

Gloria Withalm

From *Il nome della rosa* back to “The Abbey of the Crime“?

Texts by Umberto Eco and Jean-Jacques Annaud – a Comparison¹

“Indeed, it seems that people like the Middle Ages”, says Eco in his article “Dreaming of the Middle Ages” (1986a: 61), and, looking at the success story of his novel one could add that they obviously like stories about the Middle Ages. First published in 1980, *Il nome della rosa* received several literary awards. No wonder that analyses of this success, including notes on promotion strategies of publishing houses and ever increasing numbers of sold copies (cf. Kleber 1987; Kruse 1985a), can be found side by side with innumerable publications on every possible aspect of the novel itself²: from review articles in newspapers and magazines to scholarly papers to collective volumes and monographs.

In view of the media hype, it was clear that the novel would be turned into a film. After three years of preparation, the shooting started in late 1985. And, again, dozens of articles appeared in newspapers and magazines – on the shooting as such, on the locations, the director, the long pre-production phase, the various script versions (15 according to Annaud, cf. interview Annaud in: Baumann & Sahihi 1986: 12), etc. When the movie hit the cinemas there was hardly a newspaper, weekly or film journal which did not publish a review; a making-of booklet was published (Baumann & Sahihi 1986). After 1986, the cover of new paperback editions related the book to the film³, and the novel kept on selling.

Except for a few vague answers to inevitable questions concerning the film in interviews during the shooting, Eco did not comment Annaud’s film – at least not in public. The only published sources are the summary of a conversation Gideon Bachmann had with Eco at the Locarno Festival (Eco & Bachmann 1986), and, of course, the often cited and reprinted “Prima e ultima dichiarazione” (Eco 1986).

Two Texts, Two Text Constructions: Story & Discourse

Comparing the two texts, the most obvious difference lies in the formal construction, starting from the *frame structure*.

In Eco’s novel (from now on abbreviated *NR-n*)⁴ the main body of the text is embedded in a frame: sometime after 1380, the old Adso_N of Melk⁵ starts and ends the writing of his account. The textual marker of the frame are the chapter headings “Prologue” and “Last Page”. The “Prologue” is introduced by the much discussed (altered) quote from the gospel of John (John 1:1). Already a few lines later, we are told that in order to reveal truth, “we must spell out its faithful signals” [*NR-n* 11] – the first allusion to one of the major motifs, echoed at the end of the second paragraph. Finally, in the third paragraph, Adso_N mentions the abbey for the first time:

Having reached the end of my poor sinner’s life, my hair now white, I grow old as the world does [...]; confined now with my heavy, ailing body in this cell in the dear monastery of Melk, I prepare to leave on this parchment my testimony as to the wondrous and terrible events that I happened to observe in my youth, now repeating verbatim all I saw and heard, without venturing to seek a design, as if to leave to those who will come after [...] signs of signs, so that the prayer of deciphering may be exercised on them.

May the Lord grant me the grace to be the transparent witness of the happenings that took place in the abbey whose name it is only right and pious now to omit, toward the end of the year of our Lord 1327 [...]. [NR-n 11-12]

The major part of the “Prologue” deals with the prehistory of the events, the personality of William, and how Adso got involved. At the end of the chapter William_N and Adso_N have reached the foot of the hill on which the abbey stood. “And it is time for my story to approach it, as we did then, and may my hand remain steady as I prepare to tell what happened.” [NR-n 18]

In “Last Page” Adso_N gives a brief report of the last three days of the burning abbey, the departure and his farewell from William:

When we came to Munich, I had to take leave of my good master, amid many tears. His destiny was uncertain, and my family preferred me to return to Melk. [...]

My master gave me much good advice about my future studies, and presented me with the glasses Nicholas had made for him, since he had his own back again. I was still young, he said to me, but one day they would come in handy (and, truly, I am wearing them on my nose now, as I write these lines). Then he embraced me with a father’s tenderness and dismissed me.

I never saw him again. I learned much later that he had died during the great plague that raged through Europe toward the middle of this century. I pray always that God received his soul and forgave him the many acts of pride that his intellectual vanity had made him commit. [NR-n 498]

Adso_N recalls his second visit to the ruins of the abbey and his search for remains of books and scraps of parchment which he took back to Melk. After a direct address to the reader, relating his chronicle to these fragments, and a remark about his aching thumb, he ends with the perhaps most often quoted sentence of the book, “stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus” [“The rose remains in name alone, we hold the naked names”; NR-n 502]. And this entire chronicle is preceded by a brief report on the publication of the translation of a translation of Adso’s memoirs, “Naturally, a Manuscript”, whose author, according to a few hints within the text, can be nobody else than Eco himself.

The only thing that was kept from this one-and-a-half frames in Annaud’s filmic text (NR-f) are some voice-over sentences uttered by the old Adso_F at the beginning and the end. The film starts with a black leader and a male voice-over saying a few words (verbally quoting, or at least paraphrasing, some lines of the “Prologue”). Contrary to the novel, where this information is provided at the very beginning by the “editor”, we have no idea who is talking.

Adso-old_F [voice over]

My hair are now white. I prepare to leave on that parchment my testimony as to the wondrous and terrible events that I witnessed in my youth towards the end of the year of Our Lord 1327. May God grant me with the wisdom and grace to be the faithful chronicler of the happenings that took place in the remote abbey in the dark North of Italy, an abbey whose name it seems, even now, pious and prudent to omit. [NR-f s1]

Four black credit title cards with basic informations on the film are followed by the first shot of the film (two men on horseback, or rather “muleback”) with superimposed credit lines indicating the major actors. During the next shots, the camera stays in changing perspectives with the two men as they gradually approach what turns out to be the abbey.

After they have entered the premises, the same voice-over paraphrases the final sentences of the “Prologue” and some lines from “First Day”/Prime (“I will not say, in any case, that it prompted feelings of jollity. I felt fear, and a subtle uneasiness.” NR-n 22). And only now after three minutes, we can definitely associate the unknown voice

with the young man (whose name we learn about two minutes later in his first dialog with William_F):

[close-up Adso_F-young]

Adso-old_F [voice over]

May my hand not tremble now that I start to relive the
[monks / the doorway / Adso washing his hands]
past and revive the feeling of
uneasiness that oppressed my heart
as we entered the battlements.

Thus, the first sequence could be considered to have a double function. On the one hand, it introduces some characters and the setting of the plot. On the other hand, however, with the voice-over there are still some traces of a frame structure, which imply that the entire film is a flashback based on the memories of the old Adso_F⁶

At the end of the film, Adso_F has, contrary to the book, a last brief encounter with the girl, and leaves her standing there. As he continues to follow William_F, we hear once more the old Adso_F (during the major part of the voice-over we see William_F and Adso_F riding away in an extreme long shot).

Adso-old_F [voice over]

I have never regretted my decision,
for I learned from my master much that was wise and good and true.
When at last we parted company, he presented me with his eyeglasses. I was still young, he said, but some day they will serve me well. And, in fact, I am wearing them now on my nose as I write these lines. Then he embraced me fondly, like a father, and sent me on my way. I never saw him again and know not what became of him. But I pray always that God received his soul and forgave the many little vanities to which he was driven by his intellectual pride.
And yet, now that I'm an old old man, I must confess that of all the faces that appeared to me out of the past, the one I see most clearly is that of the girl of whom I've never ceased to dream these many long years. She was the only earthly love of my life. Yet, I never knew nor ever learned her name.

