

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
Chair : Prof.ssa Elena Irrera - University of Bologna

PAGINA WEB
DEDICATA AL PROGETTO

I would like to thank Dr. Lucia Gunella, of the Organising Committee for the international conference "Inheriting Eco. Umberto Eco, the University of Bologna and all the knowledge in the world", as well as Prof. Elena Irrera of the Scientific Committee, for the warm reception they have given to this personal reimagining of Umberto Eco's novel "The Name of the Rose", which is, unconventionally, set in the Cathedral of Toledo, in honour of the 800th anniversary of its founding (1226-2026).

As Prof. Roberto Vecchi, of the "Umberto Eco" International Centre for Humanities and coordinator of the extraordinary moving gathering held to honour the memory of the great scholar, pointed out, "the very critical perspective that Eco himself developed regarding the concept of an 'intellectual legacy' makes it especially fitting to collect the proposals discussed during the conference, so we can give full textual substance to the legacy he envisioned in collaboration with the city of Bologna."

In collaboration with the school managers and teachers of the schools Istituto Comprensivo "Miraglia-Sogliano" in Naples and Istituto Comprensivo "Ugo Foscolo" in Taormina, our proposal aims to engage the school community. By promoting creative workshops and organising a travelling exhibition, presented in the style of a graphic novel, set amidst the treasures of the Spanish Cathedral, we seek to introduce Eco's novel even to middle school students, while simultaneously fostering among them an appreciation for the rich cultural heritage shared between our two countries.

"A moment of reunion between our sister cities, between two peoples who, today more than ever, believe in culture as a tool for understanding and coexistence " writes Mayor Carlos Velázquez in the wonderful letter he dedicated to us for this occasion.

As we look toward bringing this initiative to both Toledo and Naples, I would like to express my gratitude for their steadfast support to: Dr. Giuseppe Buccino Grimaldi, of Italian Embassy in Madrid, to Dr. Antonietta Cornacchia of Culture and "Focal Point Andorra" Office of Italian Embassy, to Prof. Gaetano Manfredi, Mayor of Naples, to Prof. Ana Navarro, Director of "Cervantes" Institute in Naples, to Dr. Rachele Furfaro and Dr. Renato Quaglia, President and Director, respectively, of FOQUS Foundation (Fondazione Quartieri Spagnoli) in Naples, to Prof. Patrizia Rateni, director of school Istituto Comprensivo "Miraglia-Sogliano" in Naples and to Prof. Carla Santoro of school Istituto Comprensivo "Ugo Foscolo" in Taormina.

In Sicily, an exhibition dedicated to comics, organised in collaboration with Assessorato alla Cultura of Taormina and hosted within the 14th century Palazzo Corvaja, aims not only to engage fans of the graphic novel genre, but, more importantly, to invite local schools to explore a unique model of "sentimental education." This model serves as the inspiration for our reinterpretation of "The Name of the Rose" and encourages the active, creative participation of students.

In addition to offering food for thought on the ethical values within the *Bildungsroman* (coming of age journey story) of young Adso of Melk, one of the novel's undeniable central themes, the extensive collection of images accompanying the book provides young people with valuable insights, helping them engage with the historical and artistic atmosphere evoked by Eco's work. To this end, the initiative proposes a deeper, more immersive experience for schools, offering creative workshops, theatrical performances, and interactive sessions, all organised in coordination with the accompanying teachers.

With the conviction that the active involvement of young people, through dramatic performances and the creation of sculptures or paintings inspired by the imagery of the Middle Ages, much like the recent staging of "The Name of the Rose" at Teatro alla Scala in Milan, directed by Francesco Filidei, serves to foster the sharing of expressive experiences and allows for the release of individual creative verve; It also extends beyond the confines of the local school environment and it opens up stimulating opportunities for engagement with a broader audience, as envisioned by this exchange project with Spain.

In this regard, it should be noted that the students from school Istituto Comprensivo "Miraglia-Sogliano" in Naples recited the texts from our narrative adaptation in Spanish as well, allowing for more direct communication with the audience in Toledo, the intended recipients of our parallel tribute to their extraordinary Cathedral, presented on the occasion of the significant events held this year to mark the anniversary of its founding.

The project

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 with a program of unmissable events spread throughout the current year. Definitely an 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 Taormima and in Galleria Portacarrese in Quartieri Spagnoli in Naples, sponsored by "Cervantes", kindly hosted by "FOQUS Fondazione Quartieri Spagnoli".
The project's objective is to offer students from the other participating schools an exhibition accompanied by a presentation of three books, which respectively summarize the story framed as an "investigative game", the Cathedral's masterpieces which serve as a background to the plot, as well as a guide to the exhibition.
The sequences from the graphic novel illustrated in the panels on display are accompanied by explanatory captions, short texts and QR codes that provide access to multimedia content gathered on the website dedicated to the "Omaggio a Umberto Eco."

