

“THE NAME OF THE ROSE” OR COMING OUT OF THE LABYRINTH

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“The author should die after he finishes writing so that he can not influence the future of the text”¹, confesses Umberto Eco. This confession might mislead us especially because it is part of a text that tries to explain how the novel *The Name of the Rose* was written. Apart from providing the reader with some possible ways of interpreting the novel, these “squibs and marginalia” to *The Name of the Rose* are in a way, provocative messages to the reader who suddenly finds himself in a real labyrinth of meanings which can only be revealed by a thorough reading of the text.

If we accept the multiple readings put forward by Umberto Eco in *Squibs and Marginalia* and also face the challenge of going beyond these well-established hermeneutical reference points, let us first approach *The Name of the Rose* under the badge of Postmodernism.

1. *The Name of the Rose* in a postmodern perspective

Freeing itself from the shadow of Modernism Postmodernism placed itself on the right side of his own theorists and also persuaded writers that the postmodern ‘recipe’ worked. The difference between the meaning of Postmodernism in the 1980s (when *The Name of the Rose* was published) and its present significance implies a change of attitude rather than a change of vision. Due to the theoretical efforts of some first-class critics (such as J.Fr.Lyotard, Ihab Hassan or Linda Hutcheon) and also to the real value of some undoubtedly postmodernist works, Postmodernism finally succeeded in

¹ Eco, Umberto, *Marginalii și glose la Numele Rozei*, in: *Secolul XX*, 8-10, 1983, p. 89

maintaining its position. Ihab Hassan² speaks about the "semantic instability" of the word "postmodernism". This acquires new dimensions when the theoretical debates on postmodernism go beyond the strictly aesthetic sphere, towards the cultural, social and the political, defining the "postmodern condition"³. Whereas the postmodern paradigm worked mainly on the epistemological level, the literary discourse finally consecrates the shift to the aesthetic level in contemporary culture.

To what extent was *The Name of the Rose* a postmodern novel at the time of its publication? The author says: "The answer given for the postmodern against the modern consists of the recognition that the past cannot be destroyed since this would lead to silence, so it has to be revisited: with irony, without candour."⁴ This statement points to one of the most important features of postmodernism, presented by Ihab Hassan's well-known "chain" too: *irony*⁵. The visit to the past (if we keep an ironic attitude towards this purely aesthetic action) is also destined for delimiting and justifying that which was already "lived through", but from a distance. Postmodernism seems to tell us that "everything has been told", but the manner in which we say something that is already known is new. The stress is on the manner, the way in which an already known discourse is recomposed. One of the many ways to conceive it is the ironic one. Umberto Eco adopts the ironic mode in *The Name of the Rose*. Although he is in hiding, as he himself tells us, placing his story "on the fourth level of communication, inside three narrations"⁶, he is present in the text more than his subtle narrative strategy suggests and this is clear above all in the structure of the novel. The action of *The Name of the Rose* which takes seven days is divided into periods corresponding to the liturgical hours of monastic life in a Benedictine monastery. At the

² Ihab Hassan, *The Postmodern Turn. Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture*, Ohio State University Press, 1987, p.87

³ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir*, Les Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1979

⁴ Umberto Eco, op.cit. p.103

⁵ Ihab Hassan, op.cit. p.170

⁶ Umberto Eco, op. cit. p.91

end of his “sinner’s” life Adso, the narrator tells us about another time, that of his youth; he remembers it with amazing precision. It seems paradoxical and strange that a medieval chronicler fixes events so accurately in time. The perception of time in the medieval world reflects biblical history. Time in the Middle Ages has direct access to redemption⁷; it is strictly controlled by the Church. Only from the 14th century onwards can we speak about a divisible time measured by clocks⁸, which is not directly controlled by the Church. Nevertheless monasteries remain for a long time under the badge of the sacred time of liturgy. Religious life implies the “continuous experience of cosmic time”⁹. Even if Adso of Melk becomes part of a profane, historical time, anchored in an assumed present, he remains a medieval monk. A memory which accurately fixes events in time indirectly suggests the presence of a writer who possesses the “book of clocks”. In the Middle Ages the book of clocks was used to measure time. It was paginated and read aloud rhythmically to mark the passing of time. The controlled rhythm of the sentences in *The Name of the Rose* resembles the monotonous reading of the “book of clocks”. Therefore we can identify two types of time in the novel (their overlapping shows through the formal level of the text): a divisible time dominated by history which is uncommon to the Middle Ages and the time of the narrator which blends past, present and future with the natural tendency of the medieval text to objectivise them and to encompass history¹⁰. Chronologic time points to the direct presence of the author, because the Middle Ages is indifferent towards chronologies¹¹, whereas the narrator’s tendency (I refer to Adso, the narrator of the events in the novel) to objectivise time is