According to some sources (Borgogni 2001; Mertin 2002), the film includes at the very end a caption in red on black quoting the final sentence of the novel. (Unfortunately, none of the copies I could get hold of (cf. note 4) contains this title.) However, contrary to a voice-over, these lines are not associated with any character. They remain an extra-diegetic title (similar to the titles at the beginning or the end credits) and cannot be traced to the narrator identified as Adso_F.

But the differences of the frames of *NR-n* and *NR-f* cannot be reduced to different formal constructions. In *NR-n*, the words of the old Adso_N at the very beginning of the "Prologue" and at the end of the "Last Page" touch a core motif of the novel:

The starting point and the closing point of the text thematize both the word and the problematic relation between words and things, but, with regard to the range of possible conceptions, they give two extreme and antithetic interpretations. The idea of the creating word of God and the "nomina nude" frame the narrative, whose hero William is distinguished in the course of his adventures by interpreting signs and by his learned reflections on the nature of signs. [Kelemen 1994: 158]⁷

Accordingly, the huge step from the first to the last words mirrors Adso_N's development from the concept of the *indissoluble connection between things and names* to the *denomination of things*. In a similar way, through the reflexive remarks on the actual sign and text production, which the old Adso_N includes at the end, and the relation he establishes between his memoirs and the *disiecta membra*, the text of the novel focuses not only on another motif, but on one of its own principles.

In the voice-over of *NR-f* we cannot find any allusions to philosophical concepts. We just hear the voice of a man who describes himself as being old and who is going to be the “faithful chronicler” of the “wondrous and terrible events” he experienced in his youth. There is no clue that allows us to relate Adso_F to one or the other line of thought, or to discover any intellectual development or learning process of the narrator. The closing voice-over in *NR-f* includes some information on the characters as provided in *NR-n*. Other information is omitted; for instance, contrary to Adso_N, Adso_F has no idea what happened to William_F. Even though Adso-old_F is talking about a name in his final sentence, these words have nothing to do with the *nomina nuda*, but echo Adso_N's memories of the girl in *NR-n* (at the end of the “Fifth Day” after he has learned from William_N that nothing can save the girl from being burned at the stake):

I burst shamefully into sobs and fled to my cell, where all through the night I chewed my pallet and moaned helplessly, for I was not allowed – as they did in the romances of chivalry I had read with my companions at Melk – to lament and call out the beloved's name.

This was the only earthly love of my life, and I could not, then or ever after, call that love by name. [*NR-n* 407]

Due to the other position within the text and the preceding confession that he still remembers her face and has never stopped dreaming of her, the character of Adso_F is also in this respect entirely different from Adso_N. True, Adso_N confesses to have sobbed all night for the young woman. But the fact that he does not know her name is only commented with regard to a behavior which seems appropriate to him according to literary sources. And, as a “faithful chronicler” [*NR-n* 278], Adso_N also confesses that he kept thinking of the girl and saw her everywhere, but only the morning after he had slept with her. (These sentences are also paraphrased in *NR-f* in a voice-over of Adso-old_F right during the love scene.)

I thought of the girl. My flesh had forgotten the intense pleasure, sinful and fleeting (a base thing), that union with her had given me; but my soul had not forgotten her face, and could not manage to feel that this memory was perverse: rather, it throbbed as if in that face shone all the bliss of creation. [*NR-n* 278]

I could not avoid seeing, clear before my eyes (the eyes of the soul, but almost as if it appeared before my fleshly eyes), the image of the girl, beautiful and terrible as an army arrayed for battle. [*NR-n* 277]

Finally, while writing his memoirs, the old Adso_N observes how vividly he recalls the moment of making love, and, again, he comments on the discourse and the text production:

The problem is, rather, of telling what happened not as I see it now and remember it (even if I still remember everything with pitiless vividness, nor do I know whether my subsequent repentance has so fixed in my memory these situations and thoughts, [...]), but as I saw and felt it then. And I can do so with the fidelity of a chronicler, for if I close my eyes I can repeat not only everything I did but also what I thought in those moments, as if I were copying a parchment written at the time. [*NR-n* 243]

Although he does remember the event, there is no hint that Adso_N – contrary to the confession of Adso_F – has ever dreamed of the girl in the some 60 years in between.

Because of all these changes of the frame and the omission of the final sentence, the title of *NR-f* has no more diegetic intratextual anchors and relations, the only remaining possible reference is to the title of the text it is based on (as stated in the opening credits, “A palimpsest of Umberto Eco's novel”). The title of *NR-n*, on the other hand, guides the reception, since

the title deals indeed with what it proposes, with *names*, the *power of names*, the *relation between names and things*; it deals with semiotic problems. [Kelemen 1994: 159; my italics, my translation].⁸

The *name* Adso_F is talking about at the end of *NR-f* is the unknown name of the girl, a non-existing or empty *signans*, and not the *name* of the *rose* (as referred to in *stat rosa pristina nomine*, unless we equal the rose solely to the girl). This *name* of the rose remains only as a naked name (a sign residue of the *signans* according to Rossi-Landi) after the sign has fallen apart due to the passing away of the *signatum* (the rose), but it can be used again in a second, new sign production – when talking about it – to constitute a new sign.

A comparison of the formal composition of the two texts, film and novel, has to include another obvious difference, the *structure* and *duration of the narrative*. *NR-n* follows a strict chronological principle: the fabula of the major body of the text occupies a span of seven days – starting from the arrival on the first day (a Sunday) until the fire in the Abbey in the night from Friday to Saturday (consequently, the departure three days later is included in the “Final Page”). The seven main chapters are numbered consecutively; within each day/chapter there are sub-chapters (48 in total), named after the hours of the day (Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Night) and the liturgical hours (Matins, Lauds, Vespers, Compline) respectively, which allow a precise temporal orientation.

With respect to the rigid temporal structure of seven days, *NR-f* clearly diverges from *NR-n*. Since the film contains no unmarked, and thus undiscernible, ellipsis of entire days, the fire in the Aedificium starts in the night before the fifth day, and William_F and Adso_F seem to leave the abbey the same day sometimes in the afternoon. The film has no clear indication of the daily hours, the transitions from one day to the next are marked by shots of the abbey (some of them from outside) at night, at dawn or daybreak.

The questions of who is telling us of the transition, with whose eyes we see the abbey, leads to the topic of the *narrative perspective*. Except for the editorial report, *NR-n* is entirely narrated by Adso_N who is writing down the events of this very week in November 1327 (plus short flashbacks to the summer of the same year) as he experienced them in his youth. The events are rendered in a “time-condensing narrative report” as well as in “time-covering narrating with a scenic representation and dialogic direct speech of the characters” [Kruse 1985b: 37]. The narration of the events experienced by the young Adso_N is constantly commented by the old Adso_N. Eco talks about “the encasement of the voices” or an “enunciative duplicity” respectively [PNR 517]: “The trick was to make the old Adso constantly present as he ponders what he remembers having seen and felt as the young Adso.” [PNR 517] – a striking example of Bakhtin’s polyphonic, dialogic conception of the text. The intrusion of the old Adso_N establishes not only this *enunciative duplicity*, but brings about a continuous auto-thematization of the text. The seemingly linear sequence of events is interrupted, the reader is distanced from the narrative flow.

