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TREADING THROUGH THE MAZE:
A READING OF UMBERTO ECO’S
THE NAME OF THE ROSE BASED ON VASTU SASTRA

ABSTRACT: Umberto Eco’s The Name of the Rose is a novel in which architecture becomes more eloquent than the characters. The architecture within the novel does not merely serve as structures that accommodate the characters. The structures within the novel are asymmetrical and the asymmetries of these constructions attract our attention, and make possible a reading based on the Indian architectural science Vastu Shastra since this discourse considers asymmetries of a building as influential in the life-and-death matters of the inhabitants. The paper focuses on reading the asymmetries of the Italian abbey in the novel, sketching the structure of the building based on the directions given in it. The sketch is tested against the precepts of Vastu to show that the architecture of the abbey has serious omissions and this has tremendous impact on the deaths taking place within the abbey.

KEYWORDS: Vastu, architectonics, symmetry, chronotope, open text

0. INTRODUCTION

Architecture and literature are two art forms that endeavour to comprehend the essence of human existence and are linked to each other. The common ground to relate the two is the aesthetic value ascribed to them. This resemblance between architecture and literature makes it interesting to explore the beauty of a literary text that incorporates architecture into it. The aesthetic value of a literary text and of an architectural edifice depends on symmetry. Scientists and architects believe that aesthetics is an outcome of symmetry. Though philosophers such as Theodore Adorno believe in the aesthetics and attractiveness of symmetry, they find it less dynamic. McManus (1998) quotes Adorno: “Asymmetry probably results more effectively in beauty when the underlying symmetry upon which it is built is still apparent” (157). This

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paper explores the aesthetics of asymmetries by sketching the unbalanced architectural edifices in a literary text where the asymmetries turn out to be expressive. The study is founded on the readerly experience of architectures within a literary text *The Name of Rose* (1980). It uses the logic of *Vāstu* to explore the relationship between the architectural body and human body within it. It shows that both are integrally related, and that the architectural “surround” in the novel and in the cinematic adaptation communicates effectively through a series of codes. It also illustrates the hermeneutic possibilities that such an interdisciplinary reading can bring forth. The attempt is to explore the untrodden paths in Eco’s fictional woods.

There is nothing in this world without a structure. In simple words, structures are patterns. The words that spring up in our mind in relation to structure are organization, framework, arrangement, and order. The culture we are part of also has a pattern. Therefore, all cultural productions such as films, novels, and other art works have their own structures. The language which we speak has a structure. So a novel that is written using the language also has a structure which Bakhtin calls architectonics. Michael Holquist has discussed Bakhtin’s notion of architectonics of novelistic discourse: “Architectonics is the general study of how entities relate to each other” (xiii). The aesthetics of a building depends on the coherence of different parts to the whole. In the same fashion the aesthetics of the novel form also relies on its architectonics.

1. THE ARCHITECTONICS OF *THE NAME OF THE ROSE*

The novel *The Name of the Rose* is best known for its convoluted, maze-like structure that throws the readers into confusion. Eco’s setting for the novel, an Italian abbey, is built in the same fashion as an architect constructs a building. The abbey in the novel is designed on the basis of “the plan for renovation of St. Gall, a monastery dating from the early seventh century. A set of forty architectural drawings was made and the alteration never took place” (Hallissy 272). This is widely accepted as the most appropriate plan for a monastery. Margaret Hallissy observes, “As architectural drawings should, the plan of St. Gall reflects the way
of life of the monastery’s inhabitants. The life of a religious order is supposed to be above all things orderly, consisting of structured, repetitive activities within a structured consistent environment” (272). Adso, the novice to William of Baskerville, the protagonist, also considers architecture a metaphor of order. He says: “For Architecture among all the arts, is one of that most boldly tries to reproduce in its rhythm the order of the universe” (Eco 1998: 26).

The assumption that an architectural construct is a mere place to live in is out of place: “We see architecture not merely as that which stands by and gets linked up with as structures that life lightly avails itself of in passing; not passive, not passively merely hanging around to provide shelter or monumentality, architecture as we newly conceive it actively participates in life and death matters” (Gins & Arakawa 2008: xi). Therefore any disorder in architecture affects the life of the inhabitants. The present study shows how it does. Hallissy identifies differences and violations of architectural norms in the construction of Eco’s monastery from the widely accepted plan of St. Gall: “Reading the plans of both the abbey and St. Gall, and comparing the two as architectural expressions of the Benedictine way of life in the Middle ages, allow the reader to see how far the abbey deviates from the Benedictine ideal” (272).

