

## How to Re- Narrate the History through a Film? A Dialogue with Special Reference to the Movie ‘The Name of the Rose’

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### Abstract

Humans have made the history, interpreted it in different ways and have ultimately broken their bondage to history in the postmodern era. They have produced many ideologies to make, to interpret and to justify history. It is true that many disciplines have helped the man to do so and, cinematography as an advanced and technology oriented academic discipline has effectively come forward today to give meanings to the history of yesterday. Why do we define or re-define history? The answer to that question is that such re-definitions that we make, in turn; define us, our knowledge, our present power relationships with society, and our relation to history itself or, in other words, our present identity or lack of identity (Zizek, 2002 ). The identity that we struggle to justify in order to exist in this material world, finally attribute to our ideological relationship to history. Therefore, we are nostalgic about history but we do not live in history.

Film, as a less serious, pleasure oriented form of art, compared to the written forms of modern art such as novels or poetry (Best and Kellner, 1991) there is a common misunderstanding that it cannot decisively interfere into the academic or public sphere to do something worthwhile. Contrastively, in this thesis, we attempt to show that a film as a mass form of art is sufficient to re-define and re-narrate history in retrospection as done by the written texts of the previous generation. If any written document narrates history as an arbitrary metaphysical construction in the way the narrator of that particular history wants to see it, the post modern art too is capable in doing so by ascribing serious meanings to history. Such ascribed meanings are as valid as those in any written textual source and can decisively change the present signs and values system if seriously and consciously studied. That is one of the reasons why we preferred the movie to the novel ‘*The Name of the Rose*’ (1983) by Umberto Eco (1932-). We study the movie ‘*The Name of the Rose*’ (1986) by Jean Jacques Annaud with a post-structuralist stand point to demonstrate the above hypothesis. In addition, the portrayal of woman in this movie appears unavoidable for the man to surpass and the male has no other way but to submit to her beauty and the bodily seduction but, in the end, the man, in search of the future better world, overcomes her. The dualistic relationship between the woman as a ‘sexual being or as the primordial *Other*’ (Beauvoir, 1997) and the man as the builder of civilization or *the Self* (Ibid, 1997) will be discussed in the last segment of this thesis.

**Key Words:** Discursive History, Myth, Power, Woman as the ‘Real’, Re-textualization

## Introduction

A film is normally considered a less serious mode of entertainment which can be used as a self-expression of the human consciousness. It has been used in this manner from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as a very powerful source of communication to record complex profile of political, socio-cultural, aesthetic and linguistic experiences of the human civilization. Today, the film industry operates in more than ten major genres such as romance, war, horror, art and children and so on to cater a wider, diversified audience in a highly commercialized world with complex technological miracles. It is also important to mention here with the above categorized nature of the industry, the film has gone into absorb complex human experiences in the present advanced capitalistic world. However, due to the significant different in form and content, the post - War developments in cinema are considered 'postmodern' since the mass cultural features of cinema generated new sensibilities of more pluralistic less serious nature ( Best and Kellner, 1991; Sontag, 1991). But considering the heavy themes and complex human experiences it has captured in the last couple of decades, it is not at all possible to say that cinema is a superficial form of art. If the written texts (such as poetry or novels) were the mode of literature to express the modernity and classical humanism, film and/or mass music are the new forms of culture to express the experience of the post-modern man. The cinema has evolved and radicalized in such a way to articulate any serious human experience, mainly in the light of advanced academic disciplines such as psychoanalysis, post-modernism and post-structuralism. These developments have been quite useful to the ideological basements in the film industry and to its criticism, making the cinema both commercially popular and academically serious form of art, while the industry remains entertaining a millions of audience. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that, even though cinema is a mass cultural form, certain genres that contain serious or artistic themes are not as popular as those contain action or erotic.

The film '*The Name of the Rose*' by Jean Jacques Annaud that we discuss here undoubtedly falls into the niche of art film category since it may not attract a wider audience. Umberto Eco's fiction '*The Name of the Rose*' on which the movie is based did also not entice a huge readership who is accustomed to the entertainment aspect of the industry. The average audience may hardly have something to understand in this movie. As the fiction has been narrated to combat the bluntness and dominance of Theology of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries by articulating the classical knowledge of the Greeks' with the use of the deductive arguments in place of religious believes in serious dialogues in the film, this work thereby belongs to a highly intelligent crowd who must be aware of the classical history to taste this work. The film's content

condensed the murder mystery of Benedictine Abbey, an Italian monastery, to where Franciscan Friar William of Baskerville made an inspection visit to find out the responsible for the murder series in the Abbey but, in the process, he discovers more than the real killer of the priests, but the true murderer of the human laughter i.e. symbolically the slaughter of the enlightened classical rationality of the Greek civilization. The bliss that is gained from the rational use of knowledge symbolizes the true evolution of the deep human laughter by casting away the mist of idiocy.

### Hypothesis

It is assumed that if history is based on a document and that document can differently be interpreted according to the wish of the interpreter, the monumental value it bears will be either empty or arbitrary. At the same time, we elaborate on the fact that Eco's metaphysical dialogue in re-establishing a meaning to an event in the history has taken place in his fiction and Annaud's movie from the author's point of view of today; thereby proves that history is something that people at different historical moments have provided arbitrary meanings to it according to how they wish to see it.

### Methodology

The methodology that we intend to employ in this thesis is basically literary review together with a careful textual analysis of both primary and the secondary material in a post-structural stand point. For primary analysis we make use of the screenplay and subtitle of the film adaptation of Eco's fiction '*The Name of the Rose*' as a text<sup>1</sup> by Jean Jacques Annaud. For secondary references number of theoretical bases of post-structural, post-modern and psychoanalytical literary reviewers will be considered.