The creative workshop: "Omaggio a Umberto Eco" by Istituto Comprensivo "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 having 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 *Bildungsroman* theme 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 curriculum of the "emotional education" program put into practice by the school Istituto Comprensivo "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 *Bildungsroman* 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 changed 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).

(immagine 01 – Encounter with the nameless girl)

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 "Istituto Comprensivo 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, fulfil 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 *Bildungsroman*.

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 earnt 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 *world upside down* 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 skilfully 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, with a book and a video published on the dedicated web site www.elvirolangella.com, the methods of the creative project of the graphic novel developed by the young authors from the school "Istituto Comprensivo Miraglia-Sogliano", with the approval of the Mayor of Naples, at the Palace of Culture (Palazzo Cavalcanti), under the patronage of the "Cervantes" Institute.

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 "Istituto Comprensivo Ugo Foscolo" of Taormina for the production of musical scores.

Pedagogical objectives of the creative workshop "Omaggio a Umberto Eco" by school "Istituto Comprensivo 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 "Cervantes" of Naples and the collaboration of the foundation "FUNCARELE" (Fundación de Cartagena para la Enseñanza de la Lengua y Cultura Española), accredited by "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 carved stalls in the massive choir, 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 "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 Istituto Comprensivo 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 "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, in agreement with the "Assessorato alla Cultura" and the Institute "Ugo Foscolo".

Themes of the graphic novel: the dream journey
(immagine 02 – The dreams of Adso of Melk: Dies Irae and the reborn Library)

Even Adso's dreams, in their essential role as a means for the unconscious to process the traumatic experiences he endured during his novitiate, occasionally give rise to episodes that have no counterpart in Eco's novel.

One such example appears in the passages describing an improbable encounter with Adelmo of Otranto, the abbey's refined illuminator, who was already renowned despite his youth.

To reach this gifted fellow monk, we must follow the hyperbolic path of a visionary journey rode by Adso's runaway imagination. In truth, Adso might have, at most, admired Adelmo's illuminations, while the artist himself had already met a tragic and suspicious end by the time Adso joined the Benedictine community.

Setting off in search of Adelmo, we find ourselves astride the spirited Zephyrus, who soon proves to be entirely unreliable. Through some ominous, inexplicable phenomenon, the sort one might encounter only in dreams or ancient myths, the creature suddenly rears up and transforms into an untameable fury. With a single bound, it rockets off like a shooting star toward the Moon and beyond, reaching the realm of the fixed stars, before bringing this wild, adventurous flight to an end with a deferential bow at the feet of Urania herself, the Muse of Astrology.

In reality, the learnt description of the constellations he glimpsed, which Adso would later recount upon his return with an unexpectedly high level of expertise, was influenced by the lessons his master had given during those days, on the precious "Tapiz de los Astrolabios" (the Tapestry of the Astrolabes) kept in the Cathedral, which was inspired by the "labyrinthine universe" of Claudius Ptolemy.

Themes of the graphic novel: The Cathedral of Otranto – The Tree of Life

Though perhaps entirely implausible, an encounter within the Cathedral of Otranto, Adelmo's hometown, opens up an evocative gallery of images, which must surely have long nourished the illuminator's exuberant imagination, shaping his creative inclination toward those drolleries found in the margins of manuscripts, the very sort that Jorge of Burgos found so unpalatable, deeming them lewd and irreverent.

There, in the Apulian Cathedral, the learned monk and priest Pantaleone, drawing upon edifying sources such as the "Physiologus" and its fabulous bestiary, poured his talent into the magnificent mosaic that can still be admired today across the cathedral's monumental floor.

Much like in the Cathedral of Toledo, even in the Cathedral of Otranto the protagonist finds himself navigating again through an unexpected labyrinth, though of a different kind, historiated, with mosaic across the great nave, where the artist invites us to lose ourselves in devout meditation, following the salvific path of a branching Tree of Life, in this divine design stretching back to the very dawn of Creation—the tree from the Garden of Eden is linked to the wood of the Cross upon which Christ was sacrificed, serving as a promise of redemption from the sin of our first parents and the regeneration of humanity.

