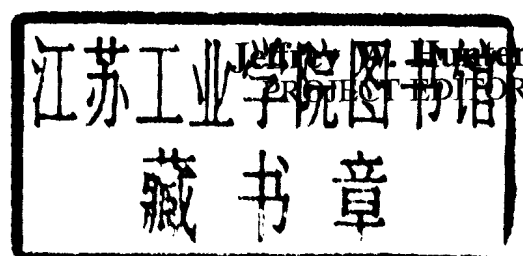☐Contemporary
Literary Criticism

CLC 248

Volume 248

Contemporary Literary Criticism

Criticism of the Works
of Today's Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, Scriptwriters, and
Other Creative Writers

Jeffrey W. Hunter
PROJECT EDITOR

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Aronoff, Myron J. "Learning to Live with Ambiguity: Balancing Ethical and Political Imperatives." In *The Spy Novels of John le Carré: Balancing Ethics and Politics,* 201-14. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999. Reprinted in *Contemporary Literary Criticism.* Vol. 220, edited by Jeffrey W. Hunter, 84-92. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006.

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The Name of the Rose

Umberto Eco

The following entry presents criticism on Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* through 2005. For additional information on Eco's life and works, see *CLC*, Volumes 28, 60, and 142.

INTRODUCTION

Il nomme della rosa (1980; *The Name of the Rose*), Eco's first novel after more than twenty years of nonfiction publication, is considered a demonstration of many of the concepts he examined in his earlier works on the subject of semiotics, or the study of signs and symbols and the ways in which they are used and interpreted. When *The Name of the Rose* appeared, Eco was greatly respected in his scholarly field, but critics, the publishing company, and the author himself were astonished at the popular success of this novel, which was expected to be too challenging to appeal as leisure reading. A native Italian born January 5, 1932, Eco's works were originally published in Italian and then translated into dozens of languages. He has maintained an academic career in conjunction with his writing and has amassed a significant collection of accolades, including the Prix Medicis étranger (1982), Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (1985), Premio Bancarella (1989), Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur (1993; Officer, 2003), Cavaliere di Gran Croce al Merito della Repubblica Italiana (1996), Prix Mediterranée étranger (2002), and more than thirty honorary doctorate degrees from universities around the world. *The Name of the Rose* is regarded as Eco's most successful work of fiction and is by far his best-selling work. The novel was adapted as a film starring Sean Connery, Christian Slater, and F. Murray Abraham in 1986.

PLOT AND MAJOR CHARACTERS

The Name of the Rose is set in northern Italy in the year 1327. When several monks of a Benedictine abbey are murdered in a sequence that echoes biblical prophecies of the Apocalypse, Brother William of Baskerville is summoned by the surviving monks to apply his enlightened deductive powers to solve the mystery. William arrives with his assistant, Adso, whose account of the investigation forms the basis of the novel. The abbey houses an extensive library of priceless medieval literary artifacts, a collection jealously guarded by a blind, elderly librarian named Jorge de Burgos who opposes William's efforts and who himself adds to the list of murders at the abbey. The story is set during the time of the Inquisition, and the murders draw the attention of the Grand Inquisitor Bernardo Gui, who suspects the crimes are the result of demonic possession and also opposes William's intellect-based investigation. William perseveres, decoding symbols and manuscripts he discovers within a secret and forbidden collection of heretical texts hidden in the labyrinthine depths of the library, and eventually finds the text that provoked the original murders: the legendary second volume of Aristotle's *Poetics,* which is reputedly the last element needed to initiate the Apocalyse and as such has been the object of de Burgos's protection.