### Theoretical Approach

History, even though we would like to relate to a lineal continuity, is actually about discontinuity. According to Michel Foucault (1926-1984), 'history of thought, of knowledge, of philosophy, of literature seems to be seeking, and discovering, more and more discontinuities, whereas history itself appears to be abandoning the irruption of events in favour of stable structures' (Foucault, 2003). For the sake of formation of one single, totalized foundation of history, the 'periods of ruptures, breaks, mutations or transformations' (Ibid) are either forgotten or differently interpreted, until it falls into a legitimate level of formalization. Foucault's view in relation to the tradition is that, 'take the notion of tradition: it is intended to give a special temporal statues to a group of phenomena that are both successive and identical (or at least similar); it makes it possible to rethink the desperation of history in the

form of same; it allows a reduction of the difference proper to every beginning, in order to pursue without discontinuity the endless search for the origin' (Ibid). History is defined in today's retrospection of yesterday, depending on the power articulation and re-articulation of a particular group of humans, at a particular moment, wishes to establish on their subjects in keeping with its momentum in the group itself or external to their domain. What has been over-determined as 'history' is what the people in power have reported to us. Those who enjoy power in governing the lives of others in the world, whether east or west or wherever they are, report history to us with their own arbitrary interpretations so that they could justify the establishment of their power and their ambition to continuously remain in power. The academic disciplines have helped history to solve the problem of establishing a single pattern and to preserve it to show an uninterrupted unity rather than a mass of discontinuities. Mostly, the shifts and the changes in the history have taken place, according to Foucault, as discontinuities but the 'real' history is all about the continuities of the suppressed, non-powers (Ibid).

Apart from the above Foucaultian definition about history, there are certain other definitions that we wish to mention here in support of what we try to hypothesize. The following definition has been taken from *The Century Dictionary: an Encyclopedic Lexicon of the English Language*, in support of the hypothesis;

"History is facilitated by the formation of a 'true discourse of past'. The modern discipline of History is dedicated to the *institutional production* of this discourse. More precisely, *history* is the narrative and research of past events as relating to the human race".

Foucault continues this argument to site that the true discourse of the past is in the form of a *document* which metamorphoses into the state of a *monument* in the hand of the rebuilder of history.

"To be brief, then, let us say that history, in its traditional form undertook to 'memorize' the *monuments* of the past, transform them into *documents* and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say; in our time, history is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*" (Foucault, 2003).

The plot narration of the movie 'The Name of the Rose' is woven around one such documentary monument i.e. the *Poetic the Second* by Aristotle (384-322B.C.) which we analyze, in one hand, as an *empty signifier*<sup>2</sup> (Barthes, 1992) and as an original document which is used to justify (and signify) the legitimation of the continuation of history (Foucault, 2003) on the other. Barthes takes his famous 'rose' example for this as a rose flower becomes a meaningful entity in a narrator's hand as it signifies love, passion, innocence

and even war according to how it can generate a meaning to anything in the territory in which a rose can be meaningful. Even Barthes goes on to say that the texts can be 'constantly rewritten into a variety of different material, social, institutional and ideological contexts' as long as those texts can be semiotically reinterpreted. The text the *Poetic the Second* plays the role of an 'empty signifier' which generates arbitrary meanings first in the hands of Jean Annaud and now in ours. We will show that it also eventually becomes 'the document' and then subsequently the documentary monument. We also attempt to create an institutional 'true' discourse about history in line with the above definition. On the other hand,

"History is not just the past as an object of systematic knowledge or the discipline that produces knowledge out of that object; history also carries a sense that is implicit in the expression 'making history'. Thus History often signifies the production of events having transformative potentials that ushers in the future. This is how a temporal schema connecting the past, the present, and the future is foregrounded through the signifier *history*. The historical temporality is grounded within the idea of autonomous human subjects endowed with historical subjectivity which aids them in the production of events and at once helps them to *record and narrate* past events as history" (Barthes, 1992).

Further, we articulate the discursive history with Barthes's conception of myth as post-transcendental phenomenon of today's identity and power. Identity and power necessarily have an interrelationship in which one identifies himself with power in relation to his or her establishment of identity, and in order to identify oneself with history (in a nostalgic sense) ultimately leads to a power articulation. The power articulations between the below mentioned variables are the chief coordinations that we focus on in this paper as apparent in the movie.

#### I. Author and the document; Aristotle and Poetic the Second

The author of the documentary monument, Aristotle, has written a text called *Poetic the Second* (or *The Poetics*), in the reciprocal power block of Alexander II as his student who conquered the world, and by conceptualizing the existing Athena as a natural community which must be beautified. *The Poetic the Second* or any other text had to be written to restructure the metropolitan according to his imagination of 'the beauty'. All the other metropolitans in the world can then be called as post-Aristotelian phenomenon.

#### II. The document and the monument; Poetic the Second and the Abby

The Benedictine Abby, the monumentary storage of a huge compilation of

classical texts of the Greeks carried 'the document', *Poetic the Second* which encouraged people to laugh which, according to Venerable Jorge, can eventually drive people to laugh at everything perhaps even God. The same human laughter was treated by William as a precious asset. The laughter or the 'bliss' comes at the moment of the discovery of rational knowledge which, in the movie, encounters the destruction and the intolerance of natural humanity by the Inquisition which prohibits the discovery of new knowledge.

### III. Excavator and the document; William of Baskerville and *Poetic the Second*

William identifies himself with the Franciscan rationality which facilitates the discovery of knowledge which he uses even to dig out the mystery of the murders in Abby and, subsequently, finds out the way to the labyrinth where some ancient texts ( which are of more rational nature) are secretly kept without allowing the priest to read them. He then excavates the truth of the second book of *Poetics* which combines pleasure and rationality. William rationally becomes a genius discoverer and historically an inevitable mediator.

### IV. Destroyer and the document; Venerable Jorge and *Poetic the Second*

In fear of the emergence of a genius discoverer of the monument of logical rationality, the force of idiocy itself creates the destroyer, Venerable Jorge, who inserted a poison of thousand scorpions to the document. The binary opposition between the destroyer of the Aristotelian rationality and the preserver of deductive rationality itself creates their own opponents. Though the monument is effectively destroyed, the rationality that the monument symbolizes remains in the hands of preservers, William and Adso for the next generations to borrow from them.

