. In various discussable contexts as analytical objects, it may represent both semiotic and informational processes. The difference between the two notions, like Eco conceptualises, shall be given a detailed account in Chapter Three of this study.

Otherwise, the text is already in front of us. According to what we have presented until now, to define the text, we can say that the text is everything we see in front of us, its shape (the linguistic level), contents, and meaning (the semantic level). It can be changed, transformed (the interpretative level). This fact naturally regards the semiotic comprehension of the text, above all. On the other hand, the context represents everything we know concerning a given text: our cultural background.

One issue, however, can be asserted here: Eco is a text expert, among other related scholarly disciplines. This assertion can be explained in the following way. Not only the written text but each kind of creation of various authors whose *sui generis* represents art or a social phenomenon (either realistically "lived" or not) is a text, precisely because it is an object of analysis of the "open" texts micro-reading, as a semiotic way of researching or their comprehension.

In the *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (1994), Eco, besides Gérard de Nerval, Alexandre Dumas, and Marcel Proust, speaks of *Indiana Jones*, which is a film work of art, of Richard Wagner, who creates operas based on a dramaturgy, and symphonic music, etc. According to this, as a conclusion to our first reference to the text analysis, according to Eco, all these works of art wait for their process of acceptance and reception: as a matter of fact, they need to be read. Is Eco not, therefore, a text expert?

1.7. How do we reach a "collaboration" with the reader in Eco?

My aim in this part of the "Introduction" is to give scientific arguments concerning the "double discourse" (as I may be encouraged to name it) of the process of reading and the process of being read. If a scholar has already decided to seek scientific arguments (in most cases in a written form), at the same time, one must decide about one's being read. All of this aims to express oneself and be appropriately understood (although I consider that rarely is there one who thinks to possess the ability to fully express oneself or even think that one has reached a foreseen goal in the mentioned respect). We shall expand our discourse in the field of literary theory to discuss the

semiotic relevance of this issue in Eco's sense, after which we shall return to the term "collaboration," which is one of the significant theoretical matters for Eco.

Russian Formalism appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth century, in the frames of so-called literary-linguistic eras (periods, discoveries). Here are the reasons why we need to mention it, from the scientific point of view:

- 1) The whole literary (as well as artistic) creation of the past century was based on *comparative methods of research*, which came because of a *double discursive analysing or discussing* one work of art on the researcher's side. This fact brought about establishing of the dichotomies characteristic of the period.
- 2) Out of such established dichotomies, the form can be an analytical object instead of the content.
- 3) Russian Formalism can augment such a vision. New methods of literary analysis were introduced later.

We shall quote here the opinion of one of the founders of Formalism, Viktor Shklovski [such as can be at least foreseen by (Beker 1986), see the quotation below]. In his famous article *The Art as a Procedure* (1917)², which is generally considered as the manifesto of Formalism, he criticises the confirmations of the critic Potebnje, who says that poetry is a unique way of thinking, that poetry is a kind of thinking in pictures [see quoted work, my paraphrasing]. Additionally, Shklovski emphasises that "...we shall call artistic those kinds of works which have been created by way of a *special procedure*, whose purpose is to understand works as artistic; whereas the picture in poetry is only one of the devices in terms of the poetic language." (Beker 1986, 12-3) [The translation from Croatian is mine, italics as in the quoted original].

What is the "special procedure"? Was it not a new approach from the methodological point of view? Moreover, is it not true that semiology and semiotics are not concerned with the form? This kind of procedure represents another method of "reading" an artistic creation. This is the answer to why all works of art should be regarded as open, which is one way of facilitating their reading.

² Quoted as in the original: [see: (Beker 1986)].

