



Misreadings

By Umberto Eco

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Satirical essays in which Eco pokes fun at the oversophisticated, the overacademic, and the overintellectual and makes penetrating comments about our modern mass culture and the elitist avant-garde. “A scintillating collection of writings” (Los Angeles Times). Translated by William Weaver. A Helen and Kurt Wolff Book

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

These 15 essays by semiotician and novelist Eco (*The Name of the Rose*) originally appeared in the 1960s and early 1970s in an Italian literary magazine; they appear here in English translation for the first time. The essays are actually satires, pastiches of publishing, art and literature. Typical is the first piece, a parody of Nabokov's *Lolita* in which the protagonist becomes obsessed with a white-haired old woman. In a work on Columbus's voyage, revised for American publication, the admiral's landing is covered by the likes of Dan Rather, Alastair Cook, MacNeil/Lehrer and Johnny Carson. Publishers' readers' reports for *Don Quixote* , Dante's *Divine Comedy* , even the Bible, reject them all. In admittedly eccentric reviews, Eco critiques the design of Italian currency. Although basically amusing, many of Eco's essays have a smug, precious sensibility about them. They seem the product of one who considers himself superior to his material, a dangerous trap for the satirist. Further, Eurocentric references, many of them still obscure despite revision, will leave readers wondering if they're missing most of the jokes.

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From Library Journal

Categorized as essays, these 15 pastiches by Eco (*Foucault's Pendulum* , LJ 9/1/89) were written between 1959 and 1972 and were meant to be amusing. Most appeared first in the Italian vanguard literary magazine *Il Verri* , and many were collected in a separate volume in 1963. Parody, Eco notes in the introduction, is linked to the topical, i.e., we can relate directly to Sophocles but need footnotes to find our way in Aristophanes (whom we may not find funny). Eco's proviso may account for some of the sophomoric and strained elements in these pastiches. Weaver, the doyen of U.S. translators of Italian, is always astute in finding appropriate cultural substitutions or inserting discreet footnotes. What he lacked license to do was remove the complacent sexism, ageism, and machismo that mark these texts as late Sixties insensitivity. The only successful pastiche is "Regretfully We Are Returning Your... , " in which a publisher's reader rejects the Bible, Homer, Dante, Joyce....

- *Marilyn Gaddis Rose, SUNY-Binghamton*

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Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

Original Language: Italian

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ricky Hayes:

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