MAJOR THEMES

Critical attention to *The Name of the Rose* has been extensive, in scholarly literary journals as well as the popular press. The novel is both an elaborately detailed medieval detective drama and a semiotic novel of ideas, and both of these characteristics have been exhaustively analyzed. Comparisons to the deductive process of fictional detective Sherlock Holmes abound and were obviously the author's intention, given that his detective shares his name with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's well-known Holmes story *The Hound of the Baskervilles.* Semioticians found a goldmine in *The Name of the Rose,* which applies and reflects upon the field of semiotics, one of Eco's academic pursuits and the subject of many of his respected works of nonfiction. Due to this subject matter, *The Name of the Rose* is recognized as a particularly successful work of metafiction. From the central scenario of the murder mystery, Eco creates an antinomy between the modern values of rationality and humor, represented by William, and the superstition and severity of the Middle Ages, as embodied by the librarian de Burgos. William's search for truth is confounded by dogmatic authorities, including officials of the Inquisition, and

1

this conflict reflects differences between modern humanism and absolute submission to the Church. The historical foundation for this component of the story is responsible for much of its expansive and at times esoteric detail.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Before writing *The Name of the Rose*, Eco had already established a brilliant literary reputation with his specialized academic texts on medieval culture and semiotics, which many scholars have regarded as definitive, yet the exuberant critical and popular reception of his first novel astonished both himself and his publishers, who have called its commercial success phenomenal by book-selling standards and noted the cottage industry that sprung up around the novel. Praising both the scholarship and imagination of *The Name of the Rose*, critics have universally acclaimed Eco's demonstration of skill at fiction-writing, especially his thorough treatment of different levels of meaning in the narrative and his impeccably designed, intellectually stimulating plotting.

The Name of the Rose has become a work to which other works are commonly compared in literary journals. Comparisons include Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, the novels of Agatha Christie, the works of Argentinian author Jorge Luis Borges (whose name's similarity to that of the villain in *The Name of the Rose* has drawn critical conjecture as well), Eco's own later fiction including *Foucault's Pendulum* and *The Island of the Day Before*, and even the television series *Monk*, featuring a gifted detective whose diagnosis of obsessive-compulsive disorder is both a curse for the limitations it imposes and a blessing for its contribution to the detective's attention to detail. Many of these comparisons have been prompted by Eco's inclusion in the novel of multitudinous references to other works, which critics have extracted much like the protagonist extracts clues from the ancient texts he examines in *The Name of the Rose*. The sensation of parallelism between the plot of the story and the act of reading it remains a source of intrigue for scholars and leisurely readers alike.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

Opera aperta [*The Open Work*] (nonfiction) 1962; revised editions, 1967, 1971, 1976

Diario minimo [*Misreadings*] (essays) 1963; revised edition, 1975

Apocalittici e integrati [*Apocalypse Postponed*] (essays) 1964; revised edition, 1977

Il costume di casa [*Travels in Hyperreality*] (essays) 1973

Trattato di semiotica generale [*A Theory of Semiotics*] (nonfiction) 1975

The Role of the Reader (essays) 1979

Il nome della rosa [*The Name of the Rose*] (novel) 1980

Postille al nome della rosa [*Postscript to The Name of the Rose*] (nonfiction) 1983

Semiotica e filosofia del linguaggio [*Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (nonfiction) 1984

Sugli specchi e altri saggi (essays) 1985

Il pendolo di Foucault [*Foucault's Pendulum*] (novel) 1988

L'isola del giorno prima [*The Island of the Day Before*] (novel) 1994

CRITICISM

Rocco Capozzi (essay date winter 1989)

SOURCE: Capozzi, Rocco. "Palimpsests and Laughter: The Dialogical Pleasure of Unlimited Intertextuality in *The Name of the Rose.*" *Italica* 66, no. 4 (winter 1989): 412-28.

[*In the following essay, Capozzi gives a reading of* The Name of the Rose *as a collage of allusions to texts and clichés, citing Eco's critical theories in support of this interpretation.*]

> Books are not made to be believed, but to be subjected to inquiry.
>
> Umberto Eco

