

Name of the Rose (1986) Annaud

'A palimpsest of Umberto Eco's *Name of the Rose*'.

P Michell, 2022

Palimpsest - A manuscript, typically of papyrus or parchment, that has been written on more than once, with the earlier writing incompletely scraped off or erased and often legible.

As mentioned in reviews the film barely scratches what the book is on about. Yet it is A wonderful evocation of what Eco is on about. No other of Eco's books has been filmed. Not only was the issue of making the text suitable for filming (four scriptwriters) , but filming logistics – a huge set built outside Rome for the exteriors (with audio problems – see Trivia), interiors were filmed in a German monastery. International cast.

The lost second book of Aristotle's *Poetics* is a core plot element (and the "[MacGuffin](#)") in [Umberto Eco's](#) novel [The Name of the Rose](#).

<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/missing-pieces/no-laughing-matter>

These Notes are in two sections – the Book and the Film (pp 3 on).

Synopsis

A historical mystery film set in C14 based on the 1980 novel [of the same name](#) by [Umberto Eco](#).^[3] [Sean Connery](#) stars as the [Franciscan](#) friar [William of Baskerville](#), called upon to solve a deadly mystery in a [medieval](#) abbey. [Christian Slater](#) portrays his young apprentice, [Adso of Melk](#), and [F. Murray Abraham](#) his [Inquisitor](#) rival, [Bernardo Gui](#). [Michael Lonsdale](#), [William Hickey](#), [Feodor Chaliapin Jr.](#), [Valentina Vargas](#), and [Ron Perlman](#) play supporting roles.

Box office – very successful (less so in USA) grossing over US\$77.2 million world wide based on \$17.5 million budget.

Re-established Sean Connery's film career.

Has a 'happy' ending – girl lives, inquisitor dies. Reversed in the book.

Source Book:

Online here:

<http://www.goodwin.ee/ekafoto/tekstid/Eco%20Umberto%20-%20The%20Name%20Of%20The%20Rose.pdf>

Umberto Eco was an Italian [medievalist](#), philosopher, [semiotician](#), novelist, [cultural critic](#), and political and social commentator. In English, he is best known for his popular 1980 novel *The Name of the Rose*, a [historical mystery](#) combining semiotics in fiction with biblical analysis, medieval studies and [literary theory](#), as well as *Foucault's Pendulum*, his 1988 novel which touches on similar themes. (Wikipedia).

The crucial point is that he taught Semiotics at University of Bologna. Semiotics is frequently seen as having important [anthropological](#) and [sociological](#) dimensions; for example the Italian semiotician and novelist [Umberto Eco](#) proposed that every cultural phenomenon may be studied as communication.

Eco made a wider audience aware of semiotics by various publications, most notably *A Theory of Semiotics* and his novel, *The Name of the Rose*, which includes (second to its plot) applied semiotic operations.

Good description at Wikipedia:
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semiotics>

The semiotic tradition explores the study of signs and symbols as a significant part of communications. Unlike [linguistics](#), semiotics also studies non-linguistic [sign systems](#). Semiotics includes the study of signs and sign processes, indication, designation, likeness, [analogy](#), [allegory](#), [metonymy](#), [metaphor](#), [symbolism](#), signification, and communication.

The novel, set in 1327, has sold over 50 million copies worldwide, becoming one of the [best-selling books](#) ever published. It has received many international awards and accolades, such as the [Strega Prize](#) in 1981 and [Prix Medicis Étranger](#) in 1982, and was ranked 14th on [Le Monde's 100 Books of the Century list](#).

For analysis of the intricate book's ideas see the Wikipedia entry:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Name_of_the_Rose

In 1983 Eco wrote a small treatise 'Reflections of the Name of the Rose. (Sorry ... Online version could not easily be found.)

Describes how he wrote the book, but less about the intrinsic content thus:

"I wanted the reader to enjoy himself, at least as much as I was enjoying myself. This is a very important point, which seems to conflict with the more thoughtful ideas we believe we have about the novel." (pp 59)

"Actually I decided not only to narrate *about* the Middle Ages. I decided to narrate *in* the Middle Ages, and through the mouth of a chronicler of the period." (pp 19)

"For two years I have refused to answer idle questions on the order of 'Is your novel an open work or not ...' ... "Of all the idle questions the most idle has been the one raised by those who suggest that writing about the past is a way of eluding the present ..." (pp 73)

Eco describes that the dialogue written for characters going up stairs was based on the time it took for Eco to climb similar stairs.