2. THE NAME OF THE ROSE AND VĀSTUSĀTRA

Hallissy (2001) has studied plans in The Name of the Rose in relation to the ideal plan for a monastery (271-286). But when we place the novel in the Indian cultural context, the text opens a possibility to interpret the plans following the logic of Vāstu Sāstra. According to Vāstu, the life of the architectural body is related to the life of the inhabitants. Laxity in observing the mathematical accuracy as per Vāstu in the plan causes disturbances in the life of the inhabitants. The principles of Vāstu depend on the body of the human being. All the measurements are taken in proportion to the body of the man residing within the house. The following lines explain this.
Tālādyaih pratimādikam khalu yavair – meyam ca bhūsadikam
ksaumaprāvaravāmsukādi parimē – yam syādvitastyatahd?
sastrādyam tadanāmikāṃguliyugē – naivam ca tadvyasato
musātyā yānikabhajanāni yajamā – nasyānyadaṅghryādinā. (Moosath 107)

(Ornaments should be measured with yava (1 angula), attire with vitasti, weapons with two added to the diameter of the ring finger, plates for holy sacrifice (yāga) with the fist of the owner, and the sacrificial hall (yāgasāla), dais, and so on should be measured with the foot of the master.)

A reading of The Name of the Rose based on the logic of Vāstu reveals that Eco’s monastery is based on Vāstu, but with some major omissions. These omissions add to the sombre and bizarre atmosphere in which the unnatural events happen. Vāstu Sāstra is strictly a mathematical architectural science. It is also an artistic discourse. The importance of mathematical precision in architecture is evident in William’s words. He says:

Mathematical notions are propositions constructed by our intellect in such a way that they function always as truths, either because they are innate or because mathematics was invented before the other sciences. And the library was built by a human mind that thought in a mathematical fashion, because without mathematics you cannot build labyrinths. And therefore we must compare our mathematical propositions with the propositions of the builder, and from this comparison science can be produced, because it is a science of terms upon terms. (Eco 1998: 215)

Reading the Vāstu of a building means checking whether or not the construction is mathematically precise. William and Adso hint at the imprecise architecture of the abbey. William says, “What does not correspond to any mathematical law is the arrangement of the openings.
Some rooms allow you to pass into several others, some into only one and we must ask ourselves whether there are not rooms that do not allow you to go anywhere else” (Eco 1998: 217). Adso’s allusion to the tower of Babel prefigures the chaotic architecture of the place and the disturbed monastic life. Through the allusion, he refers to Salvatore’s enigmatic speech:

... and once I thought that his was, not the Adamic language that a happy mankind had spoken, all united by a single tongue from the origin of the world to the Tower of Babel, or one of the languages that arose after the dire event of their division, but precisely the Babelish language of the first day after the divine chastisement, the language of primeval confusion. (Eco 1998: 46-47)

According to Hilde Hynen (1999),

The Tower of Babel traditionally is a symbol of chaos and the confusion of tongues. God, we read in the Bible, punished those people whose arrogance was such that they tried to build a tower that would reach heavens. He shattered their common language into mutually incomprehensible dialects, so that they were forced to leave their blasphemous project unfinished. (215)

The Tower of Babel is an architectural trope. It not only connotes human arrogance, but also disorder born from architecture, with which the novel deals. To unravel the chaotic architecture of the abbey, a study of the architectural sketches within the novel is made.