> Knowledge is the novel's only morality.
>
> Milan Kundera

1. A LITERARY AND LINGUISTIC PASTICHE.

The difficulties in trying, for nearly a decade, to classify *The Name of the Rose*[1] under a specific label (metaphysical, mystery, detective or anti-detective story, post-modern, historiographic metafiction; historical, gothic or essay novel; *bildungsroman*, etc.)[2] derive primarily from the plurality of meanings, and the plurality of texts, implanted in Eco's first bestselling novel. Even before the novel reached the public, privileged critics and friends of the author, such as Maria Corti, were already debating whether or not *The Rose* was an *open* or *closed* work. My conviction is that Eco's semiotic fabula, from its very structure, proves that texts are made of unlimited semiotics and

unlimited intertextuality, and that a narrative is essentially a literary and linguistic pastiche of signs and systems of signs from the great encyclopedia of literature and language(s). *The Rose* illustrates the notion that with an aesthetic text the semiotic practice of writing and reading, coding and decoding, constructing and deconstructing (in short: the whole process of signification, communication, and interpretation) is an "interdisciplinary dissemination" (Eco, 1979) of linguistic and cultural codes and of encyclopedic competence, of both writers and readers. His second novel, just published, *Il pendolo di Foucault* (Bompiani 1988) certainly reconfirms this.

The Rose seems to have been written to demonstrate both the Peircean theorization of unlimited semiosis and the Bakhtinian views of the novel as a "developing genre" and as a linguistic and literary hybrid: "The novel permits the incorporation of various genres, both artistic (inserted short stories, lyrical songs, poems, dramatic scenes, etc.) and extra-artistic (everyday, rhetorical, scholarly, religious genres and others)" (Bakhtin, 320). In fact, Eco's novel is a perfect example of conscious (and unconscious) "hybridization"; it is a text in which many other texts merge, fuse, collide, intersect, speak to, and illuminate, one another—each with its own language and "ideologue."[3] *The Rose,* succinctly put, is a skillful (con)structure of an intentionally ambiguous, polyvalent, and self-reflexive novel intended to generate multiple meanings. Moreover, it is a novel which wishes to be: an intersection of textual "traces" and "textures"; a dialogue with many texts; and a literary text generated through the endless process of writing and reading, re-writing and re-reading, etc.

Critics have searched in the novel for specific sources in order to identify Eco's eclectic "debts"[4] such as to William of Occam, Roger Bacon, Alessandro Manzoni,[5] Jorge L. Borges, Conan Doyle, Mikhail Bakhtin, Charles S. Peirce, Jury Lotman, Roland Barthes, Maria Corti,[6] Eco's own theoretical and journalistic writings, and so on—the list is unending as it depends on the reader's competence to detect overt and hidden quotations, or, better still, to detect intentional, playful, and unconscious allusions to other writers and other texts (from both scholarly and popular literature) which are part of Eco's library/encyclopedia. Perhaps the most common practice by critics was to consider *The Name of the Rose,* especially immediately after its publication, as an application of Eco's own theories from his well-known *A Theory of Semiotics* (1976) and *The Role of the Reader* (1979).[7] Many have fallen into this obvious trap of focusing on the great master of deductive and deductive reasoning, William of Baskerville, as an *ante litteram* "detective" and "semiotician" without paying sufficient attention to the fact that, in

The Rose, Eco was already expanding his views on "codes" and "dictionaries" within the wider notion of "encyclopedia," in order to explain the endless chain of horizontal and vertical (syntagmatic and paradigmatic) relation ships of signs and codes: a notion that encompasses a dynamic inter relationship of history, literary tradition, and socio-anthropological culture in general,[8] and which views the "universe of semiosis . . . *postulated in the format of a labyrinth*"—or of a spreading "rhizome"[9] (as we see theorized in *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language,* 1984).[10] Of course, if one wishes to trace Eco's own works in *The Rose,* it is necessary to examine, together with his theoretical writings, his equally stimulating essays and comments on different aspects of modern culture (ranging from Snoopy, Superman, Woody Allen, pinball machines, word processors, hyper-realism, and libraries, to St. Augustine, Joyce, Manzoni, Borges, J. Barth, Huizinga, etc.) collected in such works as *Diario minimo,*[11] *Apocalittici e integrati, Sugli specchi e altri saggi.*[12] Nonetheless, as I have already stated elsewhere (*Saggi su "Il nome della rosa,"* 158), this approach of tracing *The Rose* to Eco's own works, or to any other author, would reduce Eco's application of unlimited intertextuality to a mere question of identifying sources, or quotations—or, should we say, to a question of Eco's having fun with parodies and with post-modernism. In other words, this practice, especially if overemphasized, would undermine the whole strategy of overtly using quotations and intertextuality as a foreseen textual strategy for generating other texts, as well as for generating the pleasure of both *écriture* and *lecture.* A search for sources would also overlook Eco's intentions of demonstrating how in the act of writing an author undertakes what Maria Corti appropriately calls a "literary journey" (a *viaggio testuale* which involves author, text and reader; Corti, 1978) through the encyclopedia of literature (or in the world of culture). Equally important, the question of sources would ignore Eco's Bakhtinian echoes of a text as a rewriting and re-reading of other texts; or as an interrelationship of different discourses and meanings. In fact, for Eco, as for Bakhtin, just as there is no utterance without relations to other utterances—"there is no utterance devoid of intertextual dimension" (Todorov, 60-62),—in the same way there is no literary text (no novel) without relation to other texts—popular and scholarly ones—which have preceded it (*and which will follow it*).

