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I begin my argument by questioning Peirce's assumption that aesthetics exists only in the state of impulse and feeling (as opposed to method): if I can show how aesthetics necessitates reason, then abductive reasoning emerges as an aesthetic of creative logic useful for the interpretation of texts. Interpretation of the sign—Peirce defines the sign in terms of a triadic relation—to symbol (a word that stands for something that cannot be seen but is not meant to define or signify the object that it represents) evolution demands an aesthetic more than linguistic approach insofar as the symbol requires an interpretation that we attach randomly. I then draw on John Dewey who maintains that the highest transformative experience occurs at the non-cognitive level, and this experience gives way to the branching off of imagination, habit, and other ways to approach and create meaning. But where Peirce and Dewey dichotomize the cognitive and non-cognitive experience, I will show how the factual nature of an intellectual judgment does not preclude us from asserting an aesthetic judgment. The process of interpretation itself functions as a process of abducting (Peirce's notion) between the observed fact and the law of nature in order to create a testable hypothesis—in this case, a meaning assigned to a sign. I will test this method of abduction by applying it to *The Name of the Rose* in two ways: I will use the symbol of the rose to test this interactionist theory of metaphor, and I will show how the labyrinth operates as a metaphor for the abductive model that informs my theory. If the abductive method works favorably in terms of drawing out an interpretable and useful aesthetic, then the abductive method ought to guide readers and writers in their literary aesthetic.

Abductive Reasoning as an Aesthetic of Interpretation and a Logic of Creativity in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*

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Abstract

I begin my argument by questioning Peirce's assumption that aesthetics exists only in the state of impulse and feeling (as opposed to method): if I can show how aesthetics necessitates reason, then abductive reasoning emerges as an aesthetic of creative logic useful for the interpretation of texts. Interpretation of the sign—Peirce defines the sign in terms of a triadic relation—to symbol (a word that stands for something that cannot be seen but is not meant to *define* or *signify* the object that it represents) evolution demands an aesthetic more than linguistic approach insofar as the symbol requires an interpretation that we attach randomly. I then draw on John Dewey who maintains that the highest transformative experience occurs at the non-cognitive level, and this experience gives way to the branching off of imagination, habit, and other ways to approach and create meaning. But where Peirce and Dewey dichotomize the cognitive and non-cognitive experience, I will show how the factual nature of an intellectual judgment does not preclude us from asserting an aesthetic judgment. The process of interpretation itself functions as a process of abducting (Peirce's notion) between the observed fact and the law of nature in order to create a testable hypothesis—in this case, a meaning assigned to a sign. I will test this method of abduction by applying it to *The Name of the Rose* in two ways: I will use the symbol of the rose to test this interactionist theory of metaphor, and I will show how the labyrinth operates as a metaphor for the abductive model that informs my theory. If the abductive method works favorably in terms of drawing out an interpretable and useful aesthetic, then the abductive method ought to guide readers and writers in their literary aesthetic.

Introduction

In tracing the history of the western approach to discerning what qualifies as art, we notice particular dichotomies emerge to redress the tension. For example, while Plato deemed form to be what exists in eternity, Aristotle reconsidered form as what we can test with our senses because when we recreate form, we appeal to the measurements of that form again. Aesthetics engages us to consider how the principles of beauty inform what we characterize as art. Terms that have emerged out of aesthetic reflection—pattern, design, composition, harmony, balance, symmetry, hiddenness vs. appearance,

and artifice (artificial) vs. organic line—call our attention to the subjective nature of art that often bridles our ability to approach art critically. But unlike the initial experience of art, which is sensual, the initial experience of a text requires active input. The text requires the reader to imagine the author's written image, so the reader puts herself in the hands of the author. So instead of art, I want to discuss the relation between active participation and abduction, which coalesce in the aesthetic of abductive reasoning vis-à-vis literary interpretation: the beauty of a text lies in the reader's productive state of reading, comprehending, hypothesizing, and asserting a rational interpretation of the text.

Charles Sanders Peirce denied his logic of creativity an aesthetic role, but I would argue that if I question his assumption that aesthetics exists only in the state of impulse and feeling (as opposed to method), and I can show how aesthetics necessitates reason, then abductive reasoning emerges as an aesthetic of creative logic useful for the interpretation of texts. Interpretation of the sign—Peirce defines the sign in terms of a triadic relation (the object, represented by the “representamen” represented to the “interpretant”)—to symbol (a word that stands for something that cannot be seen but is not meant to *define* or *signify* the object that it represents) evolution demands an aesthetic more than linguistic approach insofar as the symbol requires an interpretation that we attach randomly. Theorists such as Roland Barthes and Ferdinand de Saussure noticed this problem of how the sign (e.g., an image such as the rose) mediates incompletely between the signifier and the signified. Even though we grasp only the signified insofar as it consists in the mental image of the signifier (the sign that attempts meaning), we, as postmodern readers, return to the sign to reinterpret. In a sense the type and power of the sign—in conjunction with the context that reinforces it—determine its possible aesthetic effects on the subject's understanding and appreciation.