Apart from the voice-over frame, *NR-f* includes some (voice-over) interventions of the old Adso_F, but definitely less than in the novel.

When William_F and Adso_F investigate the spot where Adelmo’s corpse was found [~15min]:

“My master trusted Aristotle, the Greek philosophers, and the faculties of his own remarkable logical intelligence. Unhappily, my fears were not mere phantoms of my youthful imagination.”

After Salvatore’s attempted murder and the deal with Remigio as he opens them the door to the Aedificium [~37min]:

“I could not comprehend why my master so quickly dismissed my suspicions of the heretical hunchback and why it was so urgent that we visit the tower. I assumed he could not resist the temptation to penetrate the library and look at the books.”

Before Adso_F sleeps with the girl [~43min]:

“Who was she? Who was this creature that rose like the dawn? Who was bewitched as the moon, radiant as the sun, terrible as an army poised for battle?”

After Salvatore and the girl are imprisoned for witchcraft and the papal legation arrives [~84min]:

“Did I lie awake that night suffering for the girl or for myself? I did not know. With the dawn came the envoys of the Pope, our adversaries in the forthcoming debate. But it meant so little to me now.”

After the trial when William_F is put under guard and the pyres are erected outside the abbey [~100min]:

“If only I could find the book and prove that Bernardo Gui was wrong. But the Antichrist was victorious once more, and nothing seemed to be able to hinder him further.”

Although uttered by the old Adso_F, none of these remarks reflects the discursive situation or can be considered a retrospective view on the events – they merely give story information or add some thoughts or desires of the young man, but they do not add another auctorial perspective.

The question of the narrative perspective necessarily includes the question of the point-of-view of the camera: Who is looking? Who is narrating?

Before we see the first image of the film, we hear the voice of an old man who presents himself as the narrator (in case we do not know the novel, we have no idea who he is). Some 20 seconds later we see two people in the distance, they slowly approach the camera on horseback: a younger and an older Franciscan. (Although this waiting for the protagonists already raises the question of the narrative perspective, the viewer is used to this kind of slow introduction.) For the next two minutes we accompany the two men on their way, and, together with them, we have a first look at the abbey. All of a sudden, a shot distances us again: we see the two men in a high-angle long shot, but with whose eyes do we see them? There’s no time to search for an answer to this question, since the two Franciscans have arrived at the gate of the abbey. After they are welcomed, we finally find out that the old voice is associated to the young monk (as mentioned above, we hear it again during a close-up of his). Together with the two men and another monk we cross the vast courtyard. And then there is another irritating high-angle shot, but this time it is retrospectively defined as a subjective shot. For the first time we are definitely not with the two Franciscans: we are inside a building, a Benedictine monk is standing at a window and asks, “Shall we tell him?”

Within these first some three and a half minutes, we are confronted with three different points-of-view which will re-appear throughout the film:

- together with William_F and/or Adso_F;
- together with other characters in situations where none of the Franciscans is present;
- from the perspective of an unknown observer/narrator.

Contrary to *NR-n*, the narrative perspective in *NR-f* is not the privilege of Adso_F (and William_F), although we experience a great deal of the plot together with them, sometimes even through their eyes in clearly subjective shots (for instance when William_F looks out of the window of his cell, and then we see what he sees: a fresh grave and a raven pecking with its beak into the earth; or when during the investigation of the spot where Adelmo’s body was found, a tilt up to the Aedificium is revealed as William_F’s look in the following shot.)

Most obviously presented from a point-of-view other than Adso_F's or William_F's are those events where none of them can be present (as it is the case with the exterior shots of the abbey at night or at dawn already mentioned).

Right after their arrival we witness a conversation between the Abbot_F, a blind old monk named Jorge_F and a third yet unknown monk who definitely has an important function. In the first night, Adso_F and William_F are shown in their cell, and then we leave them to watch several other characters: a novice is reading to Jorge_F; in the scriptorium, a monk (=Venantius_F) laughs while reading and licks his fingers to turn the pages; inside his cell, another monk (=Berengar_F) is flogging his back. In the second night, while Remigio_F opens the door of the Aedificium for Adso_F and William_F, Salvatore_F opens the small gate of the abbey and lets the girl in. Berengar_F is in the scriptorium and reads a book; when he hears steps, he puts out the light and hides in a corner, just in time before we see Adso_F and William_F entering the scriptorium. Shots of the two Franciscans (trying to read the parchment with the secret message) alternate with shots of Berengar_F who lures them away from the desk and runs away with a book. The third day opens with shots of the Franciscan delegates walking through a mountain landscape early in the morning. In the afternoon of the same day, William_F gives the abbot a brief summary of what he has found out so far. Although he only presents his conclusions, we are forced to believe that what he says is true, since everything he says is accompanied by shots exactly illustrating his words, as if he would recall the events in a sort of flashback, only briefly interrupted by shots of William_F and the Abbot_F. A few images are known already from the first night, some are motivated by Salvatore_F's statements, but for most visualized actions there is nobody (left) who could have told them.

And there are many more events that we are allowed to witness, whereas neither Adso_F nor William_F have any direct knowledge about them: the arrival of Bernardo Gui_F; Salvatore_F's love spell; the fire in the stable; Gui_F interrogating/torturing Salvatore_F; the arrival of the Papal delegation; the murder of Severinus_F; the conversation between Malachia_F and Remigio_F; Remigio_F's arrest; the departure both of the Franciscans and the papal delegation; the preparations of the stakes; and, towards the end of the film, the entire parallel plot before and during the fire in the Aedificium: how the three prisoners are brought to the stakes and executed, the revolt of the peasants and Bernardo Gui_F's death.

Finally, there are a few shots which imply an unknown (omniscient) observer, for instance most of those showing Adso_F and William_F from an extreme high angle. Some of them are subsequently related to an observer (like the one at the beginning with the Abbot_F watching from a window). A second one, already mentioned (during the examination of the blood stains in the snow) could also be motivated by an observer presented some two minutes later: Malachia_F is shown at the window of the wooden tower. Later on, when the two of them examine the footprints, they are once more shown from a high angle. Is Malachia_F again spying on them? Definitely not, since he is in the scriptorium and quickly closes the small door in the background when Adso_F and William_F enter the hall in the following scene. Is somebody else spying on them? Maybe the Abbot_F? We have no knowledge of his whereabouts. Maybe Salvatore_F who some six (film) minutes later tries to kill them with a stone? Most probably not, because his assault is introduced by another high-angle shot: After Adso_F and William_F have left the Aedificium, while talking about the little door in the scriptorium, they are shown from

above; but there is also a hand in the frame which pushes down a stone. Who was watching?

On many occasions, the camera, representing the unknown narrative perspective, knows more than any of the characters. Whenever Adso_F and William_F come into the scriptorium, the camera is already waiting for them, and it is waiting for them inside the library when they first enter it, carefully counting the steps. It is with the eye of the camera that we see the exterior views of the abbey's silhouette in the shots marking the transition between the days. And it can only be the camera's omniscient perspective which makes us a witness of the nightly adventures of Adelmo, Venantius, and Berengar.