⁷ Jan Patočka, *Essais herétiques sur la philosophie de l’histoire*, Paris, Editions Verdier, 1981. p.80

⁸ Jacques Le Goff, *Imaginarul medieval*, Edit. Meridiane, Bucureşti, 1991, p.141

⁹ Georges Duby, *Arta și societatea . 980 - 1420*, Edit. Meridiane, Bucureşti, 1987, p.150

¹⁰ Paul Zumthor, *Încercare de poetică medievală*, Edit. Univers, Bucureşti, 1983, p.55

¹¹ Paul Zumthor, op. cit. p.55

undoubtedly characteristic to the medieval chronicler. This polarisation of time is not accidental. In the *Note* placed at the beginning of the novel Umberto Eco insists upon the strict division of the day into canonic hours in order to "guide the reader"¹². The "guidance" of the reader who is spellbound by the subtle game of "visiting the past" is in fact a well-meaning irony: Eco infuses in the text the divisible time dominated by the exact hour. This time is motivated by the presence of the postmodern reader who, irrespective of his expectations, has a modern concept of time.

There is another aspect of irony subtly inserted by Eco to keep up the appearance of medieval chronicles. It goes unobserved until the end of the novel. This is the irony increased by the candour of the narrator. Umberto Eco does not miss the occasion to call attention to the pure innocence of a narrator who participates in events which he cannot understand: "I have made everything narrated by somebody who does not understand anything"¹³, says Eco. It seems that even critics failed to observe this. Here we come to the real irony of the text: Eco does not shrink from telling it. If the reader is really naive and lets himself be dominated by the innocence of the narrator, his level of understanding the text will certainly be limited to merely following the denouement. When the reader becomes detached from the text and takes part in the semiotic game proposed by Eco, his postmodern reading perspective will be a privileged one. This profound manner of treating the postmodern text is defined by irony raised to the second power. It favours the reader who is conscious of Eco's intention to suggest by various narrative strategies the truthfulness of the medieval manuscript.

The insertion of many quotations in *The Name of the Rose* which at a given moment cease to belong to a previous text is also a technique which belongs to the poetics of postmodernism. They are an obviously obscure, hidden dimension of the structure of the novel permanently requiring the attention of the reader. Umberto Eco recognises that he built up the love scene with Adso and the nameless

¹² Umberto Eco, *Numele trandafirului*, Edit.Dacia, Cluj, 1984, p.10

¹³ Umberto Eco, *Marginalii și glosse*, op. cit. p.95

girl, for example, by using quotations from medieval mysticism, but he no longer remembered their exact sources: “When somebody asks me to whom these quotations belong, where this ends and where the other begins, I cannot answer him.”¹⁴

The role of quotations within a text can be revealed by at least two approaches. In the Middle Ages the author was not considered a distinct personality, an individual creator of texts. Therefore the notion of plagiarism did not exist either. Paul Zumthor ascertains that “borrowings from texts are frequent by imitation or copying.”¹⁵ The rules of quotation in the Middle Ages differ from that known by us: quotation in the Middle Ages does not mean a reference to another text, rather it means pointing to a well-known, identical situation. From this point of view Adso, the chronicler of the *The Name of the Rose* really belongs in his time.

On the other hand Postmodernism recovers the creative function of quotation relying on the referential nature of language. It subordinates in an ironic way all experiences to a previous experience well-known from another text, the veracity of which is, however, doubtful. This unstable relation between quotation and the text proper gains a positive value as it sustains the phenomenon of intertextuality in postmodernist poetics. The postmodern function of quotation in *The Name of the Rose* is evident on the level of the whole text which is a continuous quotation from an alleged medieval manuscript which is itself a quotation. Therefore it is a quotation of a quotation, a quotation on the second power.