### V. Interpreters and the document; Eco, Annuaud and *Poetic the Second*

Umberto Eco with his academic identity as a semiotician, literary critic and a novelist provides meanings and interpretations to the anthropological history using 14<sup>th</sup> Century orthodox Christianity and its prohibition searching for new knowledge. The same is followed by Jean Annuaud, the filmmaker, who illuminates a further truth of what is perhaps not readily available in the fiction at this moment but will be discovered by the future interpreters.

### VI. Point of viewer and the document; Adso and *Poetic the Second*

The speaker of both the fiction and of the film, Adso, has the full authority to re-narrate what took place at the historical moment of the destruction of the document, the *Poetic the Second*, in the monumental Benedictine Abby after thirty years. Adso plays the role of the extension of the excavator of the

document.

#### VII. Theoricians and the document; Barthes, Foucault etc. and Poetic the Second

The producers of new knowledge that we try to incorporate in understanding this text have a significant role to play since the aesthetism and the naturalism are unable to fix meanings to history. Hence the semiotic and historic interpretations are asserted to the movie to bring more awareness to the viewer by the academic interpreters today.

#### VIII. Re-excavators and the document; The narrators of this paper and Poetic the Second

We re-discover the movie and the document in a new light, with the help of post-structuralism and semiology to prove our hypothesis.

#### IX. You and the document; the reader of this paper and Poetic the Second

Once someone reads this paper, the way he or she may look at this movie will be different. Thus the future viewer of the movie and of this paper will assert more meanings to the movie with the theoretical highlights and the re-narrations brought out in this paper. This will extend further according to how the power relationships of an individual will be compatible with the theoretical points of this paper. The reader of this paper will decide whether he or she is going to shares the points given in this narration with how they want to look at the world and how they justify their own actions with those of others.

The relationships that we have described here have chronological cross-connections with each other and the totality of each cross-relationship completes the *concept of history*. In addition to this long list of intrigue power distributions and articulations, there can be many others like this but all such by-relationships that are not in sight will not be discussed here will be left for the reader to discover in future.

### **The Name of the Rose: The Fiction and the Movie**

The fiction '*The Name of the Rose*' by semiotic fictionist Umberto Eco earned great reputation both from the readers and critics since it effectively rebuilt a rhetoric of the existence of Aristotle's second book of Poetics which, according to Eco, could have destined in shifting the basement of Western society from religious idiocy to deductive rationality. The film directed by Jean Jacques Annaud under the same title is released to the public in the year 1989 based on the events in the above fiction. As described in the abstract, we solely concentrate on the movie rather than the fiction from

which the plot has been borrowed for the movie, since we attempt to disprove the misconception that cinema as a mass and a less serious form of art is incapable of articulating serious and more dynamic themes to its audience the way modern written forms of art did.

### **Film Synopsis**

William of Baskerville and his apprentice Adso of Melk (the speaker emerges with his thirty years old memory of the destruction of the Abby) arrive at a Benedictine abbey where a mysterious death has taken place ahead of an important Church conference. William, known for his deductive and analytic mind, is asked to investigate the death of a young illuminator who apparently has committed suicide. Over the week or so, several other mystic deaths of young priests occur, and they discover that everything that appears in the abbey more than what they appear to be.

William and Adso also make the acquaintance of Salvatore, a demented hunchback who utters pieces of various ambiguous languages, and his hidden handler and protector, Remigio da Varagine who, as events prove, also owns an unrevealed and anti-Christ past. William in no time deduces that Salvatore and his heretic past can have a relationship with the murders in the Abbey.

Investigating beyond the demonic possession, the protagonists discover and explore a labyrinthine medieval library, where valuable classical texts are hidden in the main tower. It becomes apparent that the only remaining copy of Aristotle's Second Book of Poetics, however, has a connection to the series of deaths. William deduces, in line with a script hastily written by a priest just before his death, that all of those who died under mysterious circumstances had eventually read the book. His investigations are stopped by the arrival of Bernardo Gui of the Inquisition, who also got involved in the investigations. The film reveals that the two men clashed in the past and Gui, with no imagination, believed that all this is a result of the possession of devil and the punishment will reveal the truth. In the meantime, Salvatore and a poor local girl are found fighting over meat while in the presence of candles and a black cat. Bernardo Gui understands this as irrefutable proof that they are in league with Satan and, along with Remigio, he has them imprisoned and subjected to "questioning". Simultaneously, Adso falls in love with the same country girl whom Salvatore previously got involved in, which leads to a physical contact.

Remigio, in the course of the judgment and subsequent punishment screams, "The devil I renounce is you, Bernardo Gui!" and by means of this statement Remigio shows nothing but his anger towards Abbey, the Inquisition itself and its corrupt officials who exploit the villagers' labor by religious means

and takes everything that actually belongs to them. Gui disagrees with the findings of Brother William and then seeks to implicate and destroy him. Yet William does not give up his deductions but rather ascends to the forbidden library where Adso and him come face to face with the Venerable Jorge followed by a bitter argument.

In the final moments, Remigio, Salvatore and Rose are set on fire but with villager's intervention the girl rescues but the former two die. Villagers also managed to kill Gui in a misadventure. William does not get caught by the poisoned pages of the book but Jorge commits suicide by unknowingly setting fire to the entire library from which William rescues few books but not the Poetic the Second. Later, William and Adso were on the horse back to say goodbye to the Abbey after successful completion of their mission. Adso who is attracted and submerged in the wild beauty of the girl (rose?), however, leaves her despite his passionate lust by listening to William, the symbolic father who prefers the order of things in stead of submitting to the call of the woman.