The random shuffling of lines from Song of Songs, St Bernard etc on file cards to create the dialogue between Adso and the girl in the love scene in the kitchen.

Relevance of the book today:
<https://dialektika.org/en/2018/11/23/ideology-cynicism-name-rose/>

Essay exploring some of the concepts within the book:
<https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furr/mel/noessay.html>

The Film - Creative Personnel

There is a consistency of behind the camera expertise. Many having worked with the great directors from the Italian and French films. Wonderful example of how people skilled in their craft create memorable films.

Jean-Jacques Annaud – Director / Scriptwriter (17 credits)

Known for *Quest for Fire* (1981), *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997), *Enemy at the Gates* (2001), *Truth about Harry Quebert* *Affair* – TV series (2018)

As a filmmaker I am only interested in the close-up - where I can dive into a character and see the emotions - or opening the screen as wide as I can to show a spectacle.

[on directing [The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair](#) (2018) for TV] *When I started my career as a filmmaker, TV was just a quaint black-and-white little gadget that one hardly ever bothered to watch. Now people have huge TV sets, big screens, HD, with quality sound systems. [2018]*

[on directing [The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair](#) (2018)] *I'm the type of the director that likes spontaneity. More and more, I tend not to rehearse. There is a unique kind of spontaneity which you'd never achieve on the fifteenth take. [2018]*

Andrew Birkin – co scriptwriter (18 credits)

Known for this, *Burning Secret* (1988), *The Cement Garden* (1993).

Brother of Jane Birkin. Uncle of Charlotte Gainsborough.

Widely considered the world's leading expert on J M Barrie.

See: JMBarrie.co.uk - introduction

Worked as a researcher with Stanley Kubrick on aborted film *Napoleon Bonaparte*.

Gerard Brach – co scriptwriter (63 credits)

Known for *Jean de Florette* (1986), *Frantic* (1988). Films with Roman Polanski inc *Repulsion* (1965), *The Tenant* (1976) .

In his 20s, Brach developed tuberculosis and spent five years in a sanatorium. Brach was also agoraphobic. During the last 10 years of his life, he hardly ever left the Paris apartment where he lived alone, rarely receiving visitors, except for the occasional director.

Tonino delli Colli – Cinematographer (145 credits)

Italian cinematographer, who began his career as assistant cameraman at Cinecittà studios in 1938. He did his best work as Cinematographer for such directors as [Pier Paolo Pasolini](#), [Sergio Leone](#) and [Federico Fellini](#). He shot [Toto in Color](#) (1952) (*Toto' a Colori*), the first Italian movie in color. Delli Colli is most fondly remembered for his sweeping, panoramic landscapes and detailed close-ups of actors' faces in the seminal spaghetti western [The Good, the Bad and the Ugly](#) (1966). Worked on many neo-realist films which he helped to success.

Known for *Life is Beautiful* (1997), *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984), *The Decameron* (1971), *The Gospel According to St Matthew* (1964)

Recipient of American Society of Cinematographer's International Achievement Award:

<https://theasc.com/magazine/mar05/colli/page1.html>

“What astounds me about Tonino’s career is not only its duration, spanning six decades from the late 1940s to the early ’90s, but the amazingly eclectic breadth of his work,” says John Bailey, ASC. “He worked with an amazing number of auteur directors, including Pier Paolo Pasolini, Federico Fellini, Roman Polanski, Jean-Jacques Annaud, Claude Chabrol and, of course, Sergio Leone.”

Dante Ferretti – Production Designer (68 credits)

Created the production design for many films of [Martin Scorsese](#), [Federico Fellini](#) and [Pier Paolo Pasolini](#).

As of 2014, of his ten Oscar nominations (among them 3 wins), eight of them were shared with his wife, set-decorator [Francesca Lo Schiavo](#).

Throughout his career, Ferretti has worked with many acclaimed directors, both [American](#) and [Italian](#), including; [Pier Paolo Pasolini](#), [Elio Petri](#), [Federico Fellini](#), [Liliana Cavani](#), [Terry Gilliam](#), [Franco Zeffirelli](#), [Martin Scorsese](#), [Anthony Minghella](#), and [Tim Burton](#). Ferretti was a protégé of Federico Fellini, and worked under him for five films.^[1] He also had a five-film collaboration with Pier Paolo Pasolini and later developed a very close professional relationship with Martin Scorsese, designing nine of his last eleven movies.