With *The Rose* Eco has chosen to conduct a serious and erudite discussion on the nature of narrating and interpreting signs through a most pleasurable and playful fiction. Actually, it is hard to conceive that our *semiotico ludens*—a great observer of cultural phenom-

ena and mass communication, with a well-known, all-embracing sense of humour—would have not narrated his stimulating "possible world" through a *divertissement* of puns, apocryphal manuscripts, word play, parody, irony, and winking at the reader, while capturing the reader's interest with a well-developed plot (full of suspense) and through innumerable "inferential walks"[13] in the past and present encyclopedia of literature, semiotics, and culture. I would agree that many of Eco's works demonstrate his belief that one can learn and teach while having fun. As far as narrations are concerned Eco feels that "pleasure is a sufficient reason for reading a story" (*Sugli specchi,* 165; my trans.); and, about *The Rose,* he has specifically stated: "I wanted the reader to enjoy himself, at least as much as I was enjoying myself" (*Postscript* 59).

Without embarking on a lengthy discussion of whether laughter (and the truth hiding under it) in Eco's novel is reminiscent of Bakhtin's views on Rabelais and on carnivals, whether it is, possibly, Pirandellian, or whether it is simply parodic in nature, it is interesting to note that in 1975, in a review-interview, Domenico Porzio, unknowingly, announced Eco's plans for *The Name of the Rose.* After sharing biographical minutiae about our semiotician who used the pen-name Dedalus in some of his early writings (as a tribute to Joyce) and after reminding us that Eco has written *Filosofi in libertà* ("an amusing book," we are told, relatively unknown and extremely hard to find), Porzio quotes Eco as saying that he plans to publish "in twenty years, maybe . . . a work on the comic," because, "Signs and language . . . are no longer attributes exclusive to man. Ethnology demonstrates that other animals also use reason and language. The last remaining difference [between man and animal] is laughter. *Laughter* is a *mysterious* and *metaphysical* mechanism" (Porzio, 1975; my trans, and my italics). The only information missing in this statement is that "laughter" will be at the center of a "metaphysical" detective novel about a "mysterious" book in a labyrinthine library. Of course, we know that it was only five years later, and not twenty, that Eco published his success, unprecedented in the history of modern Italian literature—a book which for the last eight years has been at the center of many literary polemics.[14] And if the early indications of critics' reactions to his second novel just published, *Il pendolo di Foucault,* are correct, Eco will certainly remain at the center of many polemics well into the next decades.[15]