Abductive Reasoning as a Literary Aesthetic

Since aesthetics, I will argue, emerges as a theory of our susceptibility to a particular form of beauty, a pragmatic approach to understanding the relation between beauty *itself* and *our response* to the beauty as such provides a helpful way of getting to a theory of interpreting metaphor. Unlike Peirce who remains Kantian in his cognitive approach to aesthetics, John Dewey defined the aesthetic as an active, self-forming, self-fulfilling engagement between humans and reality insofar as “[a]rt is the living and concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously, and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristic of the live creature” (595-596). He argues that the highest transformative experience occurs at the non-cognitive level, and this experience gives way to the branching off of imagination, habit, and other ways to approach and create meaning. Where Peirce and Dewey dichotomize the cognitive and non-cognitive experience, I will show how the factual

nature of an intellectual judgment does not preclude us from asserting an aesthetic judgment. So if I can show how the intellectual experience defies the anesthetic activity, and this intellectual experience entails the rational part to discover an aesthetic, then there exists no contradiction in asserting that an aesthetic is intellectual and requires a place for the reader-subject's method to be used in the act of interpreting. To see a text as beautiful, we must recognize that the author grants the reader-subject conditional freedom. This conditional freedom requires the reader-subject to create an interpretation of the text (which requires creative engagement with the result) while remaining within the bounds that the author grants (which requires rationalism). I will argue that the creative method for interpreting a text and liberating a metaphor from conceptual gridlock in this conditional way proceeds from Peirce's notion of abductive reason and Dewey's treatment of the affective, non-cognitive quality of the mind.

If we think of *adduction* as adding knowledge, thereby allowing us to reach the median plane that attempts to resolve the cognitive impasse or epistemological problem, then *abduction* moves us away from what we claim to know. The term ontic-epistemic—defined as the crossover between being and knowing—reacts to this epistemological problem. The aesthetic tension between being (that which exists) and knowing (how we know it exists) requires an aesthetic and a semantic move (the attempt for meaning, or the communication of how we know that which exists) on our part as readers to determine how we come to know what we claim to know. The aesthetic problem of a “text” lies in the fact that black words on a page do not entail beauty, so the aesthetic lies in how the reader-subject interprets the words meaningfully. But not all texts allow for this aesthetic interpretation. A successful aesthetic contains a problem and a process by which the reader can be involved in the resolution of that problem through her assertion of an aesthetic judgment. This involvement relies on a hypothetical step because it mirrors the aesthetic experience.

Deduction alone cannot create an aesthetic of interpretation and thus fails as method to understand the beauty of a text. Peirce defines abduction as “the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis. It is the only logical operation which introduces a new idea; for induction does nothing but determine a value, and deduction merely evolves the necessary consequences of a pure hypothesis” (216). Abduction plays a significant role in semiotics because the process of interpretation itself functions as an inferential process of abducting between the observed fact and the law of nature in order to create a testable hypothesis—in this case, a meaning assigned to a sign. If “Deduction proves that something *must* be, Induction shows that something *actually is* operative, [and] Abduction merely suggests that something *may be*” (216), then the abductive argument concludes with a testable hypothesis derived from an observed fact, or case and a general truth, or rule. I will test this method of abduction by applying it to *The Name of the Rose* in two ways: I will use the symbol of the rose to test this interactionist theory of metaphor, and I will show how the labyrinth operates as a metaphor for the

abductive model that informs my theory. If the abductive method works favorably in terms of drawing out an interpretable and useful aesthetic, then the abductive method ought to guide readers and writers in their literary aesthetic.

Abductive Reasoning and Eco's *The Name of the Rose*

As a semiotician interested in medieval aesthetics, Eco's detective novel *The Name of the Rose* provides a space for literary detection vis-à-vis abduction. The fact that Eco uses the detective novel because "it represents a story of pure conjecture" (Eco qtd. in Rosso and Springer 7) points to the decisive role of an abductive approach to reading. This paper will discuss how the labyrinth operates as a metaphor for abductive inference in *The Name of the Rose*. By understanding the mode of this metaphoric labyrinth, we can, through definition, state what *is* the name of the rose, and by extension we can know the "cause of its being so-and-so" (Aristotle qtd. in *Sign* 198). Aristotle's notion of cause operates as the abductive step in inferring that the object defined *is*: "a good definition (no matter whether obtained by dichotomic division or not), while saying *what* something is, also explains the reason *why* this something is so-and-so" (199). Thus the definition ends up as a further syllogism (hypothesis)—rather than the conclusion—that involves all of the predicates and allows one to test the inferred relation among observed facts. The assertion of the hypothesis (such as "Man is a dog") entails a choice of "what has to be explained" (201) because otherwise the proposition remains a biological falsehood. So let us suppose we want to show the significance of the rose:

Rule: The rose signifies love and beauty.