Two different stories: different characters, different events, different readings

All the analyses of *NR-n* talk about the various possible levels of *reading* the novel: whodunit, historical novel, mystery, Gothic novel, reflexions on the history of the church, on various philosophical traditions, on power relations, etc. – everything is included and allows (either parallel or consecutively) a multi-tiered reading. What are the levels of the story in *NR-f* and how are they related?

As pointed out by several authors (e.g. Kruse 1985b), the two main plot strains in *NR-n*, interrelated by events and motifs, are the deaths and politics. In *NR-f* the latter one is reduced to a brief dispute between Michele da Cesena_F as member of the group of Franciscans, and Cardinal Bertrand_F presiding the papal delegates. *NR-n* focuses already in the “Prologue” on the (church) political situation (conflict Pope/Emperor) and the debate on poverty (conflict Pope/Franciscans). In the beginning, William_N's “mission [...] remained unknown” to Adso_N and he could only form “some idea on the nature of this assignment [*NR-n* 14], even after he overheard a conversation between Abo_N and William_N. In the afternoon of the second day Adso_N gives a detailed account [*NR-n* 146-148] of the intricate reasons for the meeting to be held in the abbey.

NR-f provides no information about the meeting and its political implications: we only hear about “other delegates” to arrive (in the first conversation William_F–Abbot_F), and a debate the abbey is “so greatly honored to host” (during dinner on the first day); only on the morning of the third day, when the Franciscans arrive, Michele da Cesena says something about “reconciliation” and, later on, Jerome of Kaffa expresses his fear that “the Pope wants to crash our order”. When the poverty debate finally starts in the chapter house, we can hardly follow the arguments. After members of both legations have spoken a few sentences, Severinus_F appears to tell William_F that he has found the book. When Severinus_F goes back to his laboratory, we follow him and witness how he is murdered. The political dimensions of the meeting remain untouched, but even if the debate is only meant as a sort of backdrop, there is not enough information provided about it. The political level is merely used to serve the mystery plot, and, according to an interview, that's exactly what Annaud found fascinating.

I was fascinated by the rare combination of a simple narrative structure, which proceeds rather in a linear way, and merely asks the question, who is the murderer, and the depth of the whole, the way historical backgrounds are integrated and used [...] A murder mystery which so much esprit, I was fascinated. It's not only about the detective, the case or the solution; it's also about Adso, the narrator, about his time and the spirit of his time. [Interview Annaud in: Baumann & Sahihi 1986: 10; my translation]⁹

Sean Connery expresses it even more directly:

That's the stuff, the audience likes. From Agatha Christie to Sherlock Holmes – that's the flesh of a mystery. And *The Name of the Rose* is an incredibly well-made "Whodunit". [Interview Connery in: Baumann & Sahihi 1986: 26; my translation]¹⁰

Only the producer, Bernd Eichinger, tries to play down the whodunit:

We knew that we didn't want to make a suspense movie, a thriller. We wanted to keep the essence. And we had decided that the Middle Ages should be the star in our film. [Interview Eichinger in: Baumann & Sahihi 1986: 35; my translation]¹¹

Whereas Eco integrates the Middle Ages through an intertextual web of citations and thus heightens the polyphony, Annaud relies on the meticulous visual and material recreation of the Middle Ages. However, despite the efforts of his (famous) advisers, the film delivers an overboarding melange of picturesque scenes rather than the dimension of everyday history. The image presented is the well-known and fixed image of the gloomy "other Middle Ages", full of historical exotism, instead of the "spirit of the time" (as Annaud called it), and definitely not the Middle Ages evoked by the polyphonic discourse in Eco's novel: "things" vs. "signs".

The focus on the mystery and murder plot is emphasized by several *changes in the story lines*. The major differences between the two texts occur, of course, towards the end of the film, starting from the inquisition tribunal in *NR-f* and the interrogation in *NR-n* respectively. The role of William changes from that of a listener_N (who shares his comments only with Adso_N) to a judge_F (who disputes Bernardo Gui_F's verdict and thus is summoned to Avignon). After William_F is guarded by soldiers, the detection plot is reduced to the presentation of some *faits accomplis*. In the turmoil after Malachia_F's death, William_F and Adso_F escape through the secret passage, literally flee into the library, solve the riddle of QUATUOR, and enter Jorge_F's hidden chamber. Their way through the labyrinth is cross-cut with shots showing how the three condemned are brought to the stakes. Whereas in *NR-n*, the fire in the library, which spreads throughout the Aedificium, is presented as a singular event, a kind of apocalyptic inferno, *NR-f* combines this fire with the parallel plot of the fire of the stakes. The peasants of the village revolt against Gui_F and his soldiers to save the girl. Gui_F tries to escape from the abbey and falls onto his own instruments. (In *NR-n*, Gui_N has left the abbey immediately after Malachia's death – which, contrary to Gui_F, does not seem to bother him too much). At the end, William_F and Adso_F leave the abbey (in the film they only stayed a few hours after the fire). On their way, they meet the girl and after a last silent contact, Adso_F rides away. According to an interview, it was Eco's suggestion to include a last encounter between Adso_F and the girl_F.¹² But Eco wanted to show the insurmountable communication gap between the two young people (as presented already in the love scene), and thus the social gap, which is hardly deducible from a silent scene.

Throughout the film, there are severe changes within the plot of the whodunit and the detection, not only towards the end, as shown in the following summary.

NR-n

Adelmo's death

Abo talks about the death of Adelmo and asks William for help

How to enter the library?

observing Malachia appearing from a chapel & Alinardus remarks about labyrinth and how to enter the hidden passage through the ossarium:
→ scriptorium, → library

message on the parchment

Adso holds a lamp too close to the parchment – encrypted signs visible;

deciphering later on, follows hypotheses and main principles

(content of) the mysterious book

Benno's remarks about disputes on Aristotle, laughter, the *Coena*;
fragments of Venantius's text;
disputes with Jorge on laughter;
Adso's dream; catalog listings (entries by consecutive librarians)

structure of the library

floorplan reconstructed from the exterior;
inside: inscriptions / red letters
Finis Africae

mirror door to Finis Africae

incomprehensible instructions;
Adso recalls a grammatically incorrect remark of Salvatore ("QUATUOR", *de dicto* and not *de re*)

NR-f

William discovers the new grave and talks to the Abbot about it; only then the Abbot asks for his help

William blackmails Remigio to let them in; only → scriptorium;
observation of Malachia + abduction; looking at the skulls ("Which one frightened you most?") → library

William smells lemon and holds the parchment over a flame – encrypted signs visible.

deciphering not shown, only result – the message

—

fragments hardly mentioned;
dispute with Jorge on laughter;
(not shown how William finds out about the book)

construction is never explained

—

—

incomprehensible instructions :
William finds out all by himself when they escape through the ossarium ("...of four", "but four only has four letters..." [in which language are they talking?])

Because of the modifications in the line of investigation in *NR-f*, also the **character** of William_F changes. He has much more traits of a genius movie-sleuth who solves a case (he even doesn't refrain from blackmailing Remigio in order to get clues). William_N does not get all the pieces of the puzzle by his own detections (some are presented to him through remarks, others are found by chance), but he puts them together. From the very beginning of *NR-n*, William_N is introduced as someone capable of brilliant reasoning based on the reading of signs (in *NR-f* the Brunellus episode is replaced by a comic relief scene about how to find the direction for the toilets). His description in the "Prologue", the Brunellus episode and many remarks scattered throughout the book include information on William_N's philosophical background (Occam and Bacon). The only thing Adso_F seems to know about William_F is that he "trusted Aristotle, the Greek philosophers, and the faculties of his own remarkable logical intelligence."