2. A MOSAIC OF BOOKS. UNLIMITED INTERTEXTUALITY AND SEMIOSIS.

Literary pastiches (intentional "hybridizations") are obviously assembled in a writer's laboratory/library. *The Rose,* in addition to being viewed as a collage of signs and quotations, or as a literary and linguistic pastiche, assembled in Eco's laboratory/library, should also be seen in light of parodies.[16] Which focus not on the "repetitions" in themselves but on the "new" which is inherent in the "differences" in the repetitions. Parodies also indirectly focus on the author who uses repetitions for artistic reasons and as a way of transmitting and/or repeating other writers' discourses. I should add that by "linguistic and literary pastiche" I intend a "constructed" text which is clearly intra- and intertextual, metaliterary and metalinguistic—precisely as Eco's novel wishes to be (perhaps just short of being a purely self-reflexive and narcissistic experience).[17] The linguistic pastiche of *The Rose* is much too obvious as Latin, German, Italian, French, scientific, semiotic, literary, religious, philosophical, architectural, and other systems of verbal "signs" come together in the novel. Needless to say, Antonio's *esperanto ante litteram* is in itself a manifestation of a "Babelic" (con)fusion of languages which can be decoded mainly by those, like William, with some linguistic (encyclopedic) competence. This linguistic pastiche complements, most appropriately, the intertextual literary collage of *The Rose,* a novel in which, from the opening page to the last (from "genesis" to "apocalypse")[18], many "voices" and many "echoes" (of ideas, books, and poetics) come together in such a fashion that at times (as undoubtedly carefully planned by Eco) it becomes intentionally difficult to distinguish the author's own words from those of others.

Eco has repeatedly underlined in interviews, talks, articles, and especially in *Postscript to the Rose* (1984), that his narrative is a myriad of metafictional indicators and of intertextual traces of many authors. More important, throughout the novel Eco reiterates that his is a "tale of books," a "book made of other books," a mosaic of books, "a book about books." We need only recall one of Adso's lessons on epistemological semiosis on reading and interpreting signs (verbal and nonverbal) and books, as he states with amazement:

> Until then I had thought each book spoke of the things, human or divine, that lie outside books. Now I realized that not infrequently books speak of books: it is as if they spoke among themselves. In the light of this reflection, the library seemed all the more disturbing to me.
>
> (342)

On his journey—and it is most appropriate that a "novice,"[19] in his gradual formation, should learn through the experience of a journey[20] (one of the main, and most obvious, overcoded symbols of *The Rose*)—Adso learns from William that the nature of books is similar to the nature of "signs." As he loses more and more of his naiveté, and as he acquires more and more

what Peirce calls "logica docens,"[21] Adso learns to accept that when speaking of signs, he "can always and only speak of something that speaks . . . of something else"; perhaps without ever arriving at the "final something"—at the "true one" (382). This is only one of the many clear "traces" of Peirce's principle of unlimited semiosis in *The Rose.* In essays and interviews, Umberto Eco has often quoted, rephrased, and even redefined, the Peircean notion, in his own terms. Here it is worthwhile to recall two of his definitions which are most pertinent to our discussion:

> Unlimited semiosis is above all a notion that refers to the code, not to the message. I mean . . . the fact that every sign, linguistic or otherwise, can be identified and interpreted through other signs, in an infinite circularity [. . .] A text functions (and functions also as an open text) precisely on the basis of the mechanism of unlimited semiosis.
>
> (Mincu, 61; my translation)

> I might say that a semiotics of unlimited semiosis is based on infinite interpretations, on conjectures and abductions, and on the interrogation of texts as if they were universes and of universes (including the world of our daily experience and that of science) as if they were texts.
>
> (Rosso, 10)

Furthermore, we remember that in *A Theory of Semiotics* Eco defined a sign as something that stands for something else and as "everything that can be used to lie" (Eco, 1976: 17). Naturally, all of this falls within the plan of *The Rose* as a system of signs that stands for other systems of signs (in addition to entering into a dialogue with other systems), and, just as important, as a "possible world" used at the same time to lie and to convey some truths.

There is hardly a need to define intertextuality here; Eco, Corti, Kristeva, Todorov, Genette, and many others, have all repeated, in one form or another, Mikhail Bakhtin's suggestion that a literary text is "a mosaic of quotations" and "an absorption and transformation" of other texts (Roudiez, 66). Nonetheless, I would recall Kristeva's words as she speaks of a transposition of one or more *systems* of signs into another" (Roudiez, 15), and of "permutations of texts" whereby "in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (Roudiez, 36). These words shed additional light on *The Rose* as a mosaic of books—as a novel of books within books, and of signs and a system of signs within other systems. Eco's strategy of using quotations and other books fits very well into Bakhtin's list of the different ways in which in the Middle Ages writers used other writers' words:

