



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ di BOLOGNA
Palazzo Marescotti Brazzetti
29 maggio 2026 - ore 16

el MUNDO al REVÉS
de Rodrigo Alemán
entre los tesoros de la Catedral de Toledo
di
Elviro Langella

Conference

Inheriting Eco. Umberto Eco, the University of Bologna
and all the Knowledge in the World.

(Bologna, May, 27-29, 2026)

Presentation :

Il mondo sottosopra di Rodrigo Alemán,
tra i tesori della Cattedrale di Toledo.

*Guglielmo da Baskerville sulle tracce delle immagini blasfeme
di Rodrigo Alemán condannato dal Tribunale del Sant'Uffizio.*

Speaker : Elviro Langella



PAGINA WEB
DEDICATA AL PROGETTO



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ABSTRACT:

The project documented on the web site www.elvirolangella.com involved the creation of two exhibitions accompanied by the publication of the homonymous book in both Italian and Spanish languages:

1. One of historical-artistic nature, sponsored by the "CERVANTES" Institute in Naples, exhibited at "Fondazione FOQUS Quartieri spagnoli", now in Spain at the Toledo City Hall, donated to the Mayor Carlos Velázquez Romo, with whom we share a cultural exchange project focused on the cultural heritage of our countries, on the 800th anniversary of the founding of Cathedral of Toledo (1226 - 2026).
2. The other consists of a graphic novel structured in 200 plates, inspired by Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose*, though differently set within the Cathedral of Toledo. The exhibition relies on the creative contribution of the young Neapolitan students involved in a new reimagining of the literary masterpiece through the eyes of a younger generation. Through its various forms, including multimedia formats with immediate visual impact, the language of comics can effectively contribute to school education, as it aligns to the aesthetic models of new generations.

Our project specifically chose middle school as the primary audience, and, in turn, as promoter of further outreach for the messages contained within Eco's novel.

The creative workshop experience made with the Neapolitan school aims to the creation of a graphic novel inspired by "The Name of the Rose" and set within the Cathedral of Toledo, which celebrates, this year, the eighth centenary of its foundation; a definitely important celebration within our cultural exchanges program with Spain, which involves in September the further stage in Toledo sponsored by Italian embassy in Madrid, which will follow our graphic novel exhibition in Galleria Portacarrese in Quartieri Spagnoli in Naples, sponsored by "Istituto CERVANTES", kindly hosted by "FOQUS Fondazione Quartieri Spagnoli".



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The creative workshop: "Omaggio a Umberto Eco" by I.C. "Miraglia-Sogliano" of Naples

The transposition of Umberto Eco's novel in a language ideal for new generations doesn't trivialize at all the contents of a work, even if it's undoubtedly challenging; instead, a thoughtful revisitation engages students through the whole process of their subject creation, under the guidance of teachers called to stimulate reflection and cultural enrichment, aimed to expand historical knowledge and to develop critical awareness about the many ethic-cultural outcomes of the world evoked by the novel, which have fatally become topical again. This experience, which turns out of undoubtedly educational impact, at the same time, poses to teachers a demanding challenge, in the same reinterpretation of contents of *"The Name of the Rose"* according to the particularly sensitive teenage group.

In our personal revisitation, the "coming of age story" theme (Bildungsroman) of the real protagonist Adso of Melk, which undoubtedly served as the strongest narrative thread, fully suited to the graphic novel's plot, representing a pedagogical model in tune with the educational offer of the "emotional education" program put into practice by the school I.C. "Miraglia-Sogliano".

The proposal to bring together middle school students and Umberto Eco's work, albeit challenging, stems from the conviction that the young Adso "coming of age story" serves as the strongest narrative thread with undeniable pedagogic value. The apparently secondary theme of the encounter with the Occitan girl, scrolling in the background, offers insights to value the sentimental sphere's importance within the protagonist's inner growth.

As reflected in Eco's initial intentions, the original title of the novel *Adso of Melk*, which was later changes to *The Name of the Rose*, suggests that the *leitmotiv* isn't just limited to the investigative plot, instead it gives due prominence to the retrospective narration of the loss of innocence and of the transition to the novice's mature awareness.

It seemed appropriate to prioritize an approach to the sentimental theme, definitely decisive in the protagonist's formative journey, although marked with lacerating inner conflicts which trouble Adso with self punishing haunting, due to the giving in to the deceptive grace of the girl "fomite del peccato" (source of sin), which conflicts with his intellect, in defiance to the recalls to the Benedictine *rectitudo* (moral uprightness).