### The Re-establishment of a Meaning to History

The interpretation of textuality, according to Barthes, is a relative phenomenon in which, "the Einsteinian relativity, the relativity of the frames of reference be included in the object studied"; there is now recognition that the positions from which a text is read will determine its meanings...but Barthes dismisses the traditional idea of the text as a 'veil' which is concealed a definitive meaning waiting to be revealed" (Barthes, 1981).

Thereby the historical monuments do not have fixed or unchanging meanings waiting to be discovered by us. But such monuments are interpreted as texts according to the contexts depending on the reader's anticipation. The mythical *Poetic the Second* which drove a reader to redefine the moment of the monument, too is an open text which cannot be reduced to a single meaning, but opens up a space to produce a producer of a new interpretation. When the text is considered a production of the reader (Ibid) the *Poetic the Second* can be interpreted as an 'empty signifier' which can generate arbitrary meanings in the hands of any reader.

The frames in the movie that portray the hidden *Poetic the Second* and the secretive prohibition on other classical texts that can cause laughter and merriment and William's effort to find out the story hidden behind the doors of the labyrinth is an *independent vacuum textuality* that can assert any meaning from outside. As it leaves space to absorb external interpretations, the textual vacuum is understood in this essay as an *empty signifier*. In the floating and vague atmosphere of the lost *Poetic the Second* and the fear and

rejection of the monumentary text by the venerable Jorge, and the Abbey where the document is preserved, and the preservatory and excavatory effort from William and Adso are all woven around this empty signifier. The interpretative relationship to past is displayed below (Figure 1) as a demarcation of the construction of ‘myth’ in relation to various power relationships of today (Eco’s day of writing the novel and the day that we write this).

As the empty signifiers do not contain fixed meanings, the filmic space of the events of the discovery and the destruction of *Poetic the Second* connotes various meanings such as the revival of the Aristotelian rationalism or continuation of the Christian idiocy.

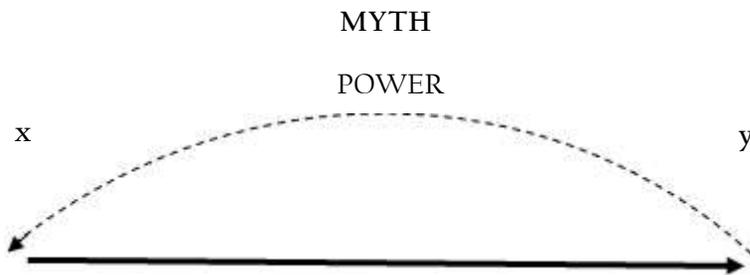


Figure 1: The interpretative relationship to past

In the lineal historic development of power and knowledge in the human civilization, if a speaker in the point ‘y’ interprets a moment in point ‘x’ in retrospection, through a mythical discourse, he or she may come across an empty space to be filled (completed, demythologize) in accordance with his or her power acquisition, legitimation and justification. If we place Eco or Annuaad in the position ‘y’, the above figure will appear as follows (Figure 2).

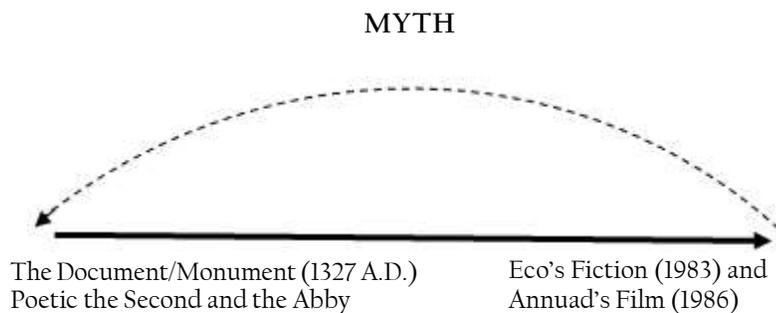


Figure 2: Mythologizing past in the monument

The myth that we refer in this paper means the dominant ideologies of our time and it connotes much more than its literal sense. ‘Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification,

it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact (Barthes, 1992).

The above diagram actually refers to the relationship between the interpreters and the document mentioned in the fifth point of the power articulators in the Background. This does not mean that the rest of the power articulations described there are neutral or non-functioning or aborted but, we emphasize that the moment of making the film solely depends on filling the 'empty space' of the vacuum of the moment of history through a mythological discourse in the form of a re-narration of the history. By re-narrating this historical event in favour of post-enlightenment rationalism, the authors (Eco and Annaud) signal to the society that they live in establishing a meaning to themselves that they are not religious ideologists but persons who believe in deductive rationality and empiricism.

### **The Poetic the Second as the Empty Signifier**

This section will explain to the reader how the empty space of the signifier of the document can become a power entity of the discursive identification of the subject who will share the document with the power acquisition alone with other elements such as fear, laughter, belief and sadness etc. This element will be discussed both from the points of view of the preserver and the destroyer of the document. Since there is no physical document as Poetic the Second by Aristotle but only a discourse, it becomes an 'empty signifier'.

### **Jorge's Identification ( Destroyer): Fear, Faith and Laughter**

Jorge is the chief priest of the Abbey and functions as the devoted theoretician who guides the younger followers in the path he believes correct for them. He identifies the *Poetic the Second* as a threat to Christianity since it encourages laughter in the form of comedy. The first book of *Poetics* by Aristotle too remarks that secular pleasure of citizens contains 'bliss' ( we can use the word 'ecstasy' too in this regard) and the feeling of bliss is the element that can cause laughter in the entertaining point of the audience. He uses this in his explanation of the taste in epics. (Aristotle, 1996) The *Poetic the Second*, according to what Jorge imagines, as a dangerous extension of the first book, can further intensify people's laughter and that element can make people to go on to laugh at everything including the Almighty. Thereby, Jorge has made strict rules for everyone in the Abbey not to laugh. Not only the laughter itself, but even the elements that generate laughter have completely been suspended. As a result, the violation of the prohibition of laughter in the Abby brings ecstasy and the subjectification to the discourse of the other (Lacan, 2003).