William_N is a modern character, the detection is presented as clearing up a mystery; he is a dispassionate rationalist, even in his passion for books and for reasoning), he is a sceptic, and full of contradictions.

William_F is far more emotional, for instance with the books in the burning library; his detection simply happens, without providing the chance to follow his steps. He just walks

through the plot, even his “solving” of the murder cases remains unreflected, whereas for William_N there is not much more left about it than the ruins of the abbey when he says that

“[...] the only truth lies in learning to free ourselves from insane passion for the truth.”

“But, master,” I ventured sorrowfully, “[...] There is one truth, however, that you discovered tonight, the one you reached by interpreting the clues you read over the past few days. Jorge has won, but you defeated Jorge because you exposed his plot. ...”

“There was no plot,” William said, “and I discovered it by mistake.” [NR-n 491]

And, in the end, William_N negates the very combinatorial capacity which has distinguished him throughout the book: “What I did not understand was the relation among signs.” [NR-n 492]

Apart from the most obvious alteration from a Benedictine to a Franciscan, also Adso_F is characterized in a different way. As already mentioned, he does not seem to have learned anything. The only experiences presented are his sexual encounter with the young woman and the following love sickness. When the old Adso_F recalls in his final voice-over, “I learned from my master much that was wise and good and true”, then he must have learned it after their departure.

Several other characters also undergo distinctive changes, for instance the abbot Abo_N (of Fossanova) who is even deprived of his name. During their first conversation, Abo_N obviously seeks the help of William_N to investigate the death of Adelmo:

“In this abbey something has happened that requires the attention and counsel of an acute and prudent man such as you are. Acute in uncovering, and prudent (if necessary) in covering.” [NR-n 29]

[The abbot] was speaking of the matter with William, he said, because, since William had great knowledge both of the human spirit and of the wiles of the Evil One, Abo hoped his guest would be able to devote a part of his valuable time to shedding light on a painful enigma. [NR-n 31]

Abo_N is not only concerned with the actual event, but, moreover, with his reputation, the honor of the abbey (which was chosen for a “summit meeting”) and his own power. Accordingly, he is worried when he learns that a famous inquisitor has the responsibility for the safety of the legation – Bernard Gui_N.

“Yes,” the abbot said, “but at this point we come up against the question raised yesterday. If by tomorrow we have not discovered the person guilty of two, perhaps three, crimes, I must allow Bernard to exercise control over the abbey’s affairs. [...] Bernard occupied with discovering the murderer will be a thorn in the side of my authority; remember that.” [NR-n 211]

But after Malachi’s death he tells William_N to stop the investigation and leave the abbey the next morning. With the meeting over and Bernard Gui_N already on his way back, the situation has changed and Abo_N sees no more danger to his authority. At least that’s what he thinks, because he does not know that he himself was only a puppet in the power game of the one person really pulling the strings. Abo_N was used by Jorge_N to maintain his control over the abbey and, in the end, Jorge_N lets him die in the secret stairway.

In the brief scene which introduces the Abbot_F he is shown together with two other monks, one of them is Jorge_F. From the very beginning he seems not to be the only authority in the abbey. Accordingly, he asks the two others whether they should tell William_F (he does not mention about what), and Malachia_F disagrees, since “there is only one authority capable of investigating such matters: the Holy Inquisition.” But when William_F mentions the recent death of a monk, the Abbot_F, nevertheless, asks him for his help.

Abbot

When I heard you were coming to our abbey, I thought it was an answer to my prayers. Here, I said to myself, is a man who has knowledge both of the human spirit and of the wiles of the Evil One. The fact is, brother Adelmo's death has caused much spiritual unease among my flock. [...]

That's why I need the counsel of an acute man such as you, Brother William. Acute in uncovering, and — prudent, if necessary, in covering up before the Papal delegates arrive. [...]

I am indeed reluctant to burden you with my dilemma, but, — unless I can put the minds of my flock at rest, I would have no alternative but summon the help of the Inquisition. [NR-f]

Already after the death of Venantius_F the Abbot_F seems to doubt his decision. When William_F's reconstruction of the deaths is interrupted by Malachia_F announcing the arrival of Bernardo Gui_F, the Abbot_F does not hesitate to hand the investigation over to the inquisitor (whom he describes with exactly the same words he attributed to William_F).

Abbot

Thank you, Brother William. We are mindful of your efforts, but I should now ask you to refrain from further investigations. Happily, there will be someone arriving with the Papal delegation who is well versed in the wiles of the Evil One, a man, I believe, you know only too well: Bernardo Gui of the Inquisition. [NR-f]

Towards the end of *NR-f* we simply lose track of the Abbot_F and his whereabouts.

Gui_F is much younger than Gui_N, whom Adson_N describes to be about seventy [NR-n 300]. Gui_N and William_N seem to know about each other and meet “with polite hostility”. In *NR-f* there is even more reason for enmity, since Gui_F has once accused William_F of heresy:

“I too was an inquisitor, but in the early days, when the Inquisition strove to guide, not to punish. And once I had to preside at a trial of a man — whose only crime was to have translated a Greek book that conflicted with the Holy Scriptures. Bernardo Gui wanted him condemned as a heretic, I — acquitted the man. Then Bernardo Gui accused me of heresy for having defended him. I appealed to the Pope, — I was put in prison, tortured — and — I recanted.” [NR-f]

The confrontation between Gui_N and William_N never goes beyond a sharp dispute, not even during the interrogation of Remigio_N. Because of the different situation of a tribunal and William_F's open questioning of the sentence, Gui_F accuses him once again of shielding a heretic and puts him under guard. After Remigio_N has confessed (and it is clear that the debate will not be taken up again), Gui_N has no reason to stay and prepares his departure for Avignon. Obviously, he is not too concerned with Malachi_N's death.

“My lord Bernard,” William asked, “who killed this man, after you so cleverly found and confined the murderers?”

“Do not ask me,” Bernard said. “I have never said I had consigned to the law all the criminals loose in this abbey. I would have done so gladly, had I been able.” [NR-n 415]

Gui_F, on the contrary, even accuses William_F of having committed the murder after one of the soldiers recalled that during the tribune he had foretold more dead monks with “blackened fingers”.

Two different Middle Ages

The two representations of the Middle Ages in the two texts are not only *slightly* different, but proceed from entirely diametric concepts which influence also the

developments of the two different stories. A first approach to point out the differences is a comparison between the beginnings of both texts.

The chronicle proper starts with the following three paragraphs:

It was a *beautiful morning* at the end of November. During the night it had snowed, but only a little, and the *earth was covered with a cool blanket* no more than three fingers high. In the darkness, immediately after lauds, we heard Mass in a village in the valley. Then we set off toward the mountain, as the *sun first appeared*.