Let us now return to Eco and his "collaboration with the reader". A typical example of Eco's relation to the "collaboration" with the reader, as well as with the behaviour of the text in determined semiotic situations, is the beginning of the book by Italo Calvino (to which Eco specifically refers), either because of his academic books or scientific congresses, which he commonly later published in the form of a lecture book. Here is one such situation:

Italo Calvino wrote his novel "*If on a winter's night a traveller...*" (Calvino 1981) by starting in this way: "*I started to write this book, but, I do not know whether you will like at all, or not. It does not count a lot. I will continue to write it....*" (Calvino 1981) [my paraphrasing and italics, see: (Eco 1994, 2)]. To whom does the author Calvino talk?

One can consider a second example concerning the problematics mentioned above:

At the beginning of his *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (1994), Eco refers to Italo Calvino's book. He states that both authors (Eco and Calvino) wrote a book simultaneously. He says, however, that neither of them knew that, as he says, "both were obsessed by the same problem". He further states that the dedication of Calvino's novel was as follows: "For Umberto, stabat lector longaque inferior Italo Calvino" (Eco 1994). This translates as: "To Umberto, the superior reader, from the inferior reader Italo Calvino" [my translation; see also: (Eco 1994b, 2)].

If both authors wrote books simultaneously, did they not collaborate at the same time? Eco says one writer did not know what the other did at that time, and that would not be called copying, but collaboration. This is because a work of art is not achievable without collaboration with the reader, or, in other words, he intends to say that these two personalities are in the process of production and have entirely equal status.

This is one more "important issue" within Eco's science, which will present in this study an element of theoretical importance and a "textual technique" applicable or applied throughout his narrative works.

Finally, I must answer the question I have raised in the subtitle. I am one of his millions of collaborators – readers – from whom the writer permanently waits for a response to the question: "Why do you not comment on my works? Could not you, respected readers, assist me in rendering my work better? Do you not know that without you, my writing would be useless?" [my paraphrasing; see: (Eco 1994b)].

1.8. The indispensable dichotomy: story and discourse: does Eco belong to the Formalist school?

Written works of art (not only these, but the ones comprising performing arts as well) should contain story and discourse [see, for instance: (Chatman 1978)]. Above all, we must say that this relation is semiotic because the meaning results from such a process. What occurs is a “manifestation” of the results [see: (Greimas 1973)] through the processes that have to follow before rendering the work artistic or before theoretically rendering the work as such. Also, one talks of two main stages as an integral part of these processes regarding writing techniques: the pre-expressive and the expressive stage.

Anyone encountering the above terms would think that we speak here of the performing arts, where this phenomenon is more visible, or better, that we either “play roles” according to E. Goffman, or design a new reality (as in figurative arts), or even, the written signs in the shape of a musical score “*are being transformed into an acoustic pleasure (in the same way that we could get pleased from a written text)*”.³

To support our explication, we shall quote Seymour Chatman here:

“Structuralism theory argues that each narrative has two parts: a story (histoire), the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called existents (characters, items of setting); and a discourse (discourse), that is, the expression, the means by which the content is communicated.” (Chatman 1978, 19)

He means that each “narration” (or each work of art that possesses narrative components) has two parts: first, the shape, and second, what is added to it, the content, or the meaning. When Eco speaks of determined works of art (which contain the narration component in themselves), does he not speak of the reconstruction of events (Eco 1994a)? The two elements in question are inter-connected to result in a specific text strategy, as we shall see in the following pages of this study.

Before we discuss this, we owe one more explanation: as may be concluded, such analysis started from Formalism. Therefore, we can say that Eco is much more than a Formalist. This assessment results from the fact that Eco marks the shape and form (elements which he poses not only on an analytical level but also adds features to their semantic field) and overcomes

³ I am paraphrasing R. Barthes here. [see: (Barthes 1992)]

the Formalists' procedures transforming his research methodology into a semiotic perspective. And finally, did not Charles Sanders Peirce define semiotics as a "formal quasi-doctrine of signs", which would represent another name for "formal logics"? [my paraphrasing, see: (Peirce 1960)]

