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## POSTMODERN NARRATION IN UMBERTO ECO'S *THE NAME OF THE ROSE*

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Umberto Eco, Italy's most celebrated philosopher, semiotician, literary critic, linguist and novelist, is widely acclaimed for many of his influential scholarly works. His novels *The Name of the Rose*, *Foucault's Pendulum*, *Baudolino*, *An Island of the Day Before*, *Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana*, *The Prague Cemetery* have gained much adulation from his readers. His recent novel *Numero Zero* has also earned greater popularity. An exceptional narrative style imposed in these novels identifies them predominantly with postmodern literature. *The Name of the Rose* is a postmodern novel where Eco recites a fictitious tale of Adso of Melk who in turn narrates his past to the readers. Adso's story deals with William along with his novice Adso, solving the mystery of seven bizarre deaths that occurs in the Benedictine Monastery where they come on a mission to partake in a theological disputation.

The postmodern narration in the novel harnesses temporal distortion and unreliable narration. Temporal distortion refers to a technique that the postmodern authors implement in their novels to convey the story. It includes employing features like fragmentation and non-linear narration. Fragmentation is the disarray of events whereas non-linear narration is the usage of distorted timeline in the portrayal of events.

A novel, in general, usually incorporates a structure that assembles the compendium of information belonging to the story in an organized fashion. When this fabrication breaks, there is an interruption in the disposal of the events of the story, affecting the totality of meaning. Fragmentation, therefore, is a process in which an author attempts to disintegrate the events in a plot. It signifies breaking up rather building up of information. Adso, while recounting his past, gives several pieces of information about many topics. Some of the topics are about the religious and political scenarios represented by papal envoys, papal legates and Christianity. Adso also discloses his mixed experiences of past and present and his perspective of life learnt from his master. He scatters the description of these matters throughout the novel by interspersing it with the actual happenings in his life.

In the beginning of Adso's narration, especially in prologue, he first comments on the contradictions existing between past and present world even before his actual story begins in the chapter named 'first day'.

In the past men were handsome and great (now they are children and dwarfs), but this is merely one of the many facts that demonstrate the disaster of an aging world. The young no longer want to study anything, learning is decline . . . (15)

Secondly, Adso describes his master's physical appearance and detective skills after which he narrates the mystery happening in the abbey. The story which he recounts includes the conversation between him and his master- William, and with other characters. Instead of transpiring the logical continuity of the discourses between Adso and William; Adso and other

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characters; William and other characters, Adso adds certain information in the middle of each of the conversations many times. Adso and William meet Ubertino. Adso describes this meeting in detail. As soon as Adso gazes on the legendary figure of Ubertino, he presents, what is in his mind about Ubertino. Adso presents the political scenario during Ubertino's time between their conversations.

Celestine V was succeeded by Boniface VIII, and this Pope promptly demonstrate . . . the death of Boniface VIII, the Spirituals tried to obtain from certain of his successors . . . (57)

Adso provides the details of the destruction of Fraticelli during the succession of Boniface VIII even before having a conversation with Ubertino. Adso does this with his previous knowledge about Ubertino that he gains by the words of mouth of many elderly monks. Adso runs on all the information known to him about Ubertino in his mind before William's discourse with Ubertino and Adso's introduction with Ubertino begin.

Later, on the third day Adso gives information about Fra Dolcino to the readers through the discussion that happens between Adso and Ubertino. Adso recalls his encounter with a maiden after he describes the heretic Fra Dolcino. Adso adds more information regarding his experience with the maiden by describing his emotional senses rather than engaging in the mere telling of events.

And I asked myself, frightened and rapt, who was she who rose before me like the dawn, beautiful as the moon, radiant as the sun, *terribilis ut castorum acies ordinata* (262)

Adso then intervenes into the present, feeling guilty of the sin he has committed. He compares his carnal concupiscence with Michael's desire for death. Adso reveals his self-realization by expressing how he feels of the erroneous deeds he has once committed. Adso recalls the teachings of Saint Thomas and confesses his misdeed to William. On the fifth day, a fraternal debate regarding the poverty of Jesus occurs. Before the debate begins Adso describes the sculptures and carvings on the doorway of the Abbey's Chapter house. On the sixth day, Adso reveals his dream occurrences to William. William along with Adso engage in the process of finding out the whodunit when the mysterious deaths occur between first, third, fifth, sixth and the last days. Finally, Adso ends his story by telling that he has formed a lesser library by collecting the detrimental remnant books of the abbey that has been ruined in ecopyrosis. Adso inserts fragments of episodes like his descriptions, experiences, general add on informations about historical characters, theological disputes, messages from learned scholars and books in between the overriding part of his narration. The overriding part includes the actual events involving unravelling the mystery of deaths. The findings of the montage in the novel are evident of the fragmentation technique employed by *Eco* in reciting the story of *Adso of Melk*.