The annihilation of laughter is seen as the annihilation of freedom to re-invent and re-interpret the world which can be incorporated with the freedom of expression which is the greatest freedom the humanity ever found. In the movie, the conscious Christian justification for the annihilation of laughter is stressed by reverent Jorge as follows;

**Jorge:** "Laughter kills fear and without fear there can be no faith

Because without fear of the devil there is no more need of God.

**William:** But you will not eliminate laughter by eliminating that book

**Jorge:** No, to be sure.

Laughter will remain the common man's recreation

But will happen if, because of this book,

Learned men were to pronounce permissible to laugh at everything.

Can we laugh at God? The world would relapse in chaos.

Therefore, I seal that which was not to be said" (Annuaire, 1986).

In the conversation between William and Jorge in the library, Jorge becomes the defender of his role as the annihilation of laughter. William defends the human urge to laugh and says that even Christianity does not bear evidence in prohibiting laughter and sometimes there are certain places in the Bible where there are things that can generate humour but Jorge rejects this remark to witness that Friars suffered on behalf of humanity and there is nothing to be funny about it. The following conversation between Jorge and William will give evidence;

**Jorge:** "A monk should not laugh, only the fool lifts his voice in laughter. Laughter is a devilish wind which deforms lineaments of the face and makes men like monkeys.

**William:** Monkeys do not laugh. Laughter is particular to man.

**Jorge:** As is sin

Christ never laughed

**William:** Can we be so sure?

**Jorge:** There is nothing in scriptures to say that he did.

There is nothing in scriptures to say that he did not. Even the saints have employed comedy to ridicule the enemies of faith. For example, when the

pagans plunged St. Maurus into the boiling water he complained that his bath was too cold. The Sultan put his hand in, scolded himself.

**Jorge:** A saint emerged in boiling water does not play childish tricks. He restrains his cries and suffers for the truth.

**William:** And yet Aristotle devoted his second book of Poetics to comedy as an instrument of truth.

**Jorge:** Because provident does not want futile things to be glorified” (Ibid).

The destruction itself creates a power relationship with the followers at the moment of Jorge’s discursive dominance in the Abbey as the hegemonic interpretator of the Bible and the documentary monument *Poetic the Second*. In this power articulation, the heretics and mystic demonization is excluded from its existence and they become the Other to identify the real Christianity.

**William’s Identification (Preserver):** Laughter

William too uses the same *vacuum* or the *empty signifier* that is created by the text to his own articulation with power construction of his identity in the Abbey (even outside) as a rationalist and, to a certain extend, a liberalist who encourages human laughter which is typical to human and witnesses that there are no examples in the Holy Scripts to prohibit merriments. William is liberal other of the binary oppositional relationship between the annihilation of laughter in the power manipulation of the entire series of incidents. He asserts meanings to the *document* which he considers as a heritage of the Classical Greek.

He also gives the due respect for humanity as a humanitarian and a liberalist by mentioning that,

**Jorge:** “A monk should not laugh, only the fool lifts his voice in laughter. Laughter is a devilish wind which deforms lineaments of the face and makes men like monkeys.

**William:** Monkeys do not laugh. Laughter is particular to man.

**Jorge:** As is sin” (Ibid).

He preserves all that is due for Christianity but emerges radically in the face of idiocy. In future, it is this rationality which carries Christianity to the next generations along side with Adso. ( Figure 3).

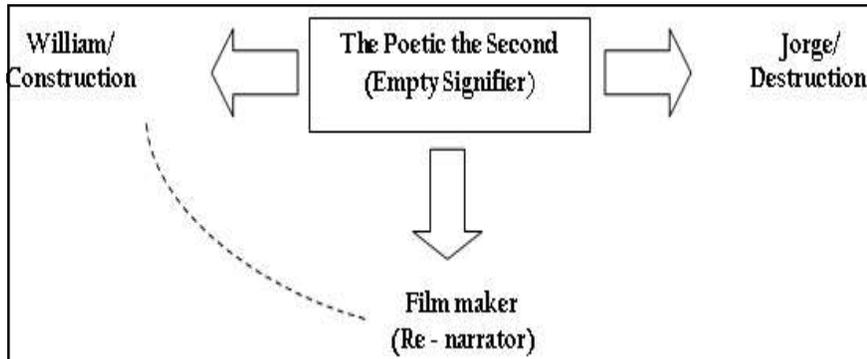


Figure 3: Monument as an Empty Signifier

### Annaud's Identification (Re-narrator)

Annaud too further utilizes the said empty space for his mythological discursive construction of what William has to narrate to us and, at the same time, he takes the side that of William. Annaud believes that the re-discovery of the document would have changed the path way of the line of thinking for the next centuries to come; which is the very path Eco took in his fiction. But the film's pictorial narration has the capacity to bring forth a rhetorical dimension to the narration which previously was not enjoyed by the written text and this is the re-narration ability of the history, in a filmatography. But this re-narration by Annaud, according to us is also a power articulation in establishing a meaningful context to both Poetic the Second and Eco's ideological stance. Eco's semiological studies establish his identity as a prominent academic and following his novel Annaud identifies himself against the idiocy of the Middle Ages and in favour of the importance of the rational Classics of Greeks.

### Suppression of Greek Rationality and the Discontinuation of History

Our lifeworld is, according to Habermas, in a sense, Aristotelian in its constitution as in everyday life, we do not think twice before distinguishing between inorganic and organic nature; the animal and the reasoning and social nature of man. (Habermas, 2005) The reasoning is what made this world as what we experience today. To the construction of knowledge, the contribution that reason and Classical rationality made is immense and still stands at the forefront of the human civilization though reason is not the driving force of the postmodern era. There seems to have a conflictual relationship between religious belief and rational hypothesis which demand discoveries and explorations. The new knowledge through rational discoveries is not encouraged by Christianity as exemplarily mentioned by Venerable

Jorge in the movie as there is no new knowledge but a recapitulation of what is already there. The Almighty has discovered all what is needed for His 'subjects' and they do not need anything else to find out.