Themes: The Labyrinth

The very place most cherished by the master, the library, proves to be the true home of the "house of Daedalus", where, under the protective wing of his mentor, Adso becomes acquainted with Asterion (who is sorrowfully confined within the labyrinth). He must learn to develop the conceptual skills required to tap into the treasures brought to light in the "joyful workshop of wisdom" that is the scriptorium, to gain access to the paths of knowledge and attempt to navigate his way out of the labyrinth's snares, all while avoiding being devoured by the monster lurking in its depths; This monster represents error, falsehood, and the unknown, as well as the rigid fanaticism embodied, for instance, by Jorge of Burgos. It is a creature born from the projection of our own fears, a product of senses numbed by a persistent, submissive awe toward dogmatic authoritarianism.

Themes: The Cathedral of Toledo – *imago mundi*

The complex architectural space of the immense Cathedral, the setting for this graphic novel, can also induce the vertigo of a true initiatory journey, much like the one undertaken by Adso under the guidance of his Franciscan master. Brother William invites him to admire the historical and artistic vestiges crystallized within the space, encouraging him to explore it as if leafing through a weighty, illuminated volume, crafted by the finest miniaturists and brimming with invaluable lessons.

Beginning with the wisdom texts kept under careful guard, such as the extraordinary "Rich Bible of Toledo" (the Bible moralisée of Saint Louis), with its unparalleled iconographic richness, everything Adso beholds upon those pages coalesces into a comprehensive *imago mundi*, an all-encompassing representation of the entire sphere of human knowledge.
The universe contained within that book of wisdom, which transcends the modest horizons of his limited knowledge, includes, within its layered palimpsest, the complex *world upside down*, as alluded to by the choir stalls carved into the choir by our own Rodrigo Alemán.

(immagine 03 – The choir stalls by Rodrigo Alemán in Cathedral of Toledo)

It is not difficult to discern, in the sequence depicting a novice lost in wonder amidst a gallery of indecipherable images, that *world upside down* sculpted by the Flemish master, a clear allusion to the metaphor of the labyrinth. Nor is it entirely far fetched to see parallels here with the layout of the secret library in the abbey imagined by Umberto Eco in "The Name of the Rose", an iconic *topos* effectively revisited in Francesco Filidei's adaptation, which was recently staged at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan.

Themes: Towards the Light – "El Transparente" by Narciso Tomé

(immagine 04 – Towards the Light)

The journey towards the Light undertaken by Adso, which also unfolds within the Cathedral, culminates in a transfiguring vision, which anticipates the insight that would later strike the artist Narciso Tomé, creator of the brilliant masterpiece known as "El Transparente", located in the ambulatory ("la girola").
To the bewildered eyes of the novice, the dramatic effect of transcendent Light, piercing the heavens of the Toledo Cathedral, serves as a prelude to a salvific vision of the Virgin and Child, long invoked, restoring a renewed sense of hope to the protagonist's soul, a soul otherwise torn by agonising frustration and a desperate sense of helplessness in the face of the tragic fate of the Occitan girl, condemned to the stake by the Tribunal of the Holy Office.

Themes: "El Puente Nuevo" (The New Bridge): by Rodrigo Alemán

Since the universe of the entire narrative gravitates around the architecture of a symbolic Labyrinth, which ultimately mirrors the equally complex mental labyrinth of the protagonist, extending even into the revelations experienced in his dreams, it's no surprise that his journey unfolds across an expansive network of paths, junctions, bridges, and landing points, all essential for connecting the pivotal stages of his *Bildungsroman*.
From the very beginning, evoked by the image of crossing the bridges of Plasencia and Toledo, the elderly Adso shares his memories of hospitality into a community tasked with cultivating the Benedictine *rectitudo* to which his monastic habit would commit him, thereby testing the authenticity of his vocation.

Themes of the narrative: "Mirabilia graphica" – invisible calligrams

(immagine 05 – Mirabilia Graphica)

The snare of the labyrinth manages to insinuate itself even into the very codes of writing.
A message may remain deliberately concealed for centuries to come, kept in the utmost secrecy within calligrams, ciphers indecipherable even to the most learned cryptanalyst; at times, these are tucked away within the intricate folds of illuminated images, blended into the chiaroscuro with such virtuosity that they become entirely invisible to the naked eye.
Burdened by the encroaching weight of old age, which calls him to take final stock of his life, Adso, in one last, dreamlike digression, sees Adelmo once more, intent on painting a portrait of the Occitan maiden; the image is interwoven with minute, poetic calligrams, crafted by the virtuoso Aymaro of Alexandria. Though on the verge of vanishing forever, along with her unpronounceable name, the image of his beloved is reborn, more vivid even than in his memory, thanks to an intimate union of two arts: the synergy between the inner inspiration of the miniaturist and the genius of the gifted amanuensis.
What a striking insight takes shape in the secrecy of the scriptorium, born from the unique interplay of two arts, before the incredulous eyes of old Adso!