In 2008, he designed the set for [Howard Shore's](#) opera *The Fly*, directed by [David Cronenberg](#), at the [Théâtre du Châtelet](#) in Paris.

Ferretti has won three [Academy Awards](#) for [Best Art Direction](#); for *The Aviator*, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, and *Hugo*. He had seven previous nominations. In addition, he was nominated for [Best Costume Design](#) for *Kundun*. He has also won three [BAFTA Awards](#).

In 2012, he designed the decor for [Salumeria Rosi Parmacotto](#), a restaurant on [Manhattan's Upper East Side](#).^{[2][3]}

For the [2015 Expo](#) held in [Milan, Italy](#) Ferretti was commissioned to do a series of statues articulating the concept "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life".^[4]

Trivia

Many of the inside shots were taken in the monastery Eberbach, which lies close to the Rhine.

According to [Ron Perlman](#), director [Jean-Jacques Annaud](#) had purposely not written a lot of the movie's dialogue, in order to more easily secure funding. When they started filming however, he wanted Perlman to talk in all his scenes. Since Salvatore was described as a character who speaks "six languages at once" (among them Latin, Italian, German, English, and French), Perlman got copies of the book in all of those languages. He then composed mixed-language sentences by combining words from Salvatore's sentences from each book.

In his interview and director's commentary on the DVD, [Jean-Jacques Annaud](#) said that after 15-year-old [Christian Slater](#) was cast as Adso of Melk, he was asked to read with three actresses auditioning for the role of "The Girl". He read with [Valentina Vargas](#) first and was scheduled to read with the other two actresses the next day. That evening, Slater sent his

mother, casting agent [Mary Jo Slater](#), to tell Annaud that he was so smitten with 22-year-old Vargas that he didn't want the other two women to be considered.

When [Ron Perlman](#), who had worked on [Quest for Fire](#) (1981), learned about this film, he contacted [Jean-Jacques Annaud](#) because he desperately wanted to play Salvatore. By then, Annaud had cast a dwarf actor with a giant head and a raspy voice. When that actor died prior to production, the Italian government, which co-financed the movie, insisted he be replaced by an Italian actor. That actor was fired for being uncooperative. Perlman was offered the role then, but he had to catch a plane that day to arrive on-set in time.

When [Michel Pastoureau](#) pointed out that the pigs used in this movie could not have pink skin, since there was no such variety at the time, the animals were dyed black, as there was no time to find others.

[Christian Slater](#) had nothing but praise for his co-star [Sean Connery](#). He described working with Connery "like having a master class in acting, life, all sorts of things. He's an incredible professional, a real gentleman, a man's man." He also said that Connery was extremely involved in every detail of filming, and at one point scolded the on-set horse wrangler for mistreating the animals.

Director [Jean-Jacques Annaud](#) admitted to casting the ugliest actors he could get, because he wanted the characters to appear "real", based on the men in the village where he lived. When he returned to his village, some of the men asked him if he really considered them to be as ugly as the actors, and he said, "Yes."

The monastery [exterior] was constructed as a replica on a hilltop outside Rome, making it the biggest exterior set built in Europe since [Cleopatra](#) (1963).

All of the dialogue had to be re-dubbed in post-production, as the location sound was ruined by aircraft noise.

Nowadays, the only place where manuscripts and books are made with the same techniques and materials depicted in the movie is the abbey of Praglia on Padua (Veneto, Italy). It takes six months to a year to create a single page.

[Feodor Chaliapin Jr.](#) was the son of Russian opera legend Feodor Chaliapin. Between the stress of wearing cataract contacts (which made Chaliapin's eyes tear continually), working on cold, damp sets, and doing his own fire stunts, Sr. Director [Jean-Jacques Annaud](#) was constantly concerned for his well-being. Chaliapin dismissed Annaud's concerns and performed beyond expectations.

When filming in the Eberbach monastery, the German police were assigned to protect the manuscripts and books used in the movie. Even with these measures, a key page was stolen. It's the one that appeared in a close-up on the desk of the missing monk, showing a capital "B". The shot used in the movie was made a year after this incident, the time that took to make a new page, two weeks before the release.