A non-linear narration is also called disjointed narration or disrupted narration. *Eco* adopts a non-linear narration, by distorting the time sequence in the novel by concentrating much on the elements of *syuzhet* than *fabula*. *Fabula* refers to the chronological order of the events in the story. *Syuzhet* refers to the unique employment of the narrative that an implied author sorts out. The non-linear narration consists of the picking up of the *fabula* events and arranging in non-chronological order by abandoning the linearity. Disrupted narration, hence, deviates the logical progression of time bound events. The narrator uses literary devices like anachronism, analepsis and prolepsis to reveal the deviation of time.

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Anachronism refers to the chronological inconsistency in a narration with the juxtaposition of the arrangements of persons, events, objects or customs from different periods of time. Eco sets his novel *The Name of the Rose* in the medieval century. So the novel apparently deploys the fourteenth century time line ineluctably with the reporting of the events respective to its time period. Eco sets the historical references to the personalities like Peter Abelard(1079-1142), Roger Bacon(c. 1214 - c. 1292), Saint Thomas Aquinas(1224/25-1274), William of Occam(c. 1285 - c. 1349), Fra Dolcino(c. 1250 - c. 1307) in the novel is with chronological inconsistency as Adso was living at time of Lord 1327, when Emperor Louis came down into Italy to restore the dignity of Holy Roman Empire.

Parachronism and Prochronism are the two types of anachronism. The usage of objects in the present context which were once present, not available or have become rare or obsolete now, in the present context is parachronism. The usage or reference to the objects, ideas, philosophy in the present or past context that are not yet used, coined, invented or familiar in the present or past context is prochronism. The objects referring to prochronism belong to the existence in uncertain future.

William tells Adso, of Roger Bacon's aphoristic teachings that include prochronistic instances. And one day it will be possible, by exploiting the power of nature, to create instruments of navigation by which ships will proceed unico homine regente, and far more rapid than those propelled by sails or oars; and there will be wagons that move without animals to pull them, and flying vehicles guided by man who will flap their wings as if they were those of a bird. And tiny contraptions that lift infinite weights, and small boats that float on the bottom of the sea. (18)

William tells Adso that he must not worry if ships, wagons without animals and flying vehicles do not exist, because that does not mean they will not be existing later. Adso's tale is presented in non-linear mode without abiding the standard time sequence of synchronicity through the usage of literary devices like analepsis and prolepsis.

Analepsis, in simple terms means, flash back. It signifies the shift of time from the present to the past where the events that had already occurred are told while handling the present timeline events. The character/narrator- Adso reports the past events that have already occurred, in order to disclose it to the readers, thereby embracing analepsis in his narration. Adso begins the novel from the present, as an old matured monk telling the readers about his testimony of the events that he has observed in his youth.

Having reached the end of my poor sinner's life, my hair now white, I grow old as the world does . . . confined now with my heavy ailing body in this cell in the dear monastery of Melk, I prepare to leave on this parchment . . . (11)

Adso's statement conceives commencing his narration in *in media res* fashion. Adso then retrospectively the year 1327 and presents the wondrous and terrible happenings in his life. He proceeds, "When we toiled up the steep path that wound around the mountain, I saw the abbey"(23). He then shifts to the present writes, "Now that, with a hand that trembles, I write these lines . . ." (265) and again Adso jumps back reciting the words, "I felt an inner exultation, which was not peace . . ." (267). Eco employs many time shifts via internal and external analeptic strategies throughout the novel. Internal analepsis is a flashback to an earlier point

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within the narrative. Internal analepsis occurs in instances where Adso intervenes to the present in the process of recounting his past and consciously tells us that he will continue from where he has intervened. "Now, let us return to the task I had humbly set myself. I was telling about that day and the total bewilderment of the senses into which I sank" (267). External analepsis is a flashback to a time even before the narrative started. Adso gives a descriptive picture of William and their mission to an Abbey in Northern Italy before he begins his actual narration which sets as an external analepsis. Adso begins:

May the Lord grant me the grace to be the transparent witness of the occurrences that took place in the abbey whose name it is only right and pious now to omit, toward the end of the year of our Lord 1327, when the Emperor Louis came down into Italy . . . (11)

The readers expect Adso to tell the events happened in the abbey. But, he tries to deviate and provide some information which does not belong to the narrative plot. Adso tells the events involving the persons who try to hegemonize the crown of the Holy Roman Empire.

In the early years of that Century Pope Clement V had moved the apostolic seat to Avignon, leaving Rome prey to the ambitions of the local overlords . . . and may my hand remain steady as I prepare to tell what happened. (12-19)

Adso moves to the point even before the actual narration occurs. His information about Roman Empire does not involve in the narration of the story. His narration proper begins with the chapter 'first day'.