We do not intend to point out all the elements of postmodern poetics in *The Name of the Rose*, but we cannot simply pass over Adso’s final pleading because of the fragmented nature of the text. After many years Adso reaches the ruins of the monastery and gathers with difficulty fragments, pieces of parchment, sheets of manuscripts that were left from the great fire in the library. Adso reveals to us at the end that the real work of art does not exist; the disparate fragments which are insufficient to restore the original unity of the

¹⁴ Umberto Eco, *Marginalii și glosse*, op. cit. p.97

¹⁵ Paul Zumthor, op. cit. p.47

work could be viable only if words from the real text of the world would show through them. Therefore Adso goes beyond the naive perception which Umberto Eco imposed on him in the novel. He has a postmodern view on the text built up from fragments and on the world as well which he is going to leave. He says mysteriously: "I leave this manuscript, I do not know for whom; I no longer know what it is about: stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus."¹⁶ The Latin quotation from *De contemptu mundi* by Bernardo Morliacense, a reference disclosed by Umberto Eco¹⁷ places the end of the novel under the sign of poetics of silence, added by postmodern literature to the silence of the world¹⁸. It is not accidental that the novel ends with a quotation which recalls other texts which, however, observe silence. It is not accidental either that the first words of the *Prologue* make reference to a consecrated text, the holy text of the Bible. In the beginning was the Word, whereas finally we are led to the "silent and uninhabited divination where there is no work of art and no image", towards absolute silence. Between the Word and the Silence of God there is the Text of the world.

Before coming to the end of our observations on the postmodernity of *The Name of the Rose* we underline a distinctive postmodern feature of the text. From the point of view of the reader this feature is linked to an undisguised pleasure produced by reading. Umberto Eco relied on this wish of Postmodernism to "seduce" his readers using all means, to make them "like"¹⁹ what they read, rediscovering intrigue and the "pleasant"²⁰.

2. The Name of the Rose - A Possible World

¹⁶ Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, op. cit. p.495

¹⁷ Umberto Eco, *Marginalii și glosse*, op. cit. p.87

¹⁸ Liviu Petrescu, *Poetica postmodernismului*, Edit. Paralela 45, Pitești, 1996, p.117

¹⁹ Roland Barthes, *Romanul scriiturii. Antologie*, Edit. Univers, București, 1987. p.205

²⁰ Umberto Eco, *Marginalii și glosse*, op. cit. p.102

The Limits of Interpretation by Umberto Eco begins with the premise that a possible world manifests itself as a “cultural construct”. It is in fact the result of interpretation “which takes shape during the cooperative interaction between the text and the Model Reader.”²¹ The possible world is therefore an intermediary space configured by the reader’s perception of the world of the text within a viable interpretation. Umberto Eco proposes four types of narrative worlds. He validates the construction of alternative, coherent universes whose degree of “verisimilitude” compared to the real world differ according to the narrative logic of each constructed world. The world conceived in *The Name of the Rose* undoubtedly belongs to the category of “possible worlds which seem verisimilar and believable.”²²

While defining the novel as a “cosmological fact” Umberto Eco does not break with the mimetic traditions of the European novel: “When I ‘constructed’ the library I realised that writing a novel is not a linguistic fact first of all, but a cosmologic one. You have to build a possible world, in the physical sense, which should work. Then, things happen almost by themselves, by the logic of that world.”²³ This point of view is closer to the intention of the realist novel which competes with the real world by building an alternative world than to postmodernism which makes up a narrative world from fragments of narrative worlds superposed imperfectly on the real world. *The Name of the Rose* develops as a universe in itself, configured by the laws of “possible and verisimilar worlds”. It is therefore close to the realist novel. However, it has a postmodern technique of construction, going beyond the realist narrative model.

3. The Name of the Rose and the Construction of Its World

²¹ Umberto Eco, *Limitele interpretării*, Edit. Pontica, Constanța, 1996, p.225

²² Umberto Eco, *Limitele interpretării*, op. cit. p.236

²³ *Dialog cu Umberto Eco*, by Tatiana Slama-Cazacu, in: *România Literară*, an.XVI, nr.50, 1983, p.21

Umberto Eco defined the work of art as being "open to a virtually infinite number of possible readings, all of them reviving the work according to a certain perspective, taste or personal execution"²⁴. He called the critics' attention to the concept of "open work". The process of undermining the centrality of the work of art began with Umberto Eco: "a new model of structuring the work"²⁵ evolved. This led to the replacement of the concept of "work" with that of "text". The de-centralisation of the "work" opens at least two compositional perspectives in postmodernist literature: eliminating the centre leads either to a narrative universe configured by the plurality of small centres or to the dispersed organisation of text according to the "puzzle model"²⁶ seen as a way of representing space in postmodernism.