2. The textual strategies

Eco talks of a strategy when defining determined techniques used in terms of both an artistic work's creation and the possibilities of its interpretation. The term "strategy" as used by Eco, does not mean anything else but a way to do, a plan, which would instruct us on how to achieve a textual level, or (better expressed) such a strategy would instruct us on how to render a simple text into an artistic text – a text which must narrate or must be narrative. Eco needs this term used as an adjective because with its assistance (referring naturally to what we have said earlier), he builds a reading theory and interprets *a narrative text*. Eco does not initially discover the narration specificity of a text. This theoretical principle (or methodology) by which a researcher would reach determined results has been used much earlier than in the post-modern era. Moreover, according to traditional literary theories, it has enormous importance for a literary semiotician and a literary critic.⁴ This is one reason we shall deliberately discuss narration later, especially in Chapter One of this study.

However, we have to explain what a strategy is according to Eco. To explain this issue, it is necessary to continue our discussion concerning story and discourse. Here is Eco's opinion: "The fabula is the basic story stuff, the logic of actions or the syntax of characters, the time-oriented course of events" (Eco 1984, 27). On the other hand, however: "The plot is the story as actually told, along with all its deviations, digressions, flash-backs, and the whole of verbal devices" (Eco 1984, 27).

The difference between these two terms can easily be noted from Eco's definitions, which develop into a theoretical principle. All that in Eco's terms will later develop into a textual strategy, because he says that "what matters to us is the level of the *cooperation stages (stages of collaboration)* which, after actualising (i.e., performing) of the discourse structures, conditioned by a range of movements, will gradually establish themselves into narrative macro-positions" [see: (Eco 1984); (Eco 1968), my paraphrasing].

⁴ Here I refer to theoreticians like Bakhtin, Warren and Jauss.

Eco speaks here of the “manifestation” concerning the theoretical suppositions, which will create a discourse out of the story for a “model reader,” which should result in an analysed text, free of semantic obscurity. Each reader can represent “an empiric reader,” a term that will be elaborated on in appropriate places of this text. However, only the model reader can create the strategy, which shall be named a competent textual strategy, as we shall see especially in Chapter Two of this study. In conclusion, we may say that the text strategy can be recognised only by a model reader, i.e., a competent reader.

2.1. An approach to Eco’s labyrinth: can we ever find our way out of it?

“It was a fiction, because the story had been reinvented by the curator; it was history, because it recounted what had happened in the cosmos at a moment in the past, it was a real life, because I was real, and not the character from a novel. I was, for a moment, the model reader of the Book of the Books. That was a fictional wood, which I had never had like to leave. But since life is cruel, for you and for me, here I am” (Eco 1994b, 140).

This is the end of the book we aim to discuss, among other related issues. Some other questions, however, may be advanced because of the facts above: why, for instance, Roberto, in the *Island of the Day Before* (1994), in the frames of his adventures (in around four hundred pages), would never desire to get outside of the Island’s adventures? Why did Casaubon in *Foucault’s Pendulum* (1988) go through so many endless discussions with Bilbo (and other characters of the work), talk, negotiate, and render intrigues in around seven hundred pages? What were the reasons that Adso had a permanent need to be advised by his teacher William, in *The Name of the Rose* (1980), to find out determined phenomena in the Cathedral that were not clear to him?

One who has read these works in the quality of “an empirical reader” (especially in their original language) will have noticed that in each of them, there is a plan: a strategy for the entrance into and exiting from them, or better, that there may be found even a realistic geographical chart for the authentic reconstruction of events.

The “labyrinth” we have mentioned has an allegorical significance. Before each book’s beginning or even towards its end, we find a drawing, which tries to represent the picture of events in an original way: the beginning, the plot, etc. Each of these units, in Eco’s terms, has a special significance. For

his implicit acts of speech, in the shape of the many techniques of writing used, would not immediately display to us the implicit secret that he keeps permanently with himself, in the form of an intrigue aimed at achieving determined purposes in the frames of his characters' actions. This is the "labyrinth" he wishes to explain to his readers. Nevertheless, why does it represent a labyrinth?