> The relationship to another's word was . . . complex and ambiguous in the Middle Ages. The role of the other's word was enormous at that time: there were quotations that were openly and reverently emphasized as such, or that were half-hidden, completely hidden, half-conscious, unconscious, correct, intentionally distorted, unintentionally distorted, deliberately reinterpreted and so forth. The boundary lines between someone else's speech and one's own speech were flexible, ambiguous, often deliberately distorted and confused. Certain types of texts were constructed like mosaics out of the texts of others.
>
> (Bakhtin, 69)

And when we consider that Eco is speaking (among many other things) about the Middle Ages and that he uses most of these forms of quotations, Bakhtin's words are even more à propos for *The Rose,* which is without a doubt an excellent "orchestration of meaning by means of heteroglossia"[22] (Bakhtin, 371). There is no question that in *The Rose* many voices/discourses can be heard/read along Eco's discourse.

3. PALIMPSESTS, ARCHI-TEXTS, AND POSTMODERNISM.

In some circles "palimpsest" seems to have become a household term after *The Rose.* In Italy the term becomes popular before J. J. Annaud flashed it on the screen in his own "palimpsest" from Eco's novel, and before Genette used it for a literature which, as parody, is once removed, or, as he put it, "to the second power."[23] Speaking of literature "once removed," Eco's novel is a *textual journey* "on a fourth level of encasement"[24]—that is, at least four times removed from Adso's experience (it becomes "five times" removed if one reads it in translation from the Italian). With few exceptions, critics have not pointed out that the term "palimpsest" appears in the Second Day, when William and Adso discover Venantius' body upside down in a barrel of blood. Looking at the footprints in the snow, around the pool of blood, William comments: "Snow, dear Adso, is an admirable parchment on which men's bodies leave very legible writing. But this palimpsest is badly scraped, and perhaps we will read nothing interesting on it" (119).[25] As we can see from the choice of words William/Eco extends to the reading of nature (to non-verbal signs) the type of reading associated with the act of writing (or rewriting) over traces of previous writings. Naturally, *The Name of the Rose,* far from being "badly scraped," is a clear "palimpsest" that allows readers to recognize numerous and various forms of intertextual traces/prints.

The Rose, is an *archi-text,* an *archi-novel,* throughout which many texts, many novels, are intentionally disseminated. From the title of the novel to the Latin verses *stat rosa pristine nomine, nomina nuda tenemus*[26] on the last page; or, from the preface, with its own ironic or parodic title "Naturally, A Manuscript"[27] to the last blatant, or not-so-blatant, quotation from

other texts, *The Rose* is an "infinite circularity" of intra- and intertextual echoes. Critics, in various degrees, have written on the paradigmatic strategies, on the disseminated and explosive chains of signifiers (Barthes), and on the "inferential walks—all foreseen (and carefully planted) by the author. I would add that these endless labyrinthine walks, in and outside the text, not only do not tire the reader but are the very essence of the Barthesian *plaisir du texte* (of writing and reading) clearly advocated by Eco. Moreover, these strategic "walks" challenge and satisfy, at the same time, the reader's encyclopedic competence as he matches it against the author's.

Teresa De Lauretis has best summarized Eco's narrative success, stating that *The Rose* is "a narrative *summa*—it novel most novelistic, the mystery most unsoluble, the *bildungsroman* most picaresque, the text most intertextual, the manuscript found, not just in a bottle but in a Chinese box" (De Lauretis, 1985: 15). To this I would add that the success *The Rose* as a pleasurable reading experience lies in the fact that it succeeds as an artistic play with language and literature both in its syntagmatic construction, typical of realistic novels (and, of course, of detective novels) linked to a logic of cause and effect, and in its paradigmatic construction, as it relies on the associative logic of intertextuality, unlimited semiosis, "dialogical" and multi-voiced discourses, which link the reader's encyclopedia to that of the writer.

