novel which voices Eco’s latest theoretical stance against aberrant, Hermetic models of semiotic activity while coming perhaps dangerously close to reproducing [...] that ‘excess of wonder’ that it set out to critique” (351) – which is to an extent, the point Hutcheson makes with respect to Foucault’s Pendulum. As it follows the fabula of Roberto de La Griva’s adventures, interpreted as “Adam’s apprenticeship novel into the breakdown of familiar models of classification” (353), Bouchard’s study resonates with de Lauretis’ comments on The Name of the Rose – both structured on the foundations laid down in L’idea deform.

In the anthology’s longest essay, Claudia Miranda conducts an illuminating and sweeping synthesis of several crucial Eco tenets causing them to converge on the significance, or rather the multiple significances, of the Orange Dove described to the shipwrecked Roberto. Through this elaborate emblem and the analysis of its position in the narrative, Miranda deftly works her way among Derrideans, Peirceans and Rortyans to locate Eco’s own particular semiotics. The author differentiates Eco’s textualism from that of the deconstructionists by pointing out Eco’s search for “a self-regulating mechanism [in the text] that can keep in check the number of ‘uncontrolled’ interpretations” (368). In this, the Miranda contribution speaks to several other articles of the collection.

The volume closes its selection of articles on openness with a second essay by Rocco Capozzi who presents a veritably exhaustive catalogue of intertexts – from medieval to modern culture – in The Island of the Day Before. Unlike some of the other authors who find a radical novelty or difference in Eco’s third novel, Capozzi prefers to interpret the narrative as yet another impressive display of “Eco’s familiar exploitations of palimp-sests and intertextuality” (389). Of particular interest to the author, however, is the selection of the Baroque age and its aesthetics as proper vehicles for Umberto Eco’s “unlimited” imagination.

Although the copy editing could have been better, nonetheless one can conclude that, if, according to John Deely, A Theory of Semiotics “is a book for every semiotician’s shelf” (83), Reading Eco. An Anthology should be on the shelf of everyone who reads Eco.

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In Five One-Act Plays, Renzo Ricchi tries to guide us, the readers, towards a deeper awareness of our lives and existence. What we find throughout these plays are various depictions of characters who, due to some extraordinary occurrence, begin to question life, death, time, the possibility of life after death, and everything they have been taught to believe with regard to these subjects. This basic existential conflict, with which we all contend at some point, is portrayed with a heightened sense of tension through the constant juxtaposition of contrasting views. In some cases, although the views are expressed by different characters, the fluidity of the discourse is such that it
transcends the immediate action that is unfolding and touches the readers directly, leading us to contemplate these existential issues.

The questions and doubts that the characters face are fundamental to all humanity; and the characters, like many of us, are never able to reach any conclusion that can ease the turmoil within. Perhaps it is not coincidental that the first play is The Scandal. In this piece a mother must try to come to terms with the suicide of her two sons; the father is so distraught by the tragedy that he is unable to deal with the reality of what has happened and as a result he loses his mind. So then, we have a mother who, for all intents and purposes, has been abandoned by her loved ones and is left to deal with her grief on her own. Two characters are introduced who try to console this mother in her time of great sorrow.

Ricchi’s main goal is the philosophical debate. His use of the one-act play format is, as discussed in the introduction of the volume, a choice that provides an economical space in which to tell the story efficiently and with a ‘rhythmic intensity’ that a longer play does not allow. With this technique he manages to enter quickly into the heart of the story, a strategy that allows the author to move towards his true goal, which is to have us take part in this examination of our own lives. To this end he begins with a device known as a chorus, by means of which the reader is quickly brought up to speed on the events that have transpired. As we immediately delve into the story we are introduced to the first consolatory figure, a woman about whom not much is said; we only know that she tries in vain to console this grief-stricken mother, and her attempt has absolutely no impact.

With this heart-wrenching story we are able to understand how the disintegration of lifelong beliefs can occur. With the loss of this belief system, there is absolutely nothing left for this woman to hold on to. In times of sorrow, and especially in mourning, we reach a point where we begin to question everything we have been taught. Ricchi seems to begin with this piece so as to annihilate any pre-existing sense of security we might have, thereby predisposing us to the more subtle debates to come. The inconsolability of the mother opens the gates to all the doubts so that they come rushing to the forefront. The mother’s grief and then anger at the second consolatory figure, the priest (in essence the representation of Christ on earth), serves to break down completely the belief system, thereby opening the reader up to the exploration of new explanations in the other plays. This introductory play serves to stir up long-held beliefs so that through the mother’s grief we can understand the recourse to alternatives.

In The Appointment, a father unsuccessfully tries to tell his son that he is ill and dying. His attempts are thwarted by his son’s self-absorption. In this play as in the others (excluding The Man, the Rose and the Silence), we have a confrontation between age and youth. Ricchi seems to emphasize the fact that we never really begin to contemplate our lives until we are faced with the reality of death. The younger characters do not consider their existence on this planet to be only temporary and so, for no apparent reason, they either throw their lives away, as do the sons in The Scandal, or flutter aimlessly without any sense of direction or without taking stock in what they, or the people around them, are doing, as does the son in The Appointment. In this case the son is so self-involved that he does not give his father the opportunity to tell him he is dying. Ricchi calls out to us telling us to meditate upon our lives, to reflect, and to examine our actions, our conscience and our existence.
The character in *The Man, the Rose and the Silence* asks: "is it worth losing our blind faith in science?" By examining the question on various levels, we find one of the keys to understanding this work. The events of our daily lives and our curious and inquisitive nature have made it so that we no longer have any foundation or firm roots in a belief system. There is nothing for us to hang on to as we quickly slip into the future. This uncertainty we feel is caused by a fear of the unknown and the possibility of oblivion. It is this deep-seated fear, now bubbling over at the end of the millennium, that Ricchi has managed to capture, making these pieces an accurate mirror reflecting the angst of today's society which, having discovered or explained everything, has nothing else to look towards.

With *The Promise*, an elderly gentleman is faced with the dilemma that many seem to think is the solution to all our problems, namely, longer life. With the conflictual nature of this decision, Ricchi's character contemplates his existence and finally rejects the offer. By creating this examination of a life, Ricchi demonstrates how life is the quality of what you have done, and not the quantity of years you have lived.

By closing with *A Foreboding*, the author ends with a warning to his readers. Through the grandfather we see what happens when we do not consider the consequences of our actions. Ricchi demonstrates how, through egotism, we can lose the things we value most. He ponders existential and ethical dilemmas which are quite engaging. Through the upheaval of his characters we are engaged in an examination of conscience which seems to be authorial intent. The loss of self-examination and contemplation in our society is what the author seems to be lamenting and his work is a call to reawaken our spiritual side and reconsider our almost mechanical existence.

Renzo D'Agnillo's translation successfully manages to pull through the complex issues explored in the plays with the concision Ricchi strives for in the original. A translator's lot is never an easy one and, given the Italian language's fluidity and lyricality, it would be very easy to lose the flow of the original work. Although stilted and a bit awkward in some places, the overall strength of the translation is able to carry through intact the sentiments of the writer.

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