Prolepsis is the flash forwarding technique where the narrator presents the events beforehand, which are yet to occur in near future. At the end of his narration in the scriptorium, in his old age, he finishes his recitation and writes of his expectation to reach the last point of his life where death invites him after his long life. These descriptions convey his readiness to die and leave this material world. "I shall soon enter this broad desert . . . I shall fall into the silent an uninhabited divinity where there is no work and no image"(538).

Foreshadowing usually refers to the warning or indication of a future event. But, in literary context, it is a device used by an author in order to hint what comes ahead in the narrative. A narrator uses it to avoid disappointment in the readers, sometimes also to evoke interest in them. Foreshadowing in the novel is evident when William adopts his method of logical deductions to find the unknown factors. In the episode of Brunellus, William tells Adso of how he has provided accurate information about the lost horse of the cellarer. William speaks of the signs and the knowledge of books that lead him to the conclusions. William's observation of the signs that the unseen creature leaves and his association of those signs to his logical and reasoning powers demonstrates his detective skill.

William's ability to find out the name of the horse to be Brunellus and the probability that the missing horse of the cellarer to be Brunellus are miscellaneous. When Adso asks *William*, how William is so sure of it, he says that it is a sheer guess. Eco wants his readers to understand William's detective skills. So, he foreshadows William's skills through his findings about the lost horse by providing a hint to the readers about his future findings. Eco evinces this foreshadowing in another instance, where Adso has a dream and *William* explains Adso's dream to him and envisions certain events to happen regarding his findings of the mysterious book for which both Adso and William are in search of. William deduces Adso's dream and

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relates the clues provided in Adso's dream to Benno's description of the book. William and Adso realize that the mysterious book they want is similar to the book that Benno describes.

"It is our book . . . This is why your dream reminded me of something" (469).

Eco foreshadows some events related to William's findings of the mysterious book by enabling William to envision it through his perception of Adso's dream.

In both, Brunellus and Adso's dream instances, Eco hints the readers about William's successive findings of the whodunit through this technique of foreshadowing. Unreliable narration in a text often questions its credibility and misleads its readers. An Unreliable narrator works under the constraints of limited knowledge to convey information that is justifiably suspect to the reader. Eco adopts first person involved, intrusive and metaleptic narrative pattern as his *modus operandi* to create unreliability in the text. Both Eco and Adso tend to be unreliable narrators as they are subjective to present the information limited of their knowledge. The story holds much dubiety and the authenticity of the information that is in incertitude. Eco's translation of the fictitious manuscript of Abbe Vallet which he claims to have read once is not true. Similarly, Milo Temeswar's work *On the Use of mirrors in the Game of Chess* is also fictitious and these books by Vallet and Temeswar do not exist. But Eco's writing about the information he provides in the preface, misleads the readers and make them misconstrue fiction for reality. Adso on the other hand is unreliable as he presents the occurings of his life with the limited knowledge of his perceptions towards the world.

Eco and Adso deviate the traditional narrative norms that an implied author employs. Eco recites Adso's story in frame narration. An Implied narration never allows its author to emerge as a character, to intrude or participate in the actions or dialogues of the novel. Instead an unreliable narrator is involved and intrusive. Adso, becomes involved as he is one among the other characters and participates as a character in the novel. Adso is intrusive as he goes beyond his legitimate limit of narration and intrudes into the narration itself in order to comment upon a character, event or situation- or even to introduce opinions not directly related to what has been narrated.

This was my master's way. He not only knew how to read the great book of nature . . . His explanation, moreover seemed to me at the point so obvious that my humiliation at not having discovered it by myself was surpassed only by my pride at now being a sharer in it. (27)

Adso describes Salvatore's reaction to Adso's question whether Salvatore has ever met Fra Dolcino in a much later instance in the novel. On the 'third day' during Adso's discourse with Salvatore:

His reaction was most strange. He widened his eyes, if it were possible to open them wider than they were, he blesses himself repeatedly, murmured some broken phrases in a language . . . (209)

The narrator's intrusion is pejorative because the process of intrusion impedes the natural development of the story, plot, actions or characters.