Within our graphic novel, this journey runs parallel to equally inextricable paths. As in Eco's novel, William, true mentor of the young novice, is called to educate him, at the same time, to a critical approach to knowledge, to logical deduction free from indoctrination based on the fear of divine punishment, on millenarian fears, on prejudices, on demonization of diversity and other forms of intolerance justified by pretentious religious fanaticism.

Among the tasks pursued by the erudite master, refining artistic sensibility plays an important role. Thus William enlightens the novice on the enriching messages of Rodrigo Alemán's artworks, which remained inaccessible to Adso and, even today, even to most visitors of the extraordinary Cathedral of Toledo.

These very artworks serve as the preferred lead of investigation undertaken by the expert William, as he attempts to discover the alleged clues of heresy and blasphemy attributed to the artist by the Court of Holy Office, which would not be long inflicting an implacable sentence.

Certainly, an educational action addressed to the emotional sphere cannot be separated from a parallel attention to cultivate an appreciation toward Beauty.

This awareness can be encouraged by the promotion of creative and educational activities aimed also toward the knowledge of the priceless cultural heritage, which moreover comes from the rich history of our territory. Although challenging, identifying suitable locations for the setting of our graphic novel nevertheless provides an unmissable opportunity because it allows young people to reclaim the valuable artistic-environmental heritage, luckily easily accessible in their own territory. A territory beyond generous with inexhaustible treasures, even though our Neapolitan School "I.C. Miraglia-Sogliano" is located within a historical area characterized by the endemic dichotomy common to other "frontier quarters", paradoxically situated in the heart of the city, just few steps away from shopping streets or from main monuments, which represent an invisible boundary the touristic Naples and the more authentic and difficult one.

However, choosing settings that stimulate the sensitivity of young people, who are called to interpret the protagonists in the "immersive" experience proposed by our project, can allow an important approach to the extraordinary heritage, going beyond theoretical study in the classroom. Knowledge acquires an inestimable added value in the direct fruition of historical-environmental sites unique to our territory, which can be implemented encouraging performances which can creatively engage young people.

It's the case, for instance, of the historic library "Biblioteca dei Girolamini" of Naples, which closes the last sequences evoked by the nostalgic dream of Adso, now overburdened by the incipient old age. Our graphic novel's totally new ending intends, in fact, fulfill not only the extreme and illusory desire of the dreamer to reunite with the beloved nameless girl, it also hopes for the ideal reconciliation with all the characters encountered through his tormented "coming of age story".

The background is the location with a particular meaning in the memory of the city of Naples, marked by a no less criminal event of the abbey library destruction by Jorge of Burgos, even though he's its most jealous keeper; The saddest fate befell in 2012 our historical library "Biblioteca dei Girolamini" allows to find a fitting metaphor, because it represents one of the most brutal raids perpetrated right by the managers directly in charge of the management of valuable cultural heritage of of Southern Italy and of Italy, lost forever.

With the reopening to the public, some weeks ago, we can consider fulfilled the long awaited rebirth of this invaluable treasure returned to the community, collected in the complex of Girolamini, a shrine of endless masterpieces of the seventeenth century. The dream of a prodigious rebirth of the "wisdom workshop" from the destructive fire, which would surely have been dear to William of Baskerville, can legitimately conjugate with Adso daydreaming about reliving his first love remained unique and immutable throughout his life, resurrecting like the phoenix from the stakes fire started by the merciless fanaticism of Inquisition.

Themes of the graphic novel

The graphic novel, created within the creative workshop with the students of school "Istituto Comprensivo Miraglia-Sogliano", offers, like a "detective game", to the public, surely worthy of William of Baskerville's nose and sagacity, a plot riddled with clues which help solving the enigma of the most intriguing artwork left in heart of the cathedral by the artist Rodrigo Alemán: the choir carvings, which were made object of inquisitors merciless slating which earned him the resulting condemnation by the Holy Office.

A condemnation that seems even more incomprehensible today because in contrast with the spirit of the times that, after all, hasn't prevented the uninhibited, often provocative, satire of those drolleries, to spread widely both in marginalia of the precious illuminated manuscripts and in the sculptures of religious architecture.