This movie had been speculated to be one of George Lucas' influences behind Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace (1999), and that William von Baskerville and Adso of Melk were the influences behind Qui-gon Jinn and Obi-wan Kenobi.

The cloak worn by Sir [Alec Guinness](#) in his role as Obi-wan Kenobi in Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope (1977) may have been used to costume one of the monks in this movie. The cloak was owned at the time by Bermans, a British costume supply house that was one of several such companies from which costumes for this movie were sourced.

In the middle of the sex scene between [Valentina Vargas](#) and [Christian Slater](#), the actress is seen putting a patch on her vagina, to avoid direct contact with actor's genitals. It proves that [Jean-Jacques Annaud](#) probably wanted real penetration in the scene, but that Vargas didn't agree. In an interview with Cosmopolitan, Slater said that during that scene he thought that "they were waiting for me to get an erection. They wanted to see the consummation. But there was no way. I couldn't perform while the camera was rolling."

Fourth highest grossing movie of 1986 in France.

After shooting ended, Jean-Jacques Annaud returned to his Munich headquarters to find it deserted and emptied. When he finally tracked down producer Bernd Eichinger, he was informed that Eichinger, to fund the movie, had sold the entire building.

During the scene when the library is on fire, and William is telling Adso to leave, Sir [Sean Connery](#) caught on fire for real, and was only saved due to the quick thinking of director [Jean-Jacques Annaud](#), who jumped on top of him and rolled him around on the ground.

A mix-up in the shooting schedule almost led to [Feodor Chaliapin Jr.](#) being killed for real. When director [Jean-Jacques Annaud](#) arrived on set to begin shooting Jorge de Burgos' death scene, the crew hadn't been told about it. Effects were set up hastily, and some safety precautions were bypassed. At one point during filming, part of the set's roof gave way, and a large flaming oak beam fell on top of Chaliapin, knocking him to the ground and cutting his head. The shot appears in the movie. Afterward, Annaud immediately raced over to make sure Chaliapin was okay. The actor replied, "I'm 81 years old, I'm going to die soon. Is the shot okay?" Chaliapin lived another 6 years.

Bernardo Gui was an inquisitor at the time this story is set. During 15 years in office, he sentenced about 900 people, and executed at least 42. In real life, he died in 1331, at the castle of Laroux.

In the movie, Bernardo Gui is killed by a mob and The Girl is rescued from the stake. In the source novel by Umberto Eco, Bernardo Gui leaves the convent without incident, and The Girl dies at the stake.

Reviews

The Name Of The Rose

August, 2011 by [M. Enois Duarte](#)

At the center of 'The Name of the Rose' lays an elaborate, labyrinthine murder mystery within a Benedictine monastery, where its inhabitants harbor many dark secrets. On the case is Sean Connery as the Franciscan monk William of Baskerville, a Sherlock Holmes for the 14th Century, with a mysterious past of his own. The members of this highly-regarded abbey already determined the deaths of their monastic brothers as the work of the Satan and judged them as signs for the end of times. William, on the other hand, takes a more scientific and academic approach to solving the riddle. But he is stopped at nearly every turn, slowly revealing a greater underlying concern in this intriguing drama that touches on issues of blind, misguided faith and empirical knowledge.

Based on Umberto Eco's novel of the same name, William is accompanied by his adolescent apprentice, a very young Christian Slater, always scuttling behind Connery like an inexperienced, cassock-wearing Watson. The two become unwittingly entangled in a rather suspenseful thriller about internal parish politics and discussions on the social virtues of comedy. With beautiful but very dreary photography by Tonino Delli Colli ('[Once Upon a Time in the West](#),' 'Life is Beautiful'), the two medieval sleuths are immersed in an atmospheric world filled with gloomy shadows and surrounded by some of the most fearsome-looking monks around. Ron Perlman's impressive imitation of Quasimodo is only a taste of the devilish weirdness taking place within the walls of this monastery.

Working from a script that required five writers, director Jean-Jacques Annaud ('The Lover,' '[Seven Years in Tibet](#)') does what he can to bring Eco's fascinating, erudite tale to the big screen. Though a heavily condensed version, the film still manages to touch on the dense book's more substantial interests. As a microcosm of supposed civilized society, the monks are susceptible to rash judgments based on superstition when confronted by fear and panic. At the same time, deduction and logical reasoning are frowned upon, even viewed as heretical by a few. Annaud also shows the disparaging class difference between those preaching the faith and the underprivileged they profess to service. There's a great scene where representatives of the Pope justify their lifestyle by claiming Jesus carried a heavy purse.