If one closely analyses Eco's narrative works, one will explicate the reconstruction of events closely linked to the relationship between story and discourse. Moreover, one would examine the realistic picturing of events, where each episode has its due place. Finally, what one would do is explicate the meaning from the viewpoint of content or unite form and meaning to reach the point of semiosis. Why should all of this be necessary? The answer is as follows. In almost all of his novels, Eco's most complex question is the relation—the semiotic relation—between seeming (appearance) and reality as one of the semiotic systems, seen from the theoretical viewpoint.

This relationship is a semiotic relation, and it belongs to semiotics. Eco, however, never finds himself out of the mentioned labyrinth, as the topic he discusses is infinite in terms of explications, repetitiveness, and similar segments of writing techniques, specific to introducing terms like "narrators," "readers", and "authors," etc. which, as shall be seen, are otherwise specific to the modern sort of prose artistic production. This general conclusion naturally needs its decent analysis to render itself explicit and reliable in its theoretical understanding, which doubtless is a matter still to consider in this study.

The elements above, especially concerning a "semiotic relation," are an integral part of Eco's narrative works, seen theoretically. Notwithstanding this fact, one should emphasise that their decent analysis represents a double discourse. It means that they comprise both his narrative and theoretical works if seen through the eyes of a semiotician.

Let us take the novels as an example. The relation between seeming and reality will never obtain an expected and realistic answer by the reader or, better expressed, a realistic solution. This presupposition of an empirical reader can be asserted because the author lets the reader find out if the actual author speaks of reality or of an idea that is personal to the author – an imaginative one. An empirical reader can, for example, talk or write up to a determined number of pages, thus describing a determined point of an event (in some of his works, Eco tells us even the precise number of pages), which

tells us whether it is an imagined idea, a plot, or an interaction of the characters, etc. Then, starting from a specific point of his narrative art and, further, within his narration technique, he lets us decide and draw conclusions on matters that might have a logical occurrence within the described plots of the stories narrated.

The relation between seeming and reality otherwise becomes indispensable from the theoretical viewpoint. Moreover, besides the fact that he does not discover the truth immediately, he discovers another phenomenon: the fact that the complex time parallelism in a literary work of art (but also, in an analogous way, within whichever work of whichever kind of art) is an essential element for him, which has a decisive role within the issue we are discussing, whether we (as readers) find ourselves within the reality described or outside of its frames.

If we consider both aspects, a question emerges: why does Eco never get out of the “labyrinth”?

Our response is as follows: in his novels, he constantly becomes more complex in many aspects, whether historical, argumentative, or scientific, in the plot and intrigue making. The author consciously renders this topic complex. He consciously renders the message more complex, over-codes it, and penetrates deeper into the labyrinth. The metaphor of the “labyrinth” lies in the *artistic being* of this author. The purpose is naturally one and only – in this instance, to be read.

How can a reader get out of his labyrinth if this is true? I believe that the professional reader, the complex reader, will eternally be an integral part of his “labyrinth”, as otherwise, without it, the aesthetic way of writing renders itself impossible.

3. Conclusion

My aim here was to present some of the methodological and theoretical aspects of Eco’s comprehension of the semiotic method. What I mean by this is the following:

- 1) Chapter One shall treat the narrative strategies or techniques as used by Eco. They shall base themselves on the structural methodology of research.
- 2) Chapter Two shall cover the textual strategies used by Eco. My aim here is to draw a clear-cut distinction between “narration” as a

process (which is seen as a semiotic possibility of one single *fragment* of artistic creation or other related social contexts), and the “textual strategies”, which would regard the wholeness of a text (disregarding its genre or origin of artistic expressivity).