Therefore *The Name of the Rose* is built up as a configuration of multiple centres displayed in active polarity which sustains the balanced tension of the text.

The *library* and the *labyrinth* is the first pair of poles according to which the characters fix their own coordinates. Umberto Eco himself explains the relation between the library and the labyrinth: "The labyrinth of my library remains a manierist labyrinth..."²⁷ The library is built according to the main principles of building a labyrinth. Deciphering its secret is a real initiation: the laws of the labyrinth must be obeyed. Beginning with the 16th century the labyrinth is "desacralised". In mannerism it is more than man's attitude towards the complexity of the world. It is the metaphor of the world itself. Man lives in a labyrinth, he is closed in there. How could he be in control of the chaos of the world? By "calculation, mathematics and symbol"²⁸.

²⁴ Umberto Eco, *Opera deschisă*, Editura pentru Literatură Universală, București, 1969, p.46

²⁵ Liviu Petrescu, op. cit. p.74

²⁶ Ihab Hassan, op. cit. p. 91

²⁷ Umberto Eco, *Marginalii și glosse*, op. cit. p.100

²⁸ Paolo Santarcangeli, *Cartea labirinturilor*, Edit. Meridiane, București, 1974, p.134

The library in *The Name of the Rose* is built according to a mathematical symbol, an extremely complicated “combinatoric art” which uses numbers and letters as well. The secret of the structure of the library is based on a mannerist combinatory technique, whereas the position of books in the library follows the medieval concept of the world. In the Middle Ages every construction corresponded to a sacred translation of the heavenly Jerusalem or the world itself. They had an orientation therefore. The arrangement of books in the Library of the Abbey confirms the geographical order of the world: “[...]when we later perfected the map definitively we were convinced that the library was truly laid out and built and arranged according to the image of the terraqueous orb. To the north we found ANGLIA and GERMANI, which along the west wall were connected by GALLIA, which turned then, at the extreme west, into HIBERNIA, and toward the south wall ROMA (paradise of Latin classics!) and YSPANIA. Then to the south came the LEONES and AEGYPTUS, which to the east became IUDEAE and FONS ADAE. Between east and north, along the wall, ACAIA, a good synecdoche, as William expressed it, to indicate Greece, and in those four rooms there was, finally, a great hoard of poets and philosophers of pagan antiquity.”²⁹

The medieval builders of the library made their plan corresponding to a sacred orientation, but later the library lost its orientation and became first of all a labyrinth, a puzzle to be solved. The word ‘labyrinth’ appears first in the text as ‘labyrinth of books’, a syntagm which belongs to the Abbot of the monastery. He insists that the library is a labyrinth of the mind: “A spiritual labyrinth, it is also a terrestrial labyrinth. You might enter and you might not emerge.”³⁰ Therefore the library has lost its sacred nature. It is regarded as a construction within a secret plan, obeying certain unknown rules, a plan which can be decyphered only by the intellect. It is also relevant that the mystery of the labyrinth has been solved from the outside and not from the inside. Adso is puzzled and asks his master, how is this possible. Guglielmo’s answer which is influenced profoundly by the

²⁹ Umberto Eco, *Numele trandafirului*, op. cit. p.320

³⁰ Umberto Eco, *Numele trandafirului*, op. cit. p.40

Ockhamist movement insists in addition on a basic idea of nominalism, namely, that God cannot be known by way of metaphysics or speculative thinking. We know from the outside only "The creations of art, because we retrace in our minds the operations of the artificer. Not the creations of nature, because they are not the work of our minds."³¹

As the labyrinth is an artifice of the human mind, its secret can be decyphered by the intellect. This is what Guglielmo does successfully. On the other hand, Adso conceives the labyrinth in a medieval way, as a "species of under-world"³² where "The Minotaur is in the centre of the inferno; it is a daemon; the labyrinth appears to be lost in error which ruins us if Christ-Theseus does not interfere."³³ Unprepared to enter the labyrinth Adso fails salvation. He is afraid and returns hastily. It is not an accident that the love scene with the nameless girl occurs immediately after he comes out of the labyrinth. Unpurified, being under the influence of senses, he is at a loss and loses his way to redemption.