What we get in the novel are not plans that are intended for builders, but those that are intended for ordinary readers: “The type of drawings Eco includes are schematics intended for users” (Hallissy 2001: 274). Therefore there is a difference in the perception of the plans when we read them from the novel and when we see it from a professionally executed building plan. Moreover, since Eco gives no mathematically accurate measurements, the readings based on Vāstu can be done only on the logic of structure envisaged by this science. Eco draws the plans
effectively through language. In other words, what he produces in the novel is an “architectural surround” (Gins & Arakawa 2002: 43) rather than a natural environment. Instead of the descriptions of natural beauty or the landscape, Eco goes for an architectural description: “Architectural surrounds exist only in relation to those moving within them” (Gins & Arakawa 2002: 43). Right from the beginning of the novel, we see the protagonists sketching the architecture of the abbey out of curiosity as well as for the purpose of investigation. The plan develops in relation to the persons, William and Adso, moving through the structure. Gins and Arakawa (2002) further says: “Even some moving through an apartment with a plan of it . . . selects her surroundings and assembles them as she goes, succeed in capturing the whole of it. Architectural surrounds stand as shaping molds for What happens next? of life” (43). In the text the surroundings are selected. The story thus unfolds through the selection of architectural surroundings. It is through William’s judicious selection of where to go and when to go into the interiors of the abbey that the mystery unfolds within the text. It is the key that he uses to open the door of mystery. While William moves through the surroundings, the reader also walks with him searching for the mystery. The path for walking is defined by the architectural surrounds. At each moment of identifying a mysterious room or door and at each instance of untwining the mystery of the labyrinth the reader is still with the same anxiety, “what happens next?” Eco (1994) rightly equates the act of reading with walking in Six Walks in the Fictional Woods:

There are two ways of walking through a wood. The first is to try one or several routes (so as to get out of the wood as fast as possible, say, or to reach the house of grandmother, Tom Thumb, or Hansel and Gretel); the second is to walk so as to discover what the wood is like and find out why some paths are accessible and others are not. Similarly, there are two ways of going through a narrative text. (27)

Eco (1994) elaborates the concept of woods that he has chosen as a metaphor for narrative text in the same work.

Woods are a metaphor for the narrative text, not only for the text of fairy tales but for any narrative text. . . . To use a
metaphor devised by Jorge Louis Borges, a wood is a garden of forking paths. Even when there are no well-trodden paths in a wood, everyone can trace his or her own path, deciding to go to the left or to the right of a certain tree and making a choice at every tree encountered. (6)

3. **VĀSTUPURUṢAMANḌALA AND THE CHRONOTOPE OF THE NOVEL**

*Vāstu* aids the reader to walk through the untrodden woods of *The Name of the Rose*.

The most important concept in the discourse of *Vāstu* is the *Vāstu Puruṣa Maṇḍala*. It becomes a chronotope in this architectural discourse. Explaining the concept of chronotope, Bakhtin says:

> We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, “time space”) to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. This term [space-time] is employed in mathematics, and was introduced as part of Einstein’s Theory of Relativity. . . . What counts for us is the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). We understand the chronotope as a formally constitutive category of literature. (Bakhtin 2004: 84)

*Vāstu Puruṣa Maṇḍala* is a chronotope in the sense that it combines time and space in a single frame. The entire discourse exists unifying time and space. The astrological backing of this discourse and the observance of auspicious time in structuring the space are testimonies to this. Even the execution of virtuous action at wrong and inauspicious hour causes bad results. More important is the attention given to *Vāstu Puruṣa*’s waking up time and sleeping time for the beginning of the construction work. From these the importance given for tracing the time in structuring the space is evident. The present analysis studies the chronotope of the novel with reference to the chronotopic *Vāstu Puruṣa*
It discusses the transgression of rule in the restricted space at the holy hour in relation to Västu Purusa Manḍala. The manḍala serves as a reference point for saying what to do at a specific time in a specific place. There are certain dos and don’ts in the concept of manḍala. The construction work which is the structuring of space is done in relation to the time of Västu Purusa’s sleeping hours. There is a time to start the construction and a time inauspicious for construction. A parallel to this in the novel is the contravention of the rules of the order at holy hours for jobs or actions that are not expected to be done in these hours. In order to integrate this notion of auspicious hours in Västu Purusa Manḍala to the literary text, the structure of the text is considered as the manḍala. Then using the rules regarding the dos and don’ts in the liturgical hours, which correspond to the observance of auspicious hours in the manḍala, the study focuses on the intrusion of forbidden spaces at holy hours as a metaphor for the disorder in the architecture of the abbey.

For this, I examine the chapter divisions based on the liturgical hours of the Benedictine order (time) in conjunction with the action done in a particular place (space) at these hours. Since Västu Purusa Manḍala is associated with the decorum of action at a particular time, the question posed in the study is whether the characters occupy the right space for right action at the right hour. In the novel, William, during his conversation with Severinus, the herbalist, says, “terrible things can happen to those who enter during forbidden hours” (Eco 1998: 68). The uniqueness of the chapter division based on the liturgical hours makes this reading possible. This analysis is a reading of the Västu of the text. Västu of the text means the structure of the text.