- 3) Chapter Three shall be concerned with the “informational processes” themselves for communicative purposes, useable as well for semiotic purposes such as, for instance, within encoding and decoding purposes. Moreover, appropriate sections of this chapter shall also cover some of Peirce's provisions of semiotics, attempting to present representational methods of the semiotic processes and Eco's semiotic legacy to Peirce. However, it is worth emphasising that my contribution shall prioritise Eco's comprehension of structural semiotics. Both components mentioned here are owed to these processes resulting in a poetics of “open work”.
- 4) Chapter Four of this study shall comprise the “poetics” notion as a semiotic component, with the sole aim of incorporating it into some used and useable semiotic procedures, specific to Eco's sort of theoretical explication.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE NARRATIVE PROCESS AS ECO'S THEORETICAL CHALLENGE

Introduction: From the binary oppositions to the textual perspective

This Chapter of the book aims to present some of the principles of the structural approach to semiotics as well as its inter-dependency and relation to linguistics, [such as are explained in: (Rauch 1999)], which would then lead to the “dichotomies” or “opposition” notion [such as, for instance, presented in (Saussure 1959)], and finally, to the “narration process” as a theoretical concept, as used in Eco. The mentioned scientific problems should be intended either as philosophical or linguistic questions or, better expressed, should comprise both, as they are integral parts of semiotics.

Twofold modelling of determined theoretical postulates in semiotics (both of a linguistic and philosophical nature: by which I intend Peirce's and Saussure's contributions to the basic semiotic concepts), which, in turn, comprises the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, represents a firm challenge for some of Eco's conceptions closely related to the narration process and text analysis.

The necessity of presenting issues of “classical semiotics” otherwise [as so named in: (Tarasti 2000)], is due to my semiotic comprehension of what Umberto Eco intends by the narration process and the textual strategies. Besides this, I aim to reach a narrative unit procedurally, a narrative discourse, [such as considered by: (Greimas 1973)], which would assist me in the theoretical elaboration of Eco's work.

Except for the approaches noted above, which construct what used to be called semiology, hypotheses such as those mentioned above shall be the questions I shall attempt to respond to in the following pages of this book.

1. An Approach to Structuralism: why should one discuss binary oppositions?

The introduction of the study of social phenomena in “dichotomies” opened a new perspective to the structural approach to semiotics. Such an approach is applicable in contemporary cognitive psychology as well, among other related disciplines: explicitly speaking in the sense of Piaget’s “semiotic function” [see: (Piaget 1969)]. In my opinion, moreover, it is also compliant both to Saussure’s and Peirce’s conception of sign and signification processes, in the sense that, it is hoped, shall be seen in Chapter Three of the present text. Therefore, I intend to conceptualise the “sign” notion by both “masters” of semiotics in the specific sense of the word. The mentioned scientific issue is also necessary because treating this kind of problem facilitates establishing typological differences and similarities, significant for analysing even one work of art only, understandably, out of the semiotic viewpoint.

Therefore, as may be supposed, we shall partially treat linguistics in this part of our study, because of a basic semiotic function, in the sense of Saussure’s comprehension of the semiotic terms.

On the other hand, it should be understood that the mentioned hypothesis would not be valid as a methodology for all other sorts of given contextual, analytical objects, which might be exposed to a semiotic method. As may be obvious, a series of theoretical discussions have been presented and elaborated on, which also treat concepts of “semiotics proper” [such as can be instanced in (Peirce 1960); (Morris 1975); (Eco 1975); (Tarasti 2015)]. My aim here is methodological, or better expressed: to give each practical approach related to Eco’s theory its due place in this study. For such reasons, I aim to elaborate on the determined principles of the structural approach to semiotics.

Eco’s contribution, therefore, primarily concerns the above-mentioned problematics because semiology would be useless without the introduction of these binary oppositions, which later have either developed into other scientific entities or have been contested as a procedure. I especially emphasise this because of the relation between the “object” and “subject” in semiotics, representing a significant component in its frames. This fact shall also be covered in some of the following sections of this study.

One issue, however, can be asserted immediately: semiotics, even in the narrowest sense of the word, “needs” such a “conflictual situation” to be

able to establish its frames of the specificity of its semantic units as a result. For this and similar reasons, I consider it appropriate to present some general linguistic principles (whether intended as part of linguistics itself or generally intended as semiotic processing of its tiniest units under analysis).