While we toiled up the steep path that wound around the mountain, I saw the abbey. *I was amazed*, not by the walls that girded it on every side, similar to others to be seen in all the Christian world, but by the bulk of what I later learned was the Aedificium. This was an *octagonal construction* that from a distance seemed a *tetragon* (a perfect form, which expresses the sturdiness and impregnability of the *City of God*), whose southern sides stood on the plateau of the abbey, while the northern ones seemed to grow from the steep side of the mountain [...] from below, at certain points, the cliff seemed to extend, reaching up towards the heavens, with the rock's same colors and material, which at a certain point became keep and tower (work of giants who had great familiarity with earth and sky). Three rows of windows proclaimed the triune rhythm of its elevation, so that what was *physically squared* on the earth was *spiritually triangular in the sky*. As we came closer, we realized that the quadrangular form included, at each of its corners, a *heptagonal tower*, *five sides* of which were visible on the outside – *four* of the *eight* sides, then, of the greater octagon producing four minor heptagons, which from the outside appeared as pentagons. And thus anyone can see the *admirable concord of so many holy numbers*, each revealing a subtle spiritual significance. Eight, the number of perfection for every tetragon; four, the number of the Gospels; five, the number of the zones of the world; seven, the number of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. [...] the Aedificium resembled Castel Ursino or Castel del Monte, [...] but its inaccessible position made it more *awesome* than those, and *capable of inspiring fear* in the traveler who approached it gradually. And it was fortunate that, since it was a very *clear winter morning*, I did not first see the building as it appears on *stormy days*.

I will not say, in any case, that it prompted feelings of jollity. I felt *fear*, and a *subtle uneasiness*. God knows these were not phantoms of my immature spirit, and I was rightly interpreting *indubitable omens inscribed in the stone* the day that the giants began their work, and before the deluded determination of the monks dared consecrate the building to the *preservation of the divine word*. [NR-n 21-22; my italics]

In this one-and-a-half pages one of the major motifs of NR-n is introduced: the confrontation between the principle of order prevailing in both medieval ideas and architectural structures, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the dark, sinister and menacing forces which, in the final consequence, lead to chaos and destruction. The suspense derives from the constant oscillation between the two poles, and even the murders seem to follow a pre-established order – that of the Apocalypse. Through the narrator Adso_N the reader is taken into this game of permanent shift: presumably clear structures which, nevertheless, remain obscure. The chapter continues with the Brunellus episode and the welcome by the abbot, and it ends with a first description of the abbey, of its proportions and layout, which, once again, takes up the motif of order.

For architecture, among all the arts, is the one that most boldly tries to reproduce in its rhythm the order of the universe, which the ancients called “kosmos”, that is to say ornate [...]. And praised be our Creator, who has decreed all things, in their number, weight and measure. [NR-n 26]

The beginning of NR-f has only retained the sinister moments both in the image and in the sound track. The sound track is composed of gliding vocalizings, a glimmering enervating glockenspiel, a vigorous rhythm, dark and gloomy string tunes (the latter accompany the first views of the Aedificium and their menacing intensity increases with the increasing size of the building. In the very first shot of the two main characters [s6] the landscape is covered by smoke, but the fire it stems from is only shown at the end of the shot [cf. note 6 on a possible reading of this shot]. The first view of the abbey mountain is followed by a strained exchange of looks between Adso_F and William_F.

From s14 on the Aedificium dominates the image (barking of dogs and cawings of ravens are added to the sound), in s15 the camera pans to the left and then tilts up showing the Aedificium almost in the center of the frame; s16 is the high-angle shot on the two men, already described. In s17 the image shows a heavy wooden door – they have arrived at the gate. The gate is opened and leads the look over the courtyard, but we also notice the grate high up in the doorway. When in s18 the monks bow their heads before William_F the camera slightly reframes in order to show more of the Aedificium rising right above their heads in the background. The first welcome and the customary washing of the hands takes place in the shady doorway. A viewer who has not paid attention to the spatial positioning of the various new persons will certainly have difficulties to keep the orientation due to the constantly changing camera perspectives. Adso_F looks around – with a “feeling of uneasiness” as revealed in the voice-over. The closing of the heavy gate (s26) and the loud noise when the door is bolted (s28) makes him look once more toward the gate – does he feel protected or locked up? When Adso_F and William_F are accompanied by one of the monks (Remigio_F) across the courtyard, every step is intensely watched, first in s36 from another monk (whom we later learn to know as the friendly Severinus_F, but here his look is not only curious but also suspicious), then from somebody above (s37). And now we realize why Adso_F and William_F were not welcomed by the Abbot_F, because he is up there in a conspiratorial conversation with two other monks.

The “feeling of uneasiness” expressed by Adso_F pervades the entire opening sequence, and is definitely conveyed to the viewer; however, its counterpart in *NR-n* – the divine order – is completely missing. After the brief comic explanation about the toilet, the uneasy tone comes back as William_F looks at a raven on a fresh grave (s61). He has hardly unpacked his astrolabium and other instruments when clanging footsteps are heard from the corridor outside the cell; he hastily covers the objects, and a second later the face of the Abbot_F appears in the small window of the door.

In both texts, the description of Adelmo’s dead body makes quite clear that the corpse was not found intact, however the two versions differ with regard to the graphic language used. In *NR-n*, Adso_N recalls what the abbot has told them:

The night of a great snowstorm, in which flakes as sharp as blades fell, almost like hail [...] the body had been discovered at the foot of the sheer drop, torn, by the rocks it had struck on the way down. Poor, fragile, mortal thing, God have mercy on him. Thanks to the battering the body had suffered in its broken fall, determining from which precise spot it had fallen was not easy [...]. [*NR-n* 32]

In *NR-f* the Abbot_F himself tells about it:

We found the body after a hailstorm, horribly mutilated, dashed against the rocks at the foot of the tower under the rear window which was — hmmh, how shall I say — [*NR-f* s102-103]

When Abso_N in *NR-n* is about to leave after the conversation,

a heartrending cry arose, like that of someone mortally wounded, followed by other, equally horrible cries. “What is that?” William asked, disconcerted. “Nothing,” the abbot answered, smiling. “At this time of the year they slaughter the pigs. A job for the swineherds. This is not the blood that should concern you.” [*NR-n* 39]

After the Abbot_F has ended with the sentence

— unless I can put the minds of my flock at rest, I would have no alternative but summon the help of the Inquisition. [*NR-f* s116],

we hear this cry, still in s116, as a sound bridge leading to the next shots (s117-121) which drastically depict what is going on: blood splashes on the face of a man, a pig is stabbed, another slaughtered pig is cut in two halves, meat is chopped into pieces. Then a man pours blood into a big jar (s122), the camera slowly tracks in on Adso, we see him in the background to the right of the thick jet of blood, framed by an arch of the vault under which the men are working.

The uneasy, insecure feeling dominates also the visualization of the abbey and in particular of the library, and, again, it is the depiction of *order* that lacks in *NR-f* (in *NR-n* *order* and *chaos* are presented in continual interplay). All editions of *NR-n* include a printed map of the abbey's layout and together with the verbal description the reader is able to reproduce the structure in any given moment. Despite the long shots, it is rather difficult to mentally reproduce the abbey in *NR-f* and to establish the spatial relations between the main buildings. The only parts of the abbey clearly visible are the Aedificium, the wooden tower and the church. But even here the viewer can hardly keep track of the paths taken by the characters to walk from one building to the other, since many of the crucial scenes take place on a foggy day (for instance during the poverty debate) or at night: where is the cemetery with regard to the Aedificium, or how to go to the laboratory from the chapter house?).