Case: Eco writes, "Yesterday's rose endures in its name, we hold empty names."

∴ Result: The lost rose signifies Aristotle's book on comedy, the destroyed library, or the dead peasant girl.

If the supposition that something was an observed fact of a general rule explains the hypothesis, then the conclusion "is explained as the case of a rule, and the cause of the [conclusion] is the middle term of the syllogism resulting from a tentative definition" (201). The text—defined as "a coherent series of propositions, linked together by a common topic or theme" (204)—no longer functions according to the "law" or rule of logic, but rather as threads that demand a law "*invented ex novo*" (207). The invention of this new law requires the subject to creatively abduct the trajectory of transient signification through deciphering what the rose *signifies*. But the abductive phase entails the deductive phase insofar as the hypothesis must be examined by anticipating conditional consequences. Like detectives, the reader-subject uses her meta-abductional

freedom because it grants her the position to counter “without further tests the basic fallibilism that governs human knowledge” (220).

The Labyrinth

The beauty of the labyrinth manifests itself in the maze’s conjunction of paths. The labyrinth transubstantiates a symbol—which Peirce defined as “a law, or regularity of the indefinite future” (*Philosophical* 112)—into an abductive maze that requires the reader to interpret and resolve. We find the literary equivalent to these fragments in mass culture and high art, which means that Eco invokes a theory of textuality that “poses the reader as a term of the text’s production of certain meanings, as an effect of its structure” (Teresa de Lauretis 21), thereby granting us only conditional freedom, so we do not commit the intentional or affective fallacy. The tensions that critic Dorothy Sayers finds problematic—“he wants a mystery both with and without solution, a text both open and closed, an epistemology with and without truth” (21)—resolve themselves through abductive inference, which manifests itself as the labyrinth. The journey through the babelic labyrinth of the abbey that Adso of Melk embarks on with William of Baskerville mirrors the readers’ reconstruction and deconstruction of the text’s maze-like structure.

The labyrinth also serves as an interesting metaphor for conjecturability (abductive inference) because we begin with an intuition, a response to data, and an abductive step in order to solve the labyrinth or, in this case, what the labyrinth represents. Eco argued that the “appeal of the detective story lies neither in the representation of murder and guilt, nor in the final triumph of justice and order, but in its being an instance of pure conjecture, on par with ‘medical detection, scientific research, even metaphysical inquiry’” (qtd. in de Lauretis 21). The three types of labyrinths that Eco describes are the Greek labyrinth, the mannerist labyrinth, and the network labyrinth. The Greek labyrinth “does not allow anyone to lose his way: you enter it and arrive at the center, and then from the center you make your way to the exit. . . . If you unravel the classical labyrinth, you will find a thread in your hands, Ariadne’s thread.” In the mannerist labyrinth, “if you unravel it, you find in your hands a kind of tree, a root-like structure with many dead ends. There is only one exit, but you can get it wrong. You need an Ariadne’s thread to keep from getting lost. This labyrinth is the model of the trial-and-error process.” The network (also called a rhizome) labyrinth “is set up so that each path connects to every other one. It has no center, no periphery, and no exit, because it is potentially infinite. Conjectural space is shaped like a rhizome” (Eco qtd. in Rosso and Springer 7). This network labyrinth suits the postmodern sensibility by troubling the ease of finding meaning.

The labyrinth is apropos to the structure of Eco's underlying point that the plot takes the reader inside the author's mind and logic and, by extension, the logic of Leibniz's notion "Library." Leibniz's attitude toward *a priori* reason, which guided the Enlightenment, gave rise to a system of scientific knowledge that echoed the structure of a labyrinth due to its lattice of paths and discontinued the notion that tree diagrams could represent knowledge. The rhizomatic structure of the novel proves more problematic for readers than the philosophical, religious, meta-linguistic, and meta-narrative contents because "naïve readers" desire a "closed" or "iron framework." While the imposition of order and the creation of mystery seem irreconcilable, Eco argues that "both are necessary" insofar as "the order you must find is a sort of hidden order. . . . An author wants to show how things are difficult in this world, not to say two plus two equals four, but to show the difficulty that two plus two makes four" (qtd. in Parsons 22). The detective novel positions the reader to hypothesize that every event occurs according to the murderer's logic, thereby leading her to structure infinite conjectures based on the real story. Eco comments on the endless process of scientists, detectives, critics, and philologists alike when they make an abduction: "they must bet that the solution that they found (the Possible World of their hypothetical imagination) corresponds to the Real World" (*Limits* 160). In *The Name of the Rose*, Eco must ensure the correspondence between the detective's imagined Possible World and the Real World.