The Name of the Rose is divided into seven days, and each day into different liturgical hours. Table 1 shows the structure of the text divided into days and hours.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Parts (Days)</th>
<th>Chapter division</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>First Day</td>
<td>Prime (Around 7:30 shortly before daybreak)</td>
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<td>Third Day</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Fourth Day</td>
<td>Lauds (Between 5:00 and 6:00 in the morning)</td>
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<td>***Compline (Around 6:00)</td>
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Table 1 gives a quick glance at the structure of the novel and helps to know how each day is divided into different liturgical hours:

Traditionally there were eight periods of prayer in the monastic schedule. These hours were fulfilled by Matins (or Vigils) prayer that focused on history and wisdom offered between 2:30 and 3:00 in the morning; Lauds, the sunrise prayer, a time of praise; Prime, Terce, Sext and Nones, also known as the ‘little hours’, the short psalms prayed during the daytime; Vespers, the sunset prayer, a time of thanksgiving and reconciliation; Compline, the closing of the day, a prayer for protection and rest. (Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration 2014)

The season in which the novel is set is winter, and the time schedule is that of the liturgical hours towards the end of November in northern Italy. The schedule varies according to time and place. From the analysis

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<td>6.</td>
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<td>Matins (Between 2:30 and 3:00 in the morning)</td>
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of the structure of the text, it is seen that the monks transgress forbidden spaces during the holy hours. Not only the inhabitants of the abbey, but also the visitor, Adso transgresses the rule of his order during the holy hours. The execution of those actions that are not expected to be done at the holy hours represent the darkness brooding over the place. For instance, Adso commits adultery after compline. The Schedule discloses that compline is the time when the monks go to sleep. According to the Rule of Benedict,

> During the winter season, that is from the first of November until Easter, it seems reasonable to arise at the eighth hour of the night. By sleeping until a little past the middle of the night, the brothers can arise with their daily food fully digested. In the time remaining after Vigils, those who need to learn some of the psalter or readings should study them. (St. Benedict 1981: 38)

Adultery happens around midnight. Compline is around 6 pm. During winter the sun sets around 7:30 pm (Eco 1998: 8). Therefore the time after compline is midnight. Hence Adso’s action is not just a temptation. It is the denunciation of the order into which he is welcomed as a guest. In the case of Adso, learning surrenders to passion when he comes down from the library to the kitchen. The kitchen is the place where the sin is committed. We can link this incident to the chronotope of the novel. In the analysis of the Greek romance Bakhtin introduces the concept of “adventure time” (Bakhtin 2004: 87):

> The Greek romance utilized and fused together in its structure almost all genres of ancient literature. . . . But all these elements, derived from various genres, are fused and consolidated into a new – specifically novelistic – unity, of which the constitutive feature is adventure – novel-time. The elements derived from various other genres, assumed a new character and special functions in this completely new chronotope – ‘an alien world in adventure-time’ – and ceased to be what they had been in the genres. (87)
This quality of the Greek romances is seen in the novel. Adso reaches the alienated space of the kitchen during the adventure-time of finding the person who escaped from the scriptorium. This chronotope of alien world in adventure-time facilitates the sin. Adso meets the girl and the relationship happens by “chance” (Bakhtin 2004: 94). The event was also sudden, for neither Adso nor the girl knew each other. In Bakhtin’s words,

All moments of this infinite adventure-time are controlled by one force – chance. . . . this time is entirely composed of contingency – of chance meetings and failures to meet. Adventuristic ‘chance time’ is the specific time during which irrational forces intervene in human life; the intervention of Fate (Tyche), gods, demons, sorcerers. . . . Moments of adventuristic time occur at those points when the normal course of events, the normal, intended or purposeful sequence of life’s events is interrupted. (Bakhtin 2004: 94-95)

In the novel all the instances of omission of duties assigned for each hour are moments of adventuristic time when the normal course of events is interrupted.

