PostScript to the Middle Ages: Teaching Medieval Studies Through Umberto Eco's the Name of the Rose

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More than a quarter century after its publication in English, Umberto Eco's "The Name of the Rose" remains a popular novel among medievalists and non-medievalists alike. Its riveting account of a series of murders at a wealthy Italian abbey during the papacy of John XXII, amidst the tensions of the Franciscan Spiritualist controversy, serves as an excellent point of entry to the cultural, philosophical, and theological milieu of fourteenth-century Europe. This collection of essays approaches the novel as a primary text in medieval studies courses and seeks to provide ways of integrating it into such courses effectively. Part One of the collection consists of essays addressing the pedagogical advantages and pitfalls of teaching "The Name of the Rose" in a variety of medieval courses, including literature, cultural studies, history, religious studies, art history, and manuscript studies. Serving as a bridge between the explicitly pedagogical essays that precede it and the critical essays that follow, Part Two of the volume explores the relationship between Eco's novel and Jean-Jacques Annaud's 1986 film version.

The volume concludes with a selection of scholarly essays dealing with major medieval historical figures, movements, and cultural phenomena as they pertain to the novel, including fourteenth-century apocalyptic traditions, reflections on medieval language and sign theories, and the search for Aristotle's lost second book of Poetics. While each essay in the collection stresses its own disciplinary contexts and concerns, together they enrich each other, providing a valuable addition to the relatively small canon of texts on medieval pedagogy.

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