Among the various semiotic and narrative theories applicable to *The Rose* one must certainly include Eco's manifestation of literary Postmodernism (in both form and content)—as he draws from History [a revival (?) of the Middle Ages combined with allusions to the present][28] and from Literature [a revival, or intentional pillaging (?), of other texts from different genres such as the historical novel, philosophical texts, popular literature, literary criticism, semiotics, etc.][29] Eco has clearly distinguished postmodernism from the *avant-garde* for the way they differ in their treatment of past and present. The *avant-garde,* Eco reminds us, tends to destroy the past, whereas postmodernism consists of "recognizing that the past—since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence—must be revisited; but with irony, not innocently" (*Postscript* 67-68). Giving an example of the ironic pleasure between two lovers who "in an age of lost innocence" can still say "I love you desperately," Eco explains that they are both "playing consciously and with pleasure at the game of irony." Moreover, he states: "Irony, metalinguistic play, enunciation to the second power, these are the characteristics of the postmodern" (Rosso, 3; also in *Postscript* 67-68).

We need only to substitute William and Adso for the "two lovers" to see how Eco is indeed using innumer-able quotations, or allusions to other writers, fully aware that between him and his readers there is no "innocence"; instead there is plenty of "conscious play of irony." (Needless to say, modern readers, just as Adso, have lost their "innocence" through experience or, vicariously, through readings such as *The Rose.*) Thus the presence (or echoes) of François Villon, Dante, Sherlock Holmes, Wittgenstein, or of anyone else, are conscious manipulations of well-known "clichés"—they are careful assemblages of *déjà-vu* and *déjà-lu*. But clichés, as Eco has illustrated in his analysis of *Casablanca,* can also be used constructively: "two clichés make us laugh, but a hundred clichés move us because we sense dimly that the clichés are talking among themselves and celebrating a reunion" (*"Casablanca"* 11). This is exactly what the books do in *The Rose*: "They talk among themselves and celebrate a reunion." Naturally the dialogic interrelationship of many texts in Eco's novel is reinforced and kept alive by the reader's intertextual encyclopedic competence.

As Teresa De Lauretis also suggests,[30] if we examine closely Eco's article *"Casablanca*: **Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage,"** we realize that we could easily replace *Casablanca* with *The Rose,* finding many analogies between one of Eco's favorite movies and his novel. Let us examine two quotations from Eco's analysis of *Casablanca*:

> *Casablanca* is a cult movie precisely because all the archetypes are there [. . .] *Casablanca* has succeeded in becoming a cult movie because it is not *one* movie. It is 'the movies.'
>
> (*Casablanca* 10)

> In *Casablanca* one enjoys the quotation even though one does not recognize it, and those who do recognize it feel as belonging to the same clique.
>
> (11)

It is not difficult to assume that the immortal Bogart film[31] was also used as a model for Eco's own strategies of using quotations and other intertextual frames, and that he may have indeed assembled *The Rose* as an intentional "cult" novel. And I should add that Eco's use of a "Snoopy" phrase[32] or of any other quotation which may border on "extreme banality" (such as the echo of Sherlock Holmes's proverbial: "Elementary, my dear Watson") is a calculated technique which transcends kitsch and approaches the sublime, exactly as he sees happening to the clichés employed in *Casablanca* where "Just as extreme pain meets sensual pleasure, and extreme perversion borders on mystical energy, so does extreme banality allow us to catch a glimpse of the sublime" (*Casablanca* 11)[33]

If we consider that Eco was one of the original promoters of the *Gruppo' 63* (and of the *Neoavanguardia*), we can assume that with *The Rose* (with his revival of

the pleasure of narrating), he is also reconciling writers and readers who had been divided for nearly twenty years in Italy. In the Sixties and Seventies many had spoken of the predominance of *écriture,* of the "writerly text," over the readerly text. Critics such as Sergio Pautasso, at the end of the Seventies, spoke of a "rivincita del lettore" (literally a "vindication of the reader"; Pautasso, 1979) as they saw a return to more traditional novels and a decrease in meta-linguistic and meta-narrative experiments. And while critics were discussing the various roles of the reader in the text, Italo Calvino, in his usual clever fashion, with *If on a Winter Night a Traveler* (1979), actually gave the illusion that the reader had finally emerged to the role of a protagonist. The so-called "letteratura fatta in laboratorio per gli addetti ai lavori" (that is, a literature made in a writer's laboratory for the experts in the field—mainly for other writers and for professional readers) appeared to have had its day in Italy. However Calvino's and Eco's novels, postmodern or otherwise, demonstrated that the fascination with "literariness" was not entirely gone. Calvino and Eco confirmed that their novels could entertain while teaching readers about the essence of writing, and about reading and decoding narratives which are overtly meta-narrative. Suffice it to say that *The Rose* and *If on a Winter Night a Traveler* are two novels in which the authors play cat and mouse with their text and with their readers.