To explicate the Structural approach and find out the reason why should we utilise such an approach, it is necessary to quote Ivič (1970):

Language is a system, and it should be analysed as such; we should not take the specific facts as isolated; we should instead take them within their totality, and that means: taking into account that each specificity is determined within its place in the frames of the totality (wholeness) (Ivič 1970, 99) [my translation from Serbian].

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the linguists, such as Saussure (1959), conceptualised language as a social phenomenon. Eco himself based his analysis on similar principles, especially within the works that I aim to treat, which is another compulsion for me to include the explication and elaboration of the structural method in linguistics in general.

Even from the linguistic aspect, the distinction between two phenomena (mainly belonging to various subfields emerging from linguistics, such as phonology and morphology, for instance) could then be viewed or studied in pairs [as otherwise explained in Ivič; (see: p.100)]. This kind of analysis enabled their distinction to reduce the redundancies. This distinction used to be made on phonological grounds, initially: linguists especially have researched the phonological systems of various languages, which aimed to compare phenomena that later assisted in creating a comparative grammar.

Such a “dichotomy” (or pairs of separately taken issues under analysis) can be explained as, for instance, “the white against the black.” These dichotomies, (otherwise also named in other semiotic circumstances), such as “relations of contradictoriness,” [that can be instanced in: (Greimas 1973)] can also be seen as oppositions between “reality and fiction”, or even among other related “social phenomena.” Specifically speaking, this viewing phenomena as contradictory to one another opens up a semiotic perception of their distinctiveness, or better expressed: “differentiation”, at least as seen from the structural viewpoint. This vision, among other related issues, explains the “intimacy” [see: (Rauch 1999, 49)] between linguistics and semiotics.

Rauch's (p.49) opening statement of the section treating this inter-dependency is an argument for Saussure's semiology. In this part of the book, my

intention is not to treat the historical development of the semiotic method but to mention some of its principles related to Eco's applicability in determined scientific contexts. It is for this reason that I shall quote Saussure (1959) here:

Language is a system of signs that express ideas, and is therefore comparable to a system of writing, the alphabet of deaf-mutes, symbolic rites, polite formulas, military signals, etc. But it is the most important of all these systems.

*A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable; it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it *semiology*' (from Greek *semeion* 'sign') (Saussure 1959, 16) [emphasis as in the original].*

As can be seen, Saussure introduced the “science of signs” into linguistic science, arguing that it is an integral part of social psychology and general psychology. It can be said that he “embedded” linguistics into semiotics or (as he would likely have preferred): semiology. Moreover, his “division”, or seeing phenomena as pairs of an issue, proves the structural approach to determined phenomena under discussion. After all, his reference to the “speech” and “language” distinction, specific also to other theoreticians of the same period, proves the mentioned twofold conceptualisation of language phenomena. I shall consider this one more argument contributing to the “intimacy” [see: (Rauch 1999, 49)] between linguistics and semiotics. However, as I have previously noted, it should be remarked that this is not the only provenance of the semiotic method. No: I aim to utilise several approaches to semiotics that have influenced determined issues of the multiplicity of Eco's scientific discourse in frames of the theoretical contributions that I aim to analyse. After all, this part of the text shall attempt to document Eco's legacy to the structural approach to semiotics which, I am convinced, is in close relation to the narration process and textual theory. Both of the theoretical problems mentioned shall be an integral part of this book.

There are obvious reasons to justify this insistence: cognitive psychology [mainly as explained in: (Piaget 1969)] is an argument that language specifically contains possibilities in the sense of “interpreting” such activities that might have occurred in consequence of human psychological abilities, either intended as realistically “lived” or as being of an imaginative nature. Is it not true then that Joyce's novels, as well as Virginia Woolf's, contain in themselves the “stream of consciousness and unconsciousness”? Is it not then true that Saussure, in his so-called “second thesis”, speaks of