What is the Name of the Rose

The novel's rose transforms from a Singular Symbol (insofar as we know empirically that it exists) into an Abstract Symbol, whose nature encompasses what the subject invents. The rose signifies what is said and what is not said and the struggle of signification itself, but most readers recognize the rose as a clichéd symbol for love and beauty. If, as Peirce argues, "[t]he word itself has no existence although it has a real being, *consisting in* the fact that existents *will conform to it*" (*Philosophical* 112), then the replication of connotations derived from the word will suggest its symbolic, law-like nature. In a sense, doesn't the rose still stand for a symbol of beauty? Not only does the narrative itself create an aesthetic experience through hypothesis, but Adso also argues for three elements necessary to create beauty: "first of all integrity or perfection, and for this reason we consider ugly all incomplete things; then proper proportion or consonance; and finally clarity and light, and in fact we call beautiful those things of definite color" (*Name* 79). In deciphering symbols such as the rose, we participate in a similar aesthetic experience to that of the Medievals: "the Medievals took great pleasure in deciphering puzzles, in spotting the daring analogy, in feeling that they were involved in adventure and discovery" (*Art and Beauty* 55). In appropriating a cliché for the title, Eco comments on the clichéd nature of the mystery genre and how to make this genre artistic.

Eco also induces us to think about the rose as both a metaphor in and of itself and a metaphor for the act of mis-interpretation. Like a collapsed star, or black hole, the sign (now simulacrum) draws myriad meanings into it. As the new simulacrum, the rose attracts everything symbolic. William's epiphany from solving the mystery mirrors the reader's epiphany from realizing the rose's *significant* move from sign to simulacra and how the metaphor will effervesce or effloresce.

Eco argues that the "cultural universe is the labyrinth" that speaks Being through language. In *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, Eco maintains that the imagination formats and responds to nature as a kind of alphabet through which God revealed the order in things to men: "In themselves, things might inspire distrust because of their disorder, their frailty, their seeming hostility. But things were more than they seemed. Things were signs. Hope was restored to the world because the world was God's discourse to man" (54). William echoes this sentiment when he says to Adso, "I have never doubted the truth of signs, Adso; they are the only things man has with which to orient himself in the world. What I did not understand was the relation among signs" (*Name* 599). But even an erroneous surmise contains an element of value: "The order that our mind imagines is like a net, or like a ladder, built to attain something. But afterward you must throw the ladder away, because you discover that, even if it was useful, it was meaningless" (*Name* 599-600). Chaos eventually disturbs any rational train of thought or attempt at meaning.

Since language speaks Being in myriad ways, it always speaks through conjectures: "What being might be is always an hypothesis posed by language. Language comes first. But, despite coming first, it is in front of us, with its laws, which are also social laws, conventions, techniques, tactics, strategies" (Eco qtd. in Rosso and Springer 11). Like the transcendent nature of the cosmos, the text requires a conjecture to discern "an ontological reflection of, and participation in, the being and the power of God" (*Art and Beauty* 15). The conjecture, or interpretation always amounts to "a wager, a dare" (Eco qtd. in Rosso and Springer 12), and thus conjectures in detective novels are representations of successful conjectures in real life that require infinite proofs until we find no real closure—a very Thomist-like inquiry.

Concluding Remarks and Where We Go From Here

The postmodern novel purports to possess no meaningful, unifying plot, but the reader cannot help but remain part of the conjecture game. Learning how to maintain, sort, and discard hypotheses with care, readers participate in a course on how to read a novel. Once we see our "guilt," as Eco suggests, as the murderous reader, we might consider how the theoretical background and biases of the reader play into our semiotic system

and use of abduction. Fischer's notion that "Knowledge becomes intelligible by way of its abductive incorporation into a coding system (semiotic system/system of signs)" (12) frames the argument for this paper in a helpful way. Abductive interpretation allows us to use this synthesis of theory and praxis to acquire inexhaustible meaning for a sign insofar as abduction implicates new knowledge: "There is no progress, no revolution of ages, in the history of knowledge, but at most a continuous and sublime recapitulation" (*Name* 482). In this sense, the labyrinth of the library schematizes a map of reading insofar as the key to the library is in the connective method of drawing the labyrinth and conjuring up the places that the words signify. Eco takes particular care, as a semiotician, to provide some *useful* and some empty signs and symbols because beauty derives from an act of apt interpretation.

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