Choosing a popular medium such as the comic, which we present both in printed and audiovisual formats, can foster, in my opinion, an effective educational approach to the guided tour to the secrets of the "upside down world" of Rodrigo Alemán kept in the cathedral. Not only for the visual language, surely suitable to interact with the new generations, but mostly because experiences a nimble and accessible method to illustrate, through the imagery immediacy, the Flemish master's expressive codes richness, alas still difficult to decipher for the general public, like the rich contemporary iconographic repertoire dear to Hieronymus Bosch or to Pieter Bruegel.

The goal is to conciliate the fictional story with the detective game, entrusting the inextricable mystery to the deductive skills of a character known to the general public as emblematic reference in detective fiction.

Who better than the infallible William of Baskerville could be able to lead the game in the role of true detective, in the modern meaning, and uncover wherever the germs of heresy lurk, of blasphemy skillfully disguised behind the tasty satirical cartoons bluntness of Rodrigo Alemán? The witty William, well accustomed to unravelling the darkest intrigues consciously hidden within the inexpugnable stronghold of knowledge of a venerated ancient Benedictine monastery, standing up even to fearsome inquisitors such as Bernardo Gui.

The creative workshop with the young authors of the graphic novel

We wanted to document the methods of the creative project of the graphic novel developed by the young authors from the school "I.C. Miraglia-Sogliano" with a book and a video published on the dedicated web site www.elvirolangella.com

The implementation of such an educational program basically consists of two essential phases:

1. The understanding of the novel's themes differently contextualized in the different adaptations: in theatrical adaptation at Teatro alla Scala (by Francesco Filidei), in movie adaptation (by Jean-Jacques Annaud), in comic adaptation (by Milo Manara) and in television series.

The educational workshop purposes aren't limited to passive assimilation of the artwork undeniable cultural significance by the students; instead, it encourages them to reprocess creatively, using codes more familiar to them, in line with contemporary media, but above all, to update the contents of the novel to the horizon of problems of our times, where they feel their own sensibility involved and where they manage to reflect themselves.

2. The creative workshop besides offering basic technical knowledge about the narrative dynamic of comics and outline an adequate overview of the complex medieval world evoked by the novel, involves a factual preliminary design: the set up of performances as well as the choice of locations, although the computer graphics editing of sequences allows to set virtually most of our photorealistic novel inside the Toledo Cathedral. To this end, an extensive high resolution photographs gallery has been produced, especially of the details of the stalls of Rodrigo Alemán's choir, which becomes indispensable since it constitutes the true object of the investigative research narrated in our graphic novel.

Special attention goes to the transposition of the printed comic into multimedia format, which necessarily requires collaborations, especially for the use of video editing software.

In this regard, we must mention the collaboration with the school "I.C. Ugo Foscolo" of Taormina for the production of musical score.

L'iniziativa è inserita nel progetto per la condivisione culturale del patrimonio artistico:
"2022~2025 : Napoli - Toledo - Firenze - Cartagena - Procida - Taormina - Giardini Naxos"

Progetto di scambi culturali tra Napoli e le città spagnole di Toledo e Cartagena, patrocinato dall'Istituto "CERVANTES" di Napoli e la Fondazione "FUNCARELE" di Cartagena, per l'insegnamento della lingua e della Cultura spagnole, d'intesa con i sindaci Carlos Velázquez Romo e Noelia Arroyo, rispettivamente di Toledo e di Cartagena.

Precedenti tappe del Progetto

Il ciclo di presentazioni partito dalla città spagnola di Cartagena è articolato nelle seguenti tappe:

Cartagena (2023)	presso la Fondazione per l'insegnamento della Lingua e della Cultura spagnole - accreditato dall'Istituto "CERVANTES";
Firenze (2024)	presso la Biblioteca delle OBLATE, patrocinata dall'Assessorato alla Cultura e presentata dal Dott. Roberto Ferrari, Direttore del Museo GALILEO di Firenze;
Napoli (2026)	Presso il Palazzo della Cultura (Palazzo Cavalcanti) - patrocinato dall'Istituto "CERVANTES" su approvazione del Sindaco Gaetano Manfredi;
Napoli (2024)	presso la Reale Pontificia Basilica di San Giacomo degli Spagnoli in collaborazione con gli allievi dell'Accademia delle BELLE ARTI;
Napoli (2023 e 2024)	presso la Fondazione FOQUS Quartieri Spagnoli, patrocinate entrambe dall'Istituto "Cervantes" in collaborazione con l'Accademia delle BELLE ARTI, l'Ass. "Annalisa Durante"; il Laboratorio "La Scarabattola" dei Fratelli Scuotto;
Procida	"Capitale della Cultura 2022" presso la chiesa di San Tommaso d'Aquino;
Taormina (2022)	presso il Palazzo dei Duchi di Santo Stefano presentata dal Sindaco Mario Bolognari e dall'assessore alla Cultura Francesca Gullotta.
Giardini Naxos (2022)	presso Biblioteca "Lorino Mangano" patrocinata dall'Assessorato alla Cultura.