Metalepsis in narrative occurs when a narrator intrudes upon another world being narrated. In the novel, Eco is an external narrator and is called as extradiegetic. Eco's narrator-character, Adso is an intradiegetic narrator. The novel has three worlds viz. the world of production, the

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story world and the world of narration. Eco is the narrator of the world of production of the story of a monk named Adso of Melk. Adso is the narrator of the world of narration in which he tells the story of his life. Metaleptic narration involves an external narrator commenting or providing information in between the narration of the intradiegetic narrator who is also an intrusive author. This usually happens in frame narratives. *The Name of the Rose*, being a frame narrative also adopts metaleptic narration. Eco is an extra-diegetic narrator as he is neither involved in Adso's narration nor participates as a character in Adso's tale. Adso, the speaker of the tale is diegetic. Eco in his extra-diegetic level of narration intervenes Adso's narration by providing a concise account of the events that Adso narrates each day. Each chapter in the novel carries a subtitle which Eco writes in third person. For example, Eco adds a subtitle to the chapter *Sext*: "In which Benno tells a strange tale from which unedifying things about life of the abbey are learned." (146) The intrusion of an extra-diegetic narrator with in an intrusive narrator's description entails ambiguous considerations. The enigmatic role of the narrators confuses the readers whether it is Eco who adds this information in chapter subtitles or Adso. Metaleptic narration in *The Name of the Rose* leads the readers to be skeptic about the narrative structure and concede the unreliability among the narrators.

An unreliable narrator typically exhibits proclivities of naive credibility or improper understanding of the story. He could make it happen by highlighting or intentionally imparting certain defects in his characters in the pretext of justifying the characters' deeds. The defects are inclusive of any of the factors viz misunderstanding of events pertaining to narrator's age, memory, mental disability, psychological disorder, ignorance and personal involvement being youth or naivete. As a result of these conditions, an unreliable narrator provides the reader with incomplete or inaccurate information.

Eco discloses to his readers that he has once read the terrible story of Adso of Melk written by certain Abbey Vallet and that Eco himself has translated it. Having confessed that Eco is recounting the tale of Adso of Melk to the readers out of sheer narrative pleasure, Adso and Eco's other characters in the novel thus become the mouth piece of Eco. Eco becomes an unreliable narrator as he is presenting his translated version of the original story of Adso of Melk by introducing certain changes in the original version in Eco's style. So, the credibility of the story is lost. Eco himself being unreliable, makes Adso also unreliable by introducing him to the readers as an old monk. Now that Adso has to look at his past, the recollection of the events of his younger age are inaccurate with the occasional lapses in memory due to aging that in turn leads to provide insufficient information to the readers.

I should recall what was happening in those last years of century, as I understood it then, living through it, and as I remember it now, complemented by other stories I heard afterward if -my memory still proves capable of connecting the threads of happenings so many and confused. (12)

Eco in his fictional novel employs Adso as a young novice with a purpose. Adso's role as a novice makes him naivete at his perspective when he reports of his life to the readers. So the limited perspective in first person narration leaves the readers perplexed in distinguishing fiction from reality.

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Exposition is the writer's manner of providing background information to the readers about the setting and the characters of the story that a writer may feel necessary for a reader to understand more clearly. *Eco* provides information of the liturgical hours Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers, Compline in his "Note" in page 7 and 8. Adso, in his prologue gives his readers a gist of the religious happenings in 1327. This enables the readers to understand the scenario of Adso's lifetime when he was young. Pages 12-19 provide the background information about how Adso became William's scribe and is also inclusive of the nature of William and Adso's assignment. Adso sets these details in the expository section as a frame work of his narrative content, even before his actual narration begins. Adding the expository details before the narrative enables the readers to have clear picture of the tale.

*Eco* deploys fragmentation, non-linear and unreliable narration in his novel *The Name of the Rose*. *Eco* achieves non-linear narration by exercising anachronism, analepsis and prolepsis. *Eco* adopts techniques like extra-diegetic, involved, intrusive, metaleptic, expository and frame narrative styles to report unreliability in narration. On the whole, these reflect a postmodern trait called narrative fragmentation. The Non-linear narrative technique employed by *Eco* in his *The Name of the Rose* has its impact in the reader's accomplishment a lot.

Non-linear narration in a postmodern novel mis-engages its readers towards the narrative transportation. Mis-engagement in narrative transportation refers to the non-occurrence of the transportation of the readers to the narrative world created by the author as the readers become aware of the fictitious nature of a story being told by unreliable narrators through non-chronological time line. This creates the distancing effect between the author/ narrator and the reader. The readers' narrative transportation involving exploration, empathizing and capturing mental imagery through verisimilitude in the narrative world they travel is corrupted due to the conscious distancing tone resonated in the narrative. The conscious distancing tone is observed through *Eco's* metaleptic narrative style. The distancing tone in the novel in turn affects the readers' perception and comprehension of the events in the novel and further minimises the narrative persuasion of the audience. However, non-linear and unreliable narration employed in the novel evokes surprise and interest in the readers much better than a standard traditional narrative. Because, in a traditional narrative, an author follows chronological time line and coherence in the manner of conveying the events of a story. Linearity in conventional style of narration exhibits less involvement of the readers as they can have unchallenging and easy reception. Unlike traditional narrative, a postmodern style of narration is unprecedented and actively engages the readers in their role of narrative exploration.

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