Speaking of readers, when Renato Barilli expressed some concern about possible misinterpretations, by "naive readers," of postmodern writings—a literature made up of quotations (the so-called *letteratura tra virgolette*—"literature within quotation marks") (*Sugli Specchi* 113), Eco replies that writers cannot be concerned with "astute" or "naive" readings. In *The Role of the Reader* he had explained that at the time of generating ("constructing") a text, a writer "constructs . . . [his] own model reader." In other words, every writer plants multiple levels of interpretations and multiple levels of pleasure for foreseen multiple readers. And thus, in *The Rose,* fully aware that there will be at least three types of readers—"those who will focus on the story, those who will look for analogies with their own historical time, and those who will chase after intertextual traces" (from the paperjacket *Il nome della rosa,* 1980)—Eco has provided sufficient pleasure for all of them.

4. *The Rose* as a Trans-textual Labyrinth.

The biggest and most important lesson that the reader learns, with the help of Adso, is that "the *adventure* of writing"[34]—*The Name of the Rose*—is above all a *speculum libri,* a microcosm or semiosis and intertextuality. Naturally, every text, to some degree, is also a *speculum mundi;* however, we are explicitly warned by Eco that his is "a tale of books, not of everyday worries" (xix).[35] Moreover, to use yet another "textual" neologism, Eco's novel is overtly *trans-textual* in its continuous network of associative interrelations (its dialogical relationships) with many other texts[36] and with culture in general. I would also add that behind every intertextual echo we can easily sense the presence of the author, winking at us, reminding us that it is time to take another "inferential walk."

Eco's novel, just as the library in the monastery, is structured as a labyrinthine relationship of books which challenges, or even threatens, those who enter it. The library, as we are told by Alinardo, is "a great labyrinth, sign of the labyrinth of the world. You enter and you do not know whether you will come out" (181). Alinardo's words actually give us a clue to the reading of *The Rose*—"sign of the labyrinth" of intertextuality, where one may enter and come out, depending on one's level of encyclopedic competence of literature, semiotics, philosophy, history, fine arts, etc. The labyrinthine library is undoubtedly the most overcoded symbol of the novel as it alludes to all the activities of reading, decoding, and interpreting the various textual strategies assembled by Eco. *The Rose* is, in fact, an echo chamber (pun aside), filled with words such as: sign, book, library, and labyrinth[37]—all interrelated, all echoing each other.

In his *Postscript to The Rose,* our author has spoken of the labyrinth as "an abstract model of conjecturality" (57), reminding us that in detective novels the act of reading is a sequence of conjectures—with one story branching out into so many other stories. It is easy to see how his notion of labyrinths suggests the labyrinth of intertextuality, and, by extension, the image of a labyrinthine library. I would add that just as the inhabitants of the monastery, the readers of *The Rose* are also dominated by the "library/labyrinth." Libraries and books, however, are supposed to be instruments of knowledge and not forms of prison-labyrinths, or of impenetrable fortresses (as many Italian libraries—and research scholars would definitely agree—too often appear to be). The good of books does not lie in being "kept from grasping hands"; in fact, as William states: "The good of a book lies in its being read . . . Without an eye to read them, a book contains signs that produce no concept; therefore is dumb" (478). Furthermore, speaking of books we remember that Adso comes to the realization that "Books are not made to be believed, but to be subjected to inquiry" (380), and more important, that "To know what one book says you must read others." I should add that in addition to this view on the nature of books, Eco is analogously also recalling the Bakhtinian principle that language should not be "conceived