As a result of this conflict relationship between rationality and belief, the other end of the binary opposition i.e. William and Adso, emerge powerfully against the blunt theology. It is also clear that their emergence represents the beginning of an 'invalidation of one another and a legitimization one another' (Foucault, 2003) history. This leads to an over-determination of one idea of history i.e. the history of rationality which won both its ideological physical battle in the Abbey. Then it starts its historical 'function' to transform individuals into subjects (Althusser, 2006) in comparison to that of Theology in the previous era. The force of rationality hereafter manipulates its ability to construct the discourse of history to formalize, totalize and to correct the previous mistake of the history by establishing a relationship 'between the authorities of emergence, delimitation and specification' (Foucault, 2003) As far as the representation of rational knowledge by William and Adso is considered, as the film connotes, the future is for them. Apparently, their success marks the discontinuation of the history of religious idiocy and fragmentation of the lineal heritage that is ascribed to it. Both William and Adso formulate a 'rational' discourse to define their future and that of the next generation, and was institutionalized as the 'true discourse' of the human civilization. That is why we believe that Adso who is the present re-narrator of the history the proper, becomes the speaker of Annuaire's film.

### Female: The Inevitable or Unsurpassable?

'If she should disappear, men would be alone, strangers lacking passports in an icy world. She is the earth itself raised to life's summit, the earth becomes sensitive and joyous; and without her, for man the earth is mute and dead' (Michel Carrouges)<sup>3</sup>

The woman is considered as the *Other* who is incidental and inessential as opposed to the essential Subject, Absolute or the *Self* (Beauvoir, 1997). The *Self* (man= male) constitutes himself, or in other words, 'a man would never begin by representing himself as an individual of a certain sex; it goes without saying that he is a man' (Ibid) According to Emmanuel Levinas, 'man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man' (Beauvoir, 1997). In the movie too, the character Rose is portrayed simply as a subjective hindrance, who is impure and primordial without an independent existent. In addition, the suppression of 'beauty' and the instinctual fear of beauty (even Adso's eyes are considered beautiful and hence devilish) play an anti-feminine role throughout. The idea of beauty which is

often compared to the qualities of devil who is believed to have beautiful eyes yet always untrustworthy is prominently portrayed in the movie especially in the scene where William meets Ubertino of Casale, a Friar in exile at the Abbey. Ubertino of Casale compares the eyes of Adso with those of the devil which are beautiful but mischievous. He mentions that, *'he had the eyes of a girl seeking intercourse with the devil'* (Annaud, 1986). This is the very place where the female symbol emerges for the first time in the movie and where the chief Christian ideology and its definition of woman are sited. This ideology distinguishes the pure woman from the evil one. Generally, according to the main teachings of the Christian theology a woman is a natural evil, abominable and leads and submits to the urge of the devil, on the contrary, she can be glorified once purified by the words of the man. It is the man who through words classify pure from impure. In the dialogue between Adso and Casale, it is mentioned, *"she is beautiful, is she not? When the female by nature, so perverse become sublime by holiness, then she can be the noblest vehicle of grace. Beautiful are the beast that protrude but little"* (Ibid). In the same way Mary, the mother of Jesus, has been sublimated through the masculine Biblical discourse of purification. This will mean that anyone (any woman including Rose in the movie) has to go through the discursive constructions of the church, the Bible or the masculine approval if she has to be glorified in existence. According to Beauvoir, 'woman is doomed to immorality, because for her to be moral would mean that she must incarnate a being of superhuman qualities: the 'virtuous woman' of Proverbs, the 'perfect mother', the 'honest woman', and so on. Let her but think, dream, sleep, desire, breath without permission and she betrays the masculine ideal' (Beauvoir, 1997). The masculine discourse of the Inquisition decides that Rose abominable and such evil to be burnt alive.

There has been a relationship between the heretics and the female but until the middle of the movie we are not disclosed about the illegal filtration of country girl to the Abbey. The village heavily suffers from poverty and, according to the film maker, the villagers even have not fulfilled the basic living requirements, and the exploitation is very visible as the Abbey receives goods from them amidst their poverty. It is mainly the poverty factor that drives Rose to be unwillingly submitting to a taste of a priest. The film shows its audience that the attempts that the Inquisition makes to destroy the female was not successful but the heretics who were in favour of the poor people could also not succeed. In the end, the woman survives as she has been rescued by the villagers who go against the decree of the Inquisition. It is strange that the villagers did not try to save Remigio who accuses the Church which obviously robs people's property. Despite the truth that contradicts with the judgment of Inquisition, it passes a quick and hasty judgment to burn alive both heretic and Rose. The careful and systematic scientific method which was utilized by Brother William confirmed who

killed the priests, and the Inquisition could only take revenge from its former dissidents (even that was partially successful). However, everything that the Inquisition did proved erroneous but the prudent judgments of Brother William not only found the true murderer but secured everything rightful to claim that the future belongs to them.

On the other hand, the villagers finally rescue *Rose* but they could not (or did not) take the other two intact. The filmmaker consciously designs a symbolic death to both Remigio and Salvatore who respectively represent the poverty of Christ together with the injustices of the Church which, as former believes, must be destroyed, and the other who entirely believes in the devil and clandestinely worships him. In line with the true history too, the heretics and the poverty of the Christ actually could not establish themselves powerfully and, the filmmakers' bringing a symbolic death for Remigio and Salvatore is justified in terms of their inability to exist in the true history. That is another example for the Foucaultian discontinuation of history.