The secret of the labyrinth is revealed by Guglielmo when he enters the library for the third time, at the end of the sixth day and the beginning of the seventh. The way to the centre had to be an initiation full of traps: the mirror which shows monsters (in the Middle Ages the mirror was "often represented as the devil's instrument"³⁴), the lamp in which hallucinatory herbs burn, the wind which whistles through the air-holes in the wall, the interdiction to enter the library as well as the labyrinth-like arrangement of the rooms with books. Without passing through this initial route the hero could never reach the real centre. These obstacles belong to the law of the labyrinth.

Eco confesses that a mannerist labyrinth served as model of his library. He also says that "Guglielmo finds out that the world he lives in is already structured like a puzzle, or it can be structured but it is

³¹ Umberto Eco, *Numele trandafirului*, op. cit. p.218

³² Paolo Santarcangeli, *Cartea labirinturilor*, op. cit. p.101

³³ Paolo Santarcangeli, op. cit. p.102

³⁴ Jurgis Baltrusztis, *Oglinda*, Edit. Meridiane, București, 1981, p.202

never structured definitively.”³⁵ The presence of the outer world is more and more felt in those two chapters which present the fierce discussions between members of different religious communities on the poverty of Christ. This outer world is structured like a puzzle, it interferes violently with the tiny little world of the monastery, absorbing it. This puzzle-like rendition of the world is not at all characteristic to the Middle Ages. The medieval man lived in a world which was centred and oriented from a religious and social point of view. Guglielmo’s world is our world, the puzzle world is a metaphor of space originating in postmodernism.³⁶

Guglielmo’s entering the labyrinth reveals his secret wish to centre the world in which he lives (his discourse addressed to the legates enlarges upon the concept of ‘ruling the world’). He fails in the end: the annihilation of the Monster does not necessarily lead to the annihilation of chaos in the world.

Another pair of poles which sustains the inner tension of the text corresponds to the two complementary characters, Guglielmo and Jorge. Guglielmo is a Franciscan, a disciple of Roger Bacon, a friend of Ockham. He has all the features Eco required to create his character, that is, “to be endowed with a sense of observation and a sensibility in the interpretation of signs.”³⁷ Guglielmo had to interpret signs so that the results of his interpretation would lead him to the knowledge of the particular, a knowledge relying on experience. The secret of the labyrinth is revealed by Guglielmo who believes in signs. He makes logical deductions and obeys the the well-known principle of Ockham of the “economy of thought”. We can find an eloquent example of Guglielmo’s judgement at the beginning of the novel: by the attentive observation of some indices that escapes others attention Guglielmo reveals minute details about the horse that disappeared from the Abbey. The reasoning which is at the basis of Guglielmo’s theory of revealing the secret of the library is, however, a wrong one, although it leads him to the truth. When his reasoning reaches

³⁵ Umberto Eco, *Marginalii și glosse*, op. cit. p.100

³⁶ Ihab Hassan, op. cit. p.91

³⁷ Umberto Eco, *Marginalii și glosse*, op. cit. p.93

deadlock, Adso helps him by unconsciously offering solutions. The investigation would have failed without him. Guglielmo exclaims: "My boy, this is the second time today that wisdom has spoken through your mouth, first in dream and now waking!"³⁸ At the end Guglielmo admits that he revealed the truth by a "false reasoning" while he tried in vain to give the world a meaning: "I behaved stubbornly, pursuing a semblance of order, when I should have known that there is no order in the universe."³⁹ Whereas for Adso the centre of the world is God, Guglielmo places God outside the world, according to Ockhamist logic and thus he thinks that the centre can be reached by reason. However, when the reason depends on false premises in its search of truth, then either this truth is the logical alternative of error or the reason is incapable of discovering the truth in a universe which does not conform to the laws of human reason: "It's hard to accept the idea that there cannot be order in the universe because it would offend the free will of God and His omnipotence."⁴⁰