These precious experiments invite us to adopt a dual perspective, one attuned to the constant dialogue between the visible and the invisible; they are capable of orchestrate the most unexpected synaesthesiae, weaving together the subliminal music of the verses, which emerges like a watermark within the texture of the drawing, and the ineffable quality of the image itself.

Only with the invention of the microscope would the science of optics, frequently praised by the master, who was devoted to his *Doctor Mirabilis*, Roger Bacon, provide the artist with the tools to create such marvels, while simultaneously offering the expert the key to deciphering them.
In our narrative, it seemed impossible to find a more fitting metaphor, offered by such "Mirabilia graphica", to represent the sequence set within the secret library, traversed by Adso, who is fortunately accompanied by his inseparable master.
Evoking the myth of Asterion (the Minotaur), which he learns about through the opening lines regarding the "house of Daedalus" as described in the fabulous illustrated pages of the "Liber Floridus", the dreaded creature hidden within the labyrinth built by Minos takes tangible form before his eyes, just as it was depicted by the Flemish creator of that unique masterpiece: the oldest illustrated encyclopedia of the Middle Ages, written and illuminated by the Flemish Lambert, Canon of Saint-Omer, between 1090 and 1121.

Immagini allegate



immagine 01
Encounter with the nameless girl



immagine 02
The dreams of Adso of Melk: Dies Irae and the reborn Library

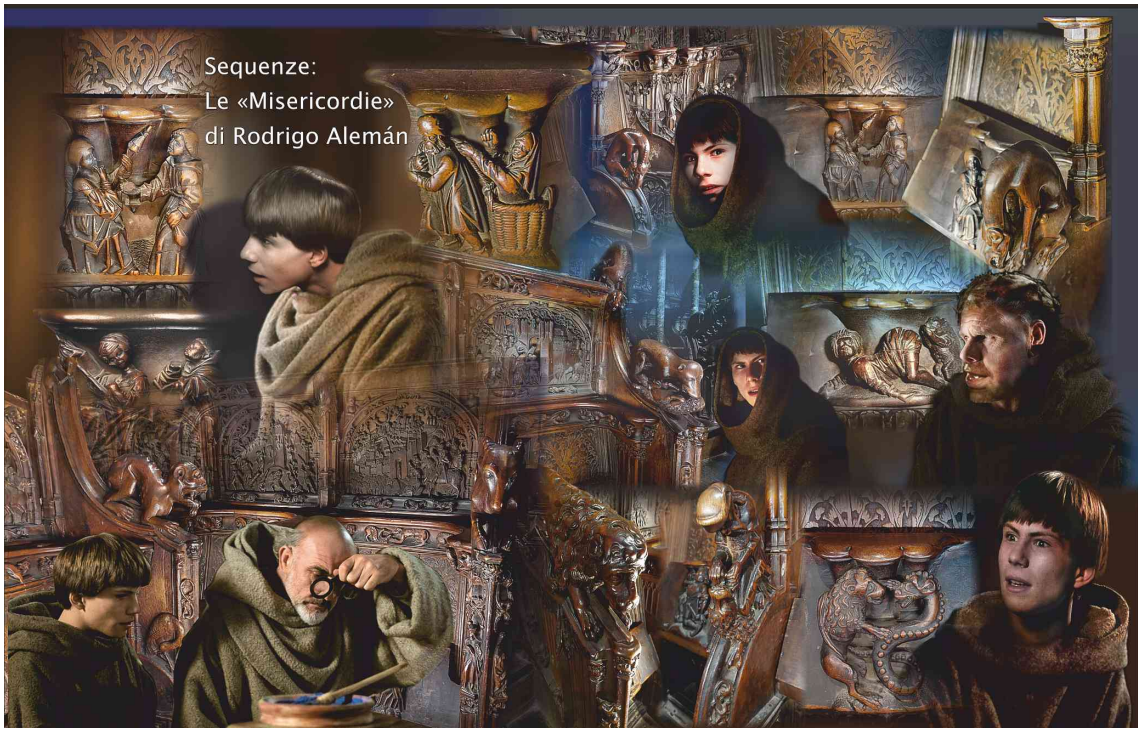


immagine 03
The choir stalls by Rodrigo Alemán in Cathedral of Toledo



immagine 04
Towards the Light



immagine 05
Mirabilia Graphica