*Rose's* survival in the movie denotes the survival of the 'real'<sup>4</sup>, which can be defined against the concept of the *Other* as coined by Simone de Beauvoir (Ibid). The *Other* is the inessential, incidental and primordial 'the sex' as opposed to the essential and absolute Subject who is the 'sexual being' (Ibid). She is normally considered 'secondary' or unimportant as far as the male subject and his involvement in changing the nature is concerned. In addition, man's biology and historical economic condition gave him supremacy and domination. According to Beauvoir, 'man's design is not to repeat himself in time: it is to take control of the instant and mould the future. It is male activity that in creating values has made of existence itself value; this activity has prevailed over the confused forces of life; it has subdued Nature and Woman' (Ibid). In creating such values which signify 'living above mere life' (Ibid) by man, woman is confronted as a mystery. For centuries she has lived as a mystic being who can seduce man in blocking human 'progress' or 'success'. Hence history never proves that she has ever become a 'conquest of nature' or 'impose her own laws' (Ibid) in power. Her place in history is not only a mystery but is, from the beginning, dedicated to evil. The evil not only brought her confusion and ambiguity but attached her with certain amount of danger as well. Apart from that, the man's inability to understand her 'mystic' biology which involved in maternity and reproduction intensified this phobia and danger. In the historical struggle between Man and Nature, Beauvoir mentions, 'man has succeeded in enslaving woman; but in the same degree he has deprived her of what made her possession desirable' (Ibid); and it seems that her assimilation to the male discourse and the subsequent subordination has caused confusion and contradiction on the ground that she is desired by man even though,

'she is the wished –for intermediary between nature, stranger to man, and the fellow being who is too closely identical. She opposes him with neither the hostile silence of nature nor the hard requirement of a reciprocal relation; through a unique privilege she is a conscious being and yet it seems possible to possess her in flesh. Thank to her, there is a means for escaping that implacable dialectic of master and slave which has its source in the reciprocity that exists between free beings' (Ibid).

Though the historical evolution has made her mystic, evil or dangerous, her being as 'the sex' itself, designates an inescapable 'Real' since she carries the fantasy object of the man, and he desires her. The human desire can be described in terms when the human individual sets out with a particular organism, with certain biological needs, which are satisfied by certain objects, the satisfaction comes at the meeting of the need and desired object. However, according to Lacan, 'desire is a perpetual effect of symbolic actualization. It is not an appetite. It is essentially excentric and insatiable. Therefore, it is not with the object that would seem to satisfy it, but with the object that causes it' (see the translators note on Lacan, 2003). It is Rose's body (object) that causes the desire in man and mediates to create unconscious attachment in him through the *Oedipus* complex. It is this unconscious attachment that the male *Self* cannot overtake her being as the *Other* and that is how she has survived, in a way as a Master, despite her secondary, inessential and subordinate role as 'the sex'. Hence, she appears as the supreme reality from the dark chaos from whence the life wells up' (Beauvoir, 1997).

In the movie, *Rose's* existence is considered as dangerous as the *Poetic the Second*. The priest consciously excluded woman from their discourse as an inevitable evil as she is considered a naturally impure element until she gets purified and glorified by the man. The priests are prohibited any body contact with such impure objects. However, the body contact was only the privilege of Adso who unconsciously succumbed to her persuasive, dominant seduction. Adso's submission to her bodily relationship and his conscious admittance that he desires her, indicate to us that the female fantasy and the submission to that fantasy is an inevitable and unsurpassable element in the human subject. There is also not a threatening rejection to Adso's worldly desire from his teacher William who is rationally aware of the inescapability of the female subject and is also aware that the pupil will follow his pathway at the decisive moment of leaving everything behind to go back which he actually does in the end.

On the other hand, a priest such as Salvatore too unconsciously becomes the subjects of *Rose*, whom she uses to gain petty benefits from the affluent Abby, for her and her parents. They identify themselves as dissidents who ideologically believe in anti-Christ (or poverty of Christ) and make

themselves against the hegemonic, inhuman orthodoxy. Their heretic inheritance or ideology too cannot obviously surpass the female subject.

If the world is a totality of religious believes (emotion) and logical rationality (intelligence), it seems that these two phenomena cannot govern the 'Real' i.e. the fantasy of the woman, instead the Real becomes the governing body of everyone as presently apparent in the movie. It is also obvious that even though the Inquisition (represented by Gui) wants *Rose* to be burnt alive, she remains the only survival of the pyre where Salvatore, Remigio and herself are set. Since other two are not rescued, she symbolically represents the only undestroyable and immortal object of the movie. In the process Gui too dies but nobody could crush her. *Rose* remains alive and she will remain symbolically such forever. In a historic re-narration of a certain moment of the past, *Rose* (representing any woman) plays the role of the inevitable, despite whoever creates history, whoever values it or re-narrates it by trying to forget or neglect her.

When we look at the dialogue between Adso and William after former made an adventurous love to *Rose*; Adso confesses to his master about what he did. After two proverbial statements William describes the issues that a monk may have by being in love. Then Adso contradicts William in a very soft note, in his statement which starts with a 'but'. This 'but' symbolizes the inner struggle of Adso's inability to come to term with the law of the big Other i.e. the symbolic law which prohibits monks in the Abby to have sexual contact with females. The violation of the prohibition brings *jouissance*<sup>5</sup> to the subject. On the other hand, his revelation shows us that he needs the approval of the master to identify himself and to establish a kind of a justification of what he did. Let's go back the conversation between Adso and William;

**Adso:** "But what do you think master?" (Annauld, 1986)

The inevitability of the inescapableness of the subject is shown by the soft contradiction in Adso's remark which he makes against the civil cultural logic of William. The prohibition of the church which creates the subject's frustration by denying desire (Lacan, 2003) and negating the real (by the words of William), limits the enjoyment of the priests in the Abby. Williams interventions to transgress the earthly pleasure that Adso experienced from *Rose* rescued him from the unconscious attachment which could have deviated him from *symbolic order*<sup>7</sup> of the priesthood. William's view about woman goes with that of Beauvoir as mentioned in the beginning of the section 4 of this article.

**William:** "Woman takes possession of a man's precious soul"

"More bitter than death is woman"

“How peaceful life would be without love Adso, safe how tranquil, and how dull” (Ibid).