In both texts the library is a labyrinth, but in *NR-n* it is clear from the beginning that there are underlying principles when Abo_N mentions a secret plan:

“The library was laid out on a plan which has remained obscure to all over the centuries, and which none of the monks is called upon to know. Only the librarian has received the secret from the librarian who preceded him [...] Only the librarian has [...] the right to move through the labyrinth of the books.” [*NR-n* 37]

In a conversation with the old Alinardus_N William_N learns that the term “labyrinth” was not used in a figurative way.

“But I never set foot in the library. Labyrinth ...”

“The library is a labyrinth?”

“Hunc mundum tipice labyrinthus denotat ille,” the old man recited, absently. “Intranti largus, redeunti sed nimis artus. The library is a great labyrinth, sign of the labyrinth of the world. You enter and you do not know whether you will come out. [...]” [*NR-n* 157-158]

Although they are aware of entering a labyrinth, William_N und Adso_N nevertheless get lost at their first visit to the library. In addition to the mysterious layout (a maze of rooms with varying numbers of doors), the library is protected from intruders by a mirror that distorts the image (at the very entrance to *Finis Africae* which the two of them do not know at that moment), by ventilation slits that let the passing air produce strange sounds, and finally by hallucinatory herbs inducing visions and unconsciousness. In the end, they somehow manage to find their way back. In order to investigate the library, they first have to discover its layout, and they start from the structure of the tower and arrangement of the windows, using “mathematical sciences”:

“the library was built by a human mind that thought in a mathematical fashion, because without mathematics you cannot build labyrinths.” [*NR-n* 215]

William_N manages to reconstruct the arrangement of the various rooms and, during their second visit, to group them according to the verses from the Apocalypse quoted on the scrolls above the archways, and to discover the entrance to *Finis Africae*. “Their” map is

also printed in the book [NR-n 321]: the labyrinth_N reproduces the map of the world – “[t]he maximum of confusion achieved with the maximum of order.” [NR-n 217]

With the labyrinth_F the situation is entirely different. William_F und Adso_F enter the library without any knowledge about it (except that the abbey is famed for the multitude of books). Adso_F just walks through different rooms, up and down different stairways until he cannot find his way back (“Where are you, boy?” – “I’m — lost!”), and William_F remarks, “Well, Adso, it would appear that we’re in a labyrinth.” When Adso_F asks how to get out, he answers dryly, “With some difficulty, [to himself] if at all! — [loud] You see, Adso, that is the charm of a labyrinth!” [NR-f s856-860] And only now the camera presents the construction of the labyrinth_F which nobody can comprehend or reconstruct at first sight: an Escheresque criss-cross of innumerable open stairways, joining and departing again, fills the interior of the Aedificium.¹³ In NR-f the secret room is not only protected by a strange mirror, but also by a trap door which William_F falls into as he approaches the mirror. In addition to the thrill of Adso_F’s way across the stairways, another man with a lantern (who turns out to be William_F) and the boy’s cry of fear when he faces his own distorted mirror image, we are presented with the dangerous fall of William_F in a fast montage of extremely short high-angle and low-angle shots.

Despite his words about depth quoted above, Annaud seems to have read NR-n as a mixture of murder mystery, detective story and Gothic novel, only with a slight touch of history, and that’s what is brought to the screen. Contrary to Eco, who creates suspense from the tension between clarity/order and obscurity/confusion, Annaud solely relies on the latter. The suspense he creates in the film is based on the narrative and stylistic devices used in thrillers and horror movies: from the structure of the story to the casting, the sound track and the cinematographic visualization of the plot with camera and montage. But to make Eco’s story work, *order* is needed, if only to give William_N the chance to state at the end:

“I behaved stubbornly, pursuing a semblance of order, when I should have known well that there is no order in the universe.” [NR-n 492]

Maybe Annaud has taken this last remark too literally? The movie can be best summed up by letting William_N have the final word [NR-n 493]:

“There is too much confusion here,” William said. “Non in commotione, non in commotione Dominus.”

Notes

- 1 The original German paper was published in 1995 under the title “Von *Il nome della rosa* zur „Abtei des Verbrechens“. Texte von Umberto Eco und Jean-Jacques Annaud”, in: Friedrich Lachmayer, Gloria Withalm, Erich Fries (ed.). *Zeichen, Recht und Macht* (= S-Addenda). Wien: ÖGS/ISSS, 211-262. My English translation is slightly revised and a few new references are added; the original appendix (a chronological comparison of novel and film, and a shot-to-shot transcript of the beginning and several scenes) is not included.
According to the *Postscript*, “The Abbey of the Crime” was the original working title of the novel which Eco rejected, “because it concentrates the reader’s attention entirely on the mystery story and might wrongly lure and mislead purchasers looking for an action-packed yarn.” [Eco 1984b/1994: 506; abbreviated hereafter *PNR*]
- 2 Thomas Stauder (1988) has included an annotated bibliography of all related publications which have appeared between 1981 and 1986; together with an index to the publications and an addendum on some German volumes of 1986/87, the appendix amounts to 180 pages.

- 3 The front cover of a Picador/Secker & Warburg edition shows a profile photograph of Sean Connery against a black background, below the title (ornated golden lettering with the blue-gilded initials ending in a rose tendril) a remark is added: "Now a major film starring Sean Connery". The back cover combines quotes from newspaper reviews on the book with the credits of the film (Eco 1984a, obviously reprinted in 1986).

In the 90s, however, new editions of the novel (like the 1994 Harvest/Harcourt Brace edition) returned to an illustration (according to indicated source, folio 28 of the manuscript "Comentario al Apocalipsis", Biblioteca del Escorial) printed on the cover of most pre-film editions.

