**Assignment 1: Movie Review**

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**Introduction**

The Catholic Church has one of the most ambiguous reputations, and probably the most dominant position in history. It has had a place in history for almost two thousand years now, and for that many people are very pleased, while many people are not so pleased. The reason for this is that the church has had such a turbulent history, filled with periods of both greatness and embarrassment. The film “The Name of the Rose” demonstrates a time of great power for the church, but a time when that power proves to have great consequences.

**Synopsis**

The Name of the Rose takes place at a remote abbey in the Northern regions of Italy, 1327. At the start of the film, Brother William of Baskerville, a member of the Franciscan Order, and his Novice Adso of Melk, ride into the abbey on donkeys. The death of one of the monks has everyone in the abbey believing they are cursed by the devil, and things only get worse when more dead bodies start showing up, one after another. Brother William is a man of logic, and tries to teach Adso how to use the power of deduction to help find out what is really going on at the abbey. William and Adso find out that the cause of the deaths has something to do with a book hidden within a secret library in the abbey. When Brother William presents his findings to the Abbott, he is dismissed, and the Holy Inquisition is summoned to resolve the matter. The Inquisitor is a man of great power, and we find out that his word is not to be challenged, only suppoerted. This becomes a problem when he accuses the wrong people for the murders when another victim turns up dead. William and Adso rush to the secret library to find the book that is the reason behind these deaths, only to meet Gorge the blind monk, who set’s the library on fire. Brother William manages to save a few books, while the Inquisitor faces the wrath of the peasants. The end.

**Is the film a realistic or romanticized view of the past?**

This film is very much a realistic view of the past. In film it is a very common occurrence to dress up the atmosphere with things that may not be historically accurate, but perhaps make for a more appealing movie. This was not the case in this film. The setting was meant to be very remote and very middle ages. It was very easy to see the division of the wealth between the peasants and the church. The faces of many of the members of the monks at the abbey were very ugly and distorted, not the type that you see predominantly in film. Also, the details of everyday life that we take for granted were shown in detail. Pigs were slaughtered, the organs of dead men were examined, and when accused of witchcraft, clothes were ripped and breasts displayed in shame. This definitely wasn’t a film glorifying the “good old days.”

**Genre**

The Name of the Rose is most definitely a historical drama. While the events in the movie aren’t based on historical events, they correlate directly to the time period and the issues surrounding the church. The story itself is a complete dramatization, but it hold onto the struggles of the time period between members of the Franciscan Order and the Inquisition.

**Conventions**

There were many conventions used throughout the movie used for emphasis. I noticed that the members of the abbey wore black robes, while the members of the Franciscan Order wore grey robes. This could simply be history suggests they wore, but I like to think it symbolizes the characters themselves. The black robes were worn by the guilty, the members of the abbey who have strayed from the path they originally chose to follow. I believe the grey robes show the opposite, that William and his Order hold the values that have been forgotten by the rest of the church. The grey also signifies that while William is plagued by his small vices such as his arrogance and stubbornness, and Adso by his sin with the peasant girl, they still search for the truth.

**Accuracy of the Film**

While the storyline of the film is fictional, it is very accurate in its historical setting. In terms of the papacy, it demonstrates what we have been learning about the power of the papal seat and its influence over the people. The church was littered with politics that determined the division of power within the church, and this fountain trickled down from the pope himself. In the movie, the Inquisition represented the power of the Pope, and when Brother William challenged his accusations with a conclusion of logic, Bernard the Inquisitor accused him of being the murderer. The film was also very accurate with its dates and historical figures. The movie takes place in 1327 according to the opening dialogue, and there are references to Pope John. They were of course referring to John XXII who occupied the papal seat from 1316 to 1334.

**Concerns and Interests during the Time it was made**

This movie was based on the book of the same name by Umberto Eco in 1980. While no one except the author can know for sure the motivations behind the storyline, we can deduce that a recurring theme in the film is the power of the church. There are two main antagonists in the film. The first antagonist would be the higher members of the abbey (Jorge the blind monk in particular), while the second is Bernard Gui, the inquisitor. Both of these antagonists are powerful, and both believe they can use that power in whatever way they please. To have picked two antagonists that so closely resemble each other, and so closely demonstrate the abuse of power given to them by the church, it is difficult not to conclude that this was a dominant motif and a reoccurring question posed by the author of the book, and later the makers of the film.

**How does this Relate to the Course?**

This film takes place a few centuries past anything we have studied yet in this course, but it is dominated by reference to the church and the papacy, and what we have studied so far is very evident in the film. So far in the course we have learned of the struggles between the church and the state, which was brought about by centuries of corruption seen in both. Both felt that they were entitled to more power, and the church found ways to make sure it got what it wanted, such as through the Donation of Constantine. The film gives us a clear picture of how this rise to power of the church affected the common peoples, the peasants, and how members of the church were able to live lives of luxury while the people went hungry. The film also demonstrated some of the politics within the church, such as the debate between the Pope’s representatives and the Franciscan Friars, and that some people were given positions of power that were unjustified. In our course material we have seen this when Henry III in 1046 travelled to Rome to be crowned as emperor, but was greeted by three men claiming to be the Pope. There have been many times when Popes were elected who were not fit for the seat, such as Silverius, Vigilius, and Pelagius I in the 6th century.

**My Opinion**

My opinion of the film is that it was very accurate to my understanding of the time period. It was able to demonstrate the poverty of the people and the wealth of the church very accurately, while maintaining that even the wealthy of the time lived in the conditions of the time period. No details were spared, from the gutting of pigs to the examining of dead bodies. The realities of life in the 14th century were present, giving the viewer the real experience that life was not so specialized, that many jobs needed to be done, and they had to be done by whoever could perform them. In respect to the film’s story, I thought it was very well thought out. It was very enjoyable to watch while remaining accurate to the time it represented.

**Conclusion**

This film was able to immerse the audience in a world that was quite unlike our world today. The power given to certain individuals by the church was enough to cover up a series of murders, and the harshness of the elements threatened the lives of those who were not privileged enough to be a member of the clergy. In the end, the power of the church’s dominant representation had fallen, due entirely to its own actions.