It is not accidental that Eco chose the mannerist model for his labyrinth, for the centre of the mannerist labyrinth may be missing.⁴¹ Guglielmo fails in his attempt to centre a world which is conceived without a centre and the periphery of which is continuously moving. This is a "network" world in which every search ends with meeting the other ego, the ego from the mirror. On a symbolic level Guglielmo's confrontation with Jorge is a confrontation with himself. Jorge waits for Guglielmo in the library. He knows whom he has to meet. Jorge, an old man who is also blind, proves to be the Monster who closely guarded the Library, even at the expense of human lives. "You are the Devil!"⁴², says Guglielmo to Jorge. But he is a devil born from excessive faith, a boundless love of God. He thinks that he can protect God if he keeps secret the second part of Aristotle's Poetics in which the Philosopher speaks about comedy. This book

³⁸ Umberto Eco, *Numele trandafirului*, op. cit. p.455

³⁹ Umberto Eco, *Numele trandafirului*, op. cit. p.488

⁴⁰ Umberto Eco, *Numele trandafirului*, op. cit. p.488

⁴¹ Gustav René Hocke, *Lumea ca labirint*, Edit. Meridiane, București, 1973, p.176

⁴² Umberto Eco, *Numele trandafirului*, op. cit. p.472

might have taught people that laughter is also part of their nature. The theme of laughter occurs as a counterpoint in the novel. Otherwise, a medieval monastery could not have been conceived without discussions on the theme of laughter. Beginning with Chrysostomos who taught the Christians that “Christ never laughed”⁴³ and St. Benedict who stated as a rule the interdiction of laughter, the Middle Ages had an ambiguous attitude towards laughter. Jorge adopts a severe position in this respect: “Laughter shakes the body, distorts the features of the face, makes man similar to the monkey.”⁴⁴ The Devil who is considered a parody of God, his monkey⁴⁵, can get man under his control by laughter. But laughter is also the way man can free himself from the fear of the devil. Learning from Aristotle’s book he might gain control over the devil. Finally, the second volume of Aristotle’s book disappears together with Jorge. He thinks that if he burns the book, he protects God, for as long as man is a victim of his own fears he will seek shelter in faith. Guglielmo proves to him that the excerpt from Aristotle’s Poetics which deals with laughter can be reconstructed from other books. Thus he shows that Jorge’s sacrifice was useless. Guglielmo’s search in a world made up only of books is also useless. The fire that breaks out in the library destroys this world built of texts and words the meaning of which becomes more and more incomprehensible, a world which isolates itself from God not only by a veil of signs but also by possessive, blind faith.

With William Ockham the 16th century “stresses the separation between philosophy and theology which was already clear”⁴⁶ and seemed to be definitive. Barely freed from the support of faith the reason began to take care of itself in the 14th century. Guglielmo’s firm belief in reason and in the truth of signs helps him to reveal the secret of the labyrinth but does not allow him to reveal the real

⁴³ Ernst Robert Curtius, *Literatura europeană și Evul Mediu latin*, Edit. Univers, București, 1970, p.487

⁴⁴ Umberto Eco, *Numele trandafirului*, op. cit. p.131

⁴⁵ Jean Chevallier, Alain Gheerbrant, *Dictionnaire des symbols*, Editions Laffout, Paris, 1991. p.353

⁴⁶ Étienne Gilson, *Filozofia în Evul Mediu*, Edit. Humanitas, București, 1995, p.589

meaning of the world he lives in. Adso, whose faith seems to be untouched by the fierce philosophical debates of his time, is always perplexed by everything that happens. He does not understand what he tells. He ventures a "theological end" by asking Guglielmo: "Isn't affirming God's absolute omnipotence and His absolute freedom with regard to His own choices tantamount to demonstrating that God does not exist?"⁴⁷ Answering with a question Guglielmo draws back and questions the idea of God, as Ockham does: "How could a learned man go on communicating his learning if he answered yes to your question?"⁴⁸ However, Adso's naivety hides an incredible profundity. The innocence of those who wonder at the world and seem not to understand it allows Adso to see things that the learned do not observe because they think they already know them. At the end the time of the story and that of the story-teller overlap: it seems that there is nothing more to tell. The words of Adso of Melk seem to be lost in a "dumb silence"; they free words that have not been told, words which in their turn will call other words.

The simple message Adso reveals at the end is that there is no death until words have been set free. How is this possible? Adso does not know or had already revealed it and nobody was listening to him...

⁴⁷ Umberto Eco, *Numele trandafirului*, op. cit. p.488

⁴⁸ Umberto Eco, *Numele trandafirului*, op. cit. p.489