- 4 All quotations from the novel are taken from the English translation (Eco 1994a), abbreviated hereafter *NR-n*; . Quotations from the film, hereafter abbreviated *NR-f*, and shot descriptions are taken from my unpublished shot-to-shot transcript, originally prepared for a seminar on the novel and the film I held at the University of Applied Arts Vienna in 1991. The transcript is based on the English language video version (pan-and-scan) and on the widescreen version aired both by the Austrian and the Second German Broadcasting Corporation (two-channel version with dialog in German and English). In the dialog quotes the cuts between shots are not marked and most of the shot description is omitted. Remarkable pauses in the dialog are rendered with "—".
- 5 For the sake of quick distinction between the novel and the film, the character names are marked with subscripts ..._N for the novel and ..._F for the film respectively.
- 6 Contrary to the description in the German version of this paper, I have found out when I viewed the film again for this publication that the first shot seems to anaphorically refer to the very end of the film. The smoke over the landscape apparently comes from the two still smoldering pyres shown in the last images of this shot: wooden poles surrounded by the remains of the burned down bundles of straw as they are erected for the execution in the final part of the film. (But I still cannot believe that first time viewers are able to notice this brief presentation of the poles, and even if they do so, it is most improbable that they recall this first image when they see the poles erected for the stakes towards the end right in the middle of a sequence full of thrill and suspense.)
If this interpretation of the first shot is correct, the film has another kind of frame and, at least implicitly and without telling anything about it to the audience, it is constructed as a double flashback: on the one hand, there is the voice-over of the old Adso_F recalling the events he experienced in his youth, and on the other hand, the first images show the situation after all these events have happened in the abbey. However, none of the following shots allows one to discover this five-day jump in time.
- 7 "Der Ausgangs- und Schlußpunkt des Textes thematisieren gleichermaßen das Wort oder die problematische Beziehung von Wörtern und Dingen und geben davon (angesichts der Skala möglicher Konzeptionen) zwei extreme und antithetische Interpretationen. Die Idee des schöpferischen göttlichen Wortes und der Nominalismus der „nomina nuda“ (der nackten Namen) rahmen die Erzählung ein, deren Held William sich im Verlauf seines Abenteuers durch das Interpretieren von Zeichen oder durch seine sehr gelehrten Reflexionen über deren Natur auszeichnet." [Kelemen 1994: 158]
- 8 "Der Titel handelt in der Tat von dem, was er uns vorschlägt, nämlich vom *Namen, von der Macht des Namens, von der Beziehung zwischen Namen und Sachen*; er handelt also von semiotischen Problemen." [Kelemen 1994: 159; my italics].
- 9 "Ich war fasziniert von der seltenen Kombination einer einfachen Erzählstruktur, in der es eigentlich ganz linear vorgeht und in der es auch schlicht um die Frage geht, wer der Mörder ist, und der Tiefe des Ganzen, die Art, wie historische Hintergründe miteinbezogen und genutzt werden [...]. Ein Mord-Rätsel mit soviel Geist, ich war fasziniert. Es geht nicht nur um den Detektiv, nicht nur um den Fall und die Lösung, es geht auch um Adson, den Erzähler, um seine Zeit, und den Geist seiner Zeit." [Interview Annaud in: Baumann & Sahihi 1986: 10]
- 10 "Das ist der Stoff, den das Publikum wertschätzt. Von Agatha Christie bis Sherlock Holmes – das ist das Fleisch des Mysteriums. Und *Der Name der Rose* ist ein sagenhaft gemachter ‚Who-done-it‘." [Interview Connery in: Baumann & Sahihi 1986: 26]
- 11 "Wir wußten, wir wollten keinen Suspense-Film machen, keinen Thriller. Wir wollten die Essenz erhalten. Und wir hatten beschlossen, daß das Mittelalter ein Star sein sollte in unserem Film." [interview Eichinger in: Baumann & Sahihi 1986: 35]

The depiction of medieval artifacts which according to Eichinger should bring the Middle Ages on the screen are noted in several reviews of the film. Richard Combs refers to it when he states that Annaud has invested a lot

“in fidelity (a tactic which curiously, distantly, reflects the debates about interpretation of Scripture which occupy the book), a painstaking recreation of the period as if the original had been an exercise in archaeology rather than semiology.” [Combs 1987]

Another point frequently mentioned is the freak-show presented through casting. Annaud gives the following explanation:

“For instance it was not easy to cast the monks. They are all dressed the same, everyone of them wears a habit and sandals. As a viewer you can only distinguish them if they have extraordinary faces. Thus we had to find a great number of peculiar faces.” [Interview with Annaud in: Baumann & Sahihi 1986: 14; my translation]

[“[Z]um Beispiel war es nicht leicht, die Mönche zu besetzen. Sie sind ja alle gleich gekleidet, jeder trägt eine Kutte und Sandalen. Der Effekt ist, daß man sie als Zuschauer nur auseinanderhalten kann, wenn sie sehr prägnante Gesichter haben. Und so galt es dann, eine ganze Fülle ungewöhnlicher Gesichter zu finden.”]

As an example for the reception of the faces, I add two quotes from film reviews:

“There are many suspects. Indeed, I cannot remember a single monk in this monastery who does not look like a suspect. The film has been cast to look like a cross between the grotesques of Fellini and the rat-faced devils scampering in the backgrounds of a tarot deck.” [Ebert 1986]

“Le casting est à ce titre très révélateur, oscillant entre les acteurs chevronnés (Lonsdale, Connery) et une cohorte de «gueules», planches anatomiques en relief représentant toutes les tares de la création. Proche en ce sens des enluminures de l’époque, il y a un malin plaisir (un plaisir mâlin?) à montrer toutes les facettes de l’enfer humain, les aveux immondes de la chair (homme à face de cochon, moinillon sado-maso, beauté du diable).” [Cazals 1987: 52]

- 12 When asked about the film, Eco says:

“Take the scene where the young woman is to be burned. In the book, the young monk doesn’t seem to pay much attention to this, even though he has been to bed with her. Now a reader can understand why a young monk from an aristocratic family, to whom the idea of a contact of the flesh was in any case totally unusual would do nothing more. But in a film? Here the viewer misses the element of identification.

So I suggested a scene – this was my only addition to what is in the book – in which these two young people make one more attempt to speak to each other. He talks to her in Latin and she answers in the local dialect as spoken at that time (which philologists in the audience will surely identify at once), and it becomes immediately apparent that there can be no real contact between them. The linguistic difference testifies to the divergence of their worlds. They come from different universes.” [Eco & Bachmann 1986: 130]

- 13 Annaud gives three explanations for the design of the labyrinth:

“the labyrinth in the novel is flat, two-dimensional, the one in the film is constructed vertically, three-dimensional. We did it for several reasons. Firstly, if the labyrinth is situated in a tower, then why is it flat? I believe Umberto Eco has not thought about that, at least there is no explanation in the novel. Secondly, the psychological impact of the tower is much greater, when you visualize that the tower is entirely filled by the labyrinth. Thirdly, shooting in a flat labyrinth is rather difficult. It’s so narrow and there are walls all over, which limits the number of possible perspective.” [interview Annaud in: Baumann & Sahihi 1986: 15; my translation]

[“[D]as Labyrinth im Roman ist flach, zweidimensional, das im Film ist in die Höhe gebaut, dreidimensional. Das hat verschiedene Gründe. Erstens: Wenn es ein Turm ist, worin sich unser Labyrinth befindet, wieso ist dann das Labyrinth flach? Ich glaube, das hat Umberto nicht bedacht, zumindest ist es im Roman nicht erklärt. Zweitens: Die psychologische Wirkung des Turms ist sehr viel größer, wenn man es visualisiert, daß er gänzlich von einem Labyrinth ausgefüllt ist. Drittens: In einem flachen Labyrinth ist es sehr schwierig zu filmen. Alles ist sehr eng, und überall sind Wände. Das schränkt die Möglichkeit der Perspektive ein.”]

The first of his explanations is hardly comprehensible, since the structure of the Aedificium is clearly described in *NR-n*. The Aedificium has three stories: on the ground floor there is the kitchen and the refectory, the scriptorium is on the second floor, and the library on the third floor. All stories are described to be very high, and from the outside three rows of windows are visible. And Eco knew exactly how he constructed the labyrinth according both to existing labyrinth depictions and the map of the world [cf. Haft 1995]. The third explanation gives only practical reasons. The second explanation

remains as the only one based on expressive and stylistic motifs, and here we are confronted once more with the aim to evoke certain emotions – the way the labyrinth is constructed certainly evokes emotions of disorientation, confusion, and uneasiness, and it heightens the menacing dominance attributed to the Aedificium throughout the film.

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