Much like William arriving to this particular abbey for a conference on Church theology, the film, too, attempts to create open discussion on what best serves humanity. How well Annaud succeeds in inspiring debate will undoubtedly depend on each viewer, since the filmmakers consciously never probe or explore the matter too deeply. They only allude to the issues in small glimpses of monastery life. And even if they wanted to go further, would they still arrive at the same ambiguous conclusion as Eco? If that rather unsatisfying ending is at all frustrating, it's precisely the point. Even though the scientific method was able to crack the mystery, it does not come out on top. Those with the power to write history remain in their position while the real things of value are remembered in name and memory only, which is what the title alludes to.

Again, enjoying 'The Name of the Rose' this deeply is a matter of preference. The film still works terrifically as a mystery thriller set in medieval Italy, but it also offers an intelligent plot where science and faith try to coexist. One aspect of the narrative which has lingered after so many years is the passage from Ecclesiastes 1:18 read by one of the monks during a private prayer. It's a verse with a great deal of truth, viewed here as a secular meaning where William

seems to suffer the most sorrow for his knowledge. While at the center of the film is a complicated murder investigation, the heart of the plot seems to lay in that particular passage.

New York Times – Vincent Canby

Sept, 1986

IT'S possible that nobody could have been more surprised than Umberto Eco, the Italian journalist, critic and professor of semiotics, when, in 1983, his first novel, "The Name of the Rose," became a best seller in this country as it had earlier been in Europe.

Mr. Eco clearly had not set out to please the unfathomable tastes of book buyers. Instead, he seemed to be amusing himself with his tale of murder and church politics, set in a remote abbey in the north of Italy in 1327, and with the character of a renowned English monk, Brother William of Baskerville, who's called on to solve the crimes.

What makes the novel impressive is scarcely the medieval sleuthing, which recalls Nancy Drew as often as it does Sherlock Holmes. The story of "The Name of the Rose" depends a lot on things like secret staircases, hidden doors, coded messages and even, at one point, invisible ink. The mystery is "elementary," as Brother William says in another context to Adso, the young monk who acts as his Watson.

The novel is made fascinating (to many readers, anyway) by Mr. Eco's prodigious scholarship. "The Name of the Rose" is stuffed with lengthy asides (some of which are in untranslated Latin) and incidental footnotes to history. These cover everything from the political maneuvering within the Avignon papacy, the fight for the Holy Roman Empire and the church's merciless suppression of heresies (Waldensian, Albigensian and Catharist, among others) to the invention of eyeglasses and gunpowder.

Mr. Eco's novel is like a professor's joke. It's nothing if not erudite. It goes on so long, with so many detours, that by the time it arrives at its point, one is too exhausted even to smile. Yet, without these asides and detours, there's very little point at all.

Reduced to its story (as the screen adaptation is) about who dumped Brother Venantius into the cauldron of pig's blood, head-first, and why, "The Name of the Rose" becomes lightweight as well as lugubrious.

Under the direction of Jean-Jacques Annaud ("Black and White in Color," "Quest for Fire"), the movie is full of the kind of atmosphere that can be created by elaborate sets, dim lighting and misty landscapes, though it has no singular character or dominant mood. In its opening credits, it announces itself as a "palimpsest," which, in this case, may be the movie maker's jargon for plot synopsis.

As Brother William, the voice of reason in an age of superstition, Sean Connery does his best to find the film's proper tone, which should have been provided by Mr. Annaud and the four people who wrote the screenplay. Mr. Connery doesn't have an easy time of it. He plays Brother William as something of an anachronism. This 14th-century monk is a worldly, 20th-century scholar-priest, the sort who would be as proud of his memory for football scores as of his knowledge of obscure Greek or Arabic texts on the treatment of warts.

In his first screen appearance since his Oscar-winning performance in "Amadeus," F. Murray Abraham plays Brother William's chief adversary, Bernardo Gui, an inquisitor who sees heresies everywhere and has a real fondness for torture for its own sake. The role is very brief. It's also ankle-deep, as is that of Adso, Brother William's eager, admiring, 14th-century gofer, played by Christian Slater. Among the other good actors, who are required to assume picturesque attitudes rather than create characters, are Michael (billed as "Michel" in his French films) Lonsdale and William Hickey.