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Class-XII

English

Flamingo

Chapter-7



Christopher Silvester

The Interview

Part - 2

Neha Rajvanshi

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unprecedented : अभूतपूर्व

"Almost everything of moment reaches us through one man asking questions of another. Because of this, the interviewer holds a position of unprecedented power and influence."

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formidable : शक्तिशाली
medieval : मध्य युग का
aesthetics : कला / सुंदरता से संबंधित



Umberto Eco



Mukund Padmanabhan

The following is an extract from an interview of Umberto Eco. The interviewer is Mukund Padmanabhan from The Hindu. Umberto Eco, a professor at the University of Bologna in Italy had already acquired a formidable reputation as a scholar for his ideas on semiotics (the study of signs), literary interpretation, and medieval aesthetics before he turned to writing fiction.

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staggeringly : बहुत ज्यादा
acquired : प्राप्त करना
equivalent : बराबर / समान
intellectual : बौद्धिक

Literary fiction, academic texts, essays, children's books, newspaper articles—his written output is staggeringly large and wide-ranging, In 1980, he acquired the equivalent of intellectual superstardom with the publication of The Name of the Rose, which sold more than 10 million copies.

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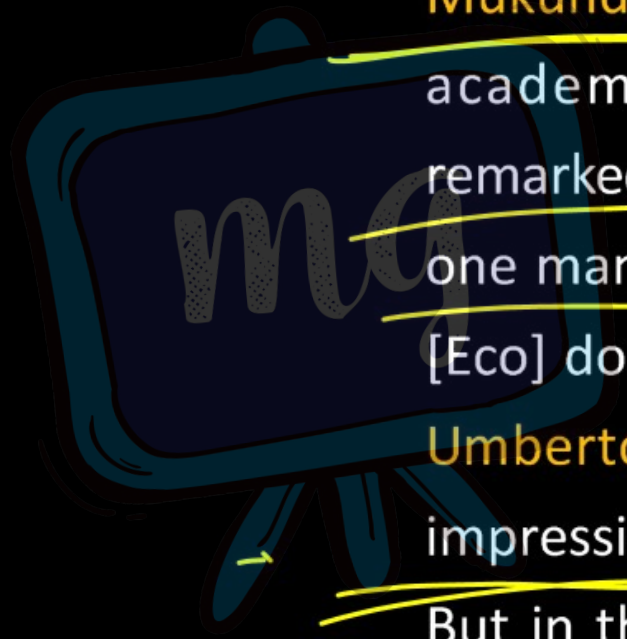

Mukund: The English novelist and academic David Lodge once remarked, "I can't understand how one man can do all the things he [Eco] does."

Umberto Eco: Maybe I give the impression of doing many things. But in the end, I am convinced I am always doing the same thing.

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ethical: नैतिक

philosophical : दार्शनिक

Mukund: Which is?

Umberto Eco: Aah, now that is more difficult to explain. I have some philosophical interests and I pursue them through my academic work and my novels. Even my books for children are about non-violence and peace...you see, the same bunch of ethical, philosophical interests.

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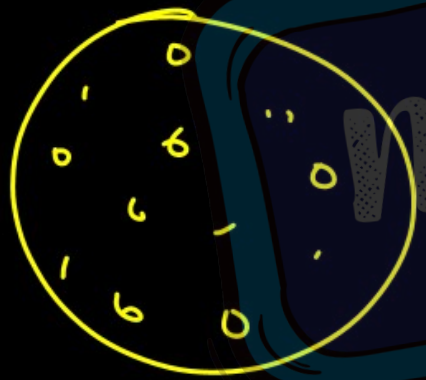
eliminate : हटाना



And then I have a secret. Did you know what will happen if you eliminate the empty spaces from the universe, eliminate the empty spaces in all the atoms? The universe will become as big as my fist. Similarly, we have a lot of empty spaces in our lives. I call them interstices. Say you are coming over to my place.

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You are in an elevator and while you are coming up, I am waiting for you. This is an interstice, an empty space. I work in empty spaces. While waiting for your elevator to come up from the first to the third floor, I have already written an article! (Laughs).

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invariably : लगभग हमेशा



Mukund: Not everyone can do that of course. Your non-fictional writing, your scholarly work has a certain playful and personal quality about it. It is a marked departure from a regular academic style — which is invariably depersonalised and often dry and boring.

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dissertation : लंबा निबंध

Have you consciously adopted an informal approach or is it something that just came naturally to you?

Umberto Eco: When I presented my first Doctoral dissertation in Italy, one of the Professors said,

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hypotheses: अनुमान पर आधारित

appreciated : प्रशंसा करना

"Scholars learn a lot of a certain subject, then they make a lot of false hypotheses, then they correct them and at the end, they put the conclusions. You, on the contrary, told the story of your research. Even including your trials and errors." At the same time, he recognised I was right and went on to publish my dissertation as a book, which meant he appreciated it.

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At that point, at the age of 22, I understood scholarly books should be written the way I had done — by telling the story of the research. This is why my essays always have a narrative aspect. And this is why probably I started writing narratives [novels] so late — at the age of 50, more or less.

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I remember that my dear friend Roland Barthes was always frustrated that he was an essayist and not a novelist. He wanted to do creative writing one day or another but he died before he could do so. I never felt this kind of frustration. I started writing novels by accident. I had nothing to do one day and so I started. Novels probably satisfied my taste for narration.

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spectacularly : शानदार

Mukund: Talking about novels, from being a famous academic you went on to becoming spectacularly famous after the publication of The Name of the Rose. You've written five novels against many more scholarly works of non-fiction, at least more than 20 of them...

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seminal : प्रभावशाली/सहायक
bother : परेशान करना

Umberto Eco: Over 40.

Mukund: Over 40! Among them a seminal piece of work on semiotics. But ask most people about Umberto Eco and they will say, "Oh, he's the novelist." Does that bother you?

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Umberto Eco: Yes. Because I consider myself a university professor who writes novels on Sundays. It's not a joke. I participate in academic conferences and not meetings of Pen Clubs and writers. I identify myself with the academic community.

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But okay, if they [most people] have read only the novels... (laughs and shrugs). I know that by writing novels, I reach a larger audience. I cannot expect to have one million readers with stuff on semiotics.