The prohibition of the church, on the other hand, which demands Adso to deviate from woman by showing how dangerous and seductive she is, creates a larger symbolic structure in him which finally helps him to surpass the female subject over his wider understanding about the civilizational rules which eventually combat with the static unconsciousness.

The final shots of the movie can be roughly condensed to what we see in Figure 4, The symbolic law of the Church i.e. the prohibition rules created by the Orthodox Church becomes an effective influence to guide Adso to the domain of the *symbolic law* ‘in determining the order of the subject’ (Lacan, 2003); which is actually the patriarchal construction of the world as it appears today. Again in the final episode, we find that *Rose* stands helplessly in the path where they leave the Abby, and she urges with her eyes from Adso not to leave her. William turns back once to look at both Adso and Rose who stand closely looking at each other, with the pre-assumption and assurance that Adso will follow him without getting distracted in her eyes. To confirm the success of the symbolic role that William has administered through his education, use of symbolic language, long admonished teaching of theology and his personality itself as the master, Adso decides not to get caught in her eyes. This can be the effect of the establishment of the identification of the *symbolic order* in Adso and succumbing to it. Rose bears the fantasy object of Adso’s unconscious desire which a subject cannot overtake by himself but Adso’s *symbolic order* successfully leads him not only to overtake her carnal pleasure (or body) but also to give birth to a dream that determines and ensures a futuristic better world in which *Rose* flourishes thousands of roses with laughter. This re-textualization of the film-maker is seen as the re-narration of another history within the periphery of the movie.

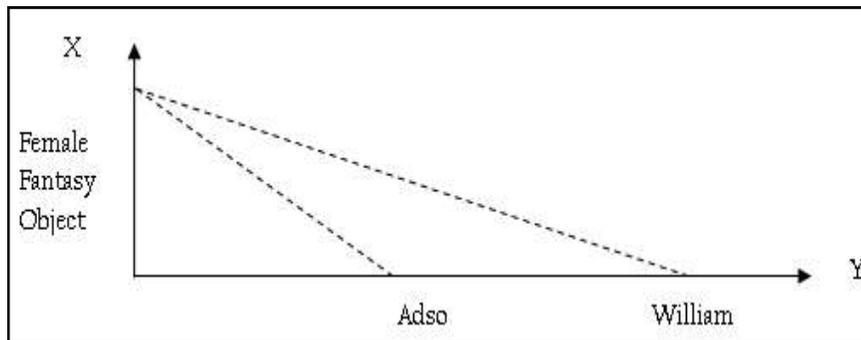


Figure 4: Filmic Re- textualization of the Female Object

## The Conclusion

Since the *documentary monument*, objects and characters are kept as empty signifiers, the insertion of meanings to those vacant spaces can successfully be done bringing new interpretations to history through the film. Hence, the character *Rose*, the *Poetic the Second* and the Abbey itself are seen as empty signifiers. The given in depth meanings to those empty signifiers are the re-narrations of history. These vacant spaces are used as mythically constructible vacuums by those who enjoyed power at a given moment.

The meanings that have been inserted to those empty signifiers depend on the power relationship of the individuals who could justify their interpretations through discourses which has been interpellated over different layers and stratum. Therefore, history is neither natural nor innocent.

The female initially stands as the unsurpassable object but, in the cause of the movie, we find that she is overtaken by the patriarchal symbolic order established by the theological knowledge and by the characters such as William and Casale.

As a highly academic text, the movie has the capacity to generate variety of meanings to be discovered in the discursive dimensions of the human civilization in retrospection, given the reader is equipped with relevant theoretical awareness to dig out the ambiguities of the unknown.

## End notes

<sup>1</sup> The word 'text' signifies as something in production, something produced as much by the reader as by the language of the text itself (Barthes, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> Empty signifier is a complete disconnection between signifier and the signified. It is a floating, vague, highly variable, unspecifiable and non-existent event (Barthes, 1981). Such signifiers can mean different things to different people. The word was first specifically used by Roland Barthes in his essay *Myth Today* (1957) in Culler (1995).

<sup>3</sup> The term Real, according to Lacan, means 'the impossible'... 'and this term is used as an adjective, to describe that which is lacking in the symbolic order, the ineliminable residue of all articulation, the foreclosed element, which may be approached, but never grasped: the umbilical cord of the symbolic' (Lacan, 2003). Slavoj Žižek distinguishes 'Real' from reality as the latter, 'serves as the external boundary which enables us to totalize language, to make out of it a close coherent system, whereas' the former, 'is its inherent limit, the unfathomable fold which prevents it from achieving its identity with self' (Žižek, 2002). He further explains this as, 'the Real

emerges as that which is outside language..impossible to imagine or inetrgrate into the symbolic order. The resistant to symbolization leads the Real its traumatic quality’.

<sup>4</sup>*Jouissance* has no simple English equivalent. This can simply be translated to mean ‘enjoyment’, ‘possession’, ‘pleasure’, ‘right’ or ‘appropriation’ (Lacan and Wilden, 1991) but, in this paper, this word would approximately mean ‘enjoyment beyond the pleasure principle.

(*Jouir*- slang for ‘to come’.) ‘Beyond the pleasure principle’, whereby, through discharge, the psyche seeks the lowest possible level of tension. *Jouissance* transgresses this law and, in that respect, it is beyond the pleasure principle (Lacan, 2003)

<sup>5</sup>According to Lacan, ‘the Symbolic is the primary order, since it represents and structures both of the orders; moreover, since it is ultimately only in the language (or in judgment) that synonyms, ambiguities and interpretations operate’ (Lacan and Wilden, 1991). The symbolic dimension of language is that of the signifier, in which elements have no positive existence but are constituted by virtue of their mutual differences. It is the realm of radical alterity: the Other. The unconscious is the discourse of the Other and thus belongs to the symbolic order. Its is also the realm of the Law that regulates desire in the Oedipus complex. For more details, log on to [www.lacan.com](http://www.lacan.com).

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