Pedagogical objectives of the creative workshop "Omaggio a Umberto Eco" by school "I.C. Miraglia-Sogliano" of Naples

1. Encourage young people to active and creative sharing through cultural exchanges, essential objective of the spirit of the project, which benefits from sponsorship of "Istituto CERVANTES" of Naples and the collaboration of the foundation "FUNCARELE" (Fundación de Cartagena para la Enseñanza de la Lengua y Cultura Española), accredited by "Istituto CERVANTES".
2. Familiarization with historical, artistic and environmental heritage, in reference to the repertory, greatly elusive to the large audience understanding, constituted, for instance, by the works of undoubted artistic value of Rodrigo Alemán, among the most valuable of the Cathedral of Toledo.
Exquisite "misericords" carved in the massive choir stalls, as well as "marginalia", common in manuscripts and in medieval architecture sculptures, are unjustly confined by the cultural mainstream within so called "minor arts", where, instead, it would be advisable a critical deepening of the rich artistic production of "miniaturists" of the time, which, right because of the irreverent bold satirical verve and of the uninhibited allusions, carry the seeds of that "heretic" drift strongly opposed by Jorge of Burgos within Umberto Eco's novel.
3. Our exchange project started in 2022 with Cartagena, in conjunction with the mayor Noelia Arroyo and the president of "Istituto CERVANTES" Miguel Martinez, privileged an approach oriented to that artistic production area which counts undeniable masterpieces in the wake of common sculptural tradition shared by our countries; This in the intent to bring a contribution to the knowledge, not only of Rodrigo Alemán's works original meaning, but to wooden works in general, which, despite not benefiting of the same durability as marble, can by right claim equal dignity; an example of this is the "*Virgen de la Caridad*", landed from Naples to Cartagena in 1723, quintessential patron saint and both artistic and religious devotional icon of the Spanish city, work by Giacomo Colombo, virtuous master during the flourishing times of our sacred art workshops in Naples, widespread throughout Europe. The tercentenary of that arrival from Naples to the Spanish coasts provided the unmissable opportunity of the previous stage of the project in Cartagena, promoting, in particular, the cultural exchange with Procida island "Italian capital of Culture 2022".

Diffusion of the travelling exhibition

The school "Istituto Comprensivo Miraglia-Sogliano", in Naples, operates in a difficult territorial context, which puts demanding challenges when dealing with a social and linguistic inclusion program.

The school is committed to educational projects aimed to support students, including integration processes for minors in vulnerable situations.

"Frontier quarters" in the heart of Naples are historical zones which have always been characterized by a strong dichotomy: places where popular identity, ancient history and art coexist with socio-economic degradation, crime incursions, precarious living conditions of the community tested in its obstinate resilience.

Nevertheless, like Quartieri Spagnoli, Rione Sanità, Forcella, right from the human capital, despite being confined in these high risk problematic realities, the most effective antibodies reactive to the social fabric degradation are activated daily, through a liveliness of cultural events absolutely unimaginable until yesterday.

The experience of the graphic novel developed by students of the school "Istituto I.C. Miraglia-Sogliano" subject of the exhibition donated to the Casa Consistorial, the location, of Toledo City Hall, opens to all of the schools of the territory through 3 exhibitions:

1. In Naples at the Galleria Portacarrese of the Fondazione FOQUS Quartieri Spagnoli, sponsored by "Istituto CERVANTES" directed by Prof. Ana Navarro;
2. In Naples at the "Biblioteca a porte aperte Annalisa Durante" in Rione Forcella;
3. In Sicily, in Taormina at the "Istituto Ugo Foscolo".



Web page dedicated
to the project

I. C. 29 MIRAGLIA - SOGLIANO
Napoli 26 maggio 2026



cultura
napoli

Seconda Parte

il MUNDO al REVÉS
de Rodrigo Alemán
a 10 anni dalla scomparsa
di Umberto Eco
gli allievi ricordano «Il nome della rosa»
con un loro fumetto ambientato nella Cattedrale
di Toledo per l'VIII centenario della fondazione.