There are more instances of the chronotope adventure-time in the novel. Venantius of Savemec dies during matins of the second day: “Between matins and lauds the monk does not return to his cell, even if the night is still dark. The novices followed their master into the chapter house to study the psalms; some of the monks remained in church to tend to the church ornaments, but the majority strolled in the cloister in silent meditation” (Eco 1998: 102). From the words of the abbot it is clear that the deceased one did not attend the prayer: “‘Was he present in choir during the office?’ William asked pointing to the corpse. ‘No,’ the abbot said. ‘I saw his stall was empty’” (Eco 1998: 104). Later William finds that the Greek translator died when he was reading the forbidden book late in the scriptorium. The occupation of the prohibited place, the scriptorium, at the forbidden time puts an end to his life. Had he been in meditation in the cloister or in the church or in the chapter house he would not have died. The swineherds yell out when they see the dead body and inform the lord abbot:
Suddenly some noises were heard from the direction of the north door. I wondered why the servants, preparing for their work, disturbed the sacred functions in this way. At that moment three swineherds came in, terror on their faces; they went to the abbot and whispered something to him. The abbot first calmed them with a gesture, as if he did not want to interrupt the office; but other servants entered, and the shouts became louder. “A man! A dead man!” (Eco 1998: 103)

At compline of the first day we see William and Adso enjoying the hospitality of the abbot and engaging in an angry conversation with Jorge. Compline is the time of complete silence, but this rule is violated on the first day. The Rule says, “The monks should diligently cultivate silence at all time especially at night” (St. Benedict 1981: 64). Thus the metaphoric adaptation of auspicious and inauspicious time sequences in Vāstu in interpreting the time sequences in The Name of the Rose leads to the understanding that lapses in observing the decorum of specific activities at a particular time can be dangerous. Execution of right action at the right moment is inevitable in a space which is structured for a specific purpose.

The concept of measuring space using time is a technique propounded by Anthony Viscardi and popularised through an exhibition entitled Anthony Viscardi: Tracing Time to Measure Space. This concept also goes hand in hand with the idea of the chronotope. In his architectural plans shadow serves as a metaphor for time:

Derived from traditional architectural drawing methods that privilege the hand and eye, Viscardi’s intimate act of drawing as a multisensory and intuitive experience is fundamental to all of his work. The drawings in this exhibition result from the collusion of phenomena: the physicality of the object casting a shadow, the quality of light in real time and space, and the negotiation between the materials and the artist’s hand Generated from time-based interactions during three periodic intervals of day-morning, noon and night—the ephemeral play of shadows is made static through sequential tracings that collapse space and time into one singular composite drawing. (Rago 2013)
Sketches based on the play of shadows are also present in the novel. Soon after talking about the disproportionate openings of different rooms in the labyrinth, William says: “If you consider this aspect, plus the lack of light or of any clue that might be supplied by the position of the sun (and if you add the visions and the mirrors), you understand how the labyrinth can confuse anyone who goes through it, especially when he is already troubled by a sense of guilt” (Eco 1998: 217). The reference to the sun and the lack of light are hints to an architecture based on shadows. Adso also remarks that he saw his master “observing the windows that gave light to the stairway” (Eco 1998: 71).

We saw that *Vāstu Puruṣa Manḍala* is a chronotope. It also stands for the universe. The notion of *Vāstu Puruṣa* is that the *Puruṣa* lies all over the earth. Every enclosed piece of land has a *Vāstu Puruṣa* within it. In *Vāstu* the existence of *Vāstu Puruṣa* codifies the life element of universe. Every microcosmic manifestation of the macrocosm inherits within the space a replica of the universal. Thus each construction is a minor universe with the same universal man within it.

Looking at the plan within the novel and considering the abbey as the universe, the Aedificium is a microcosm of the universe. During their visit to the Labyrinth, Adso and William find that the library resembles the globe:

“So the plan of the library reproduces the map of the world?”
“That’s probable. And the books are arranged according to the country of origin, or the place where their authors were born, or as in this instance, the place where they should have been born. (Eco 1998: 314)

As Adso states, architecture emulates the order of the universe. The idea of building as a microcosm of the macrocosm is a pertinent link between *Vāstu* and the sketches of the building given in the novel. Adele J. Haft (1995) says, “Eco’s abbey is a microcosm, his Aedificium is its focal point: a *speculum mundi* or ‘mirror of [that] world.’” If one follows *Vāstu*, the Aedificium is a minor construction within the large abbey. It is also the central construction in the abbey. The concept of *Vāstu nābhi* inscribes the idea of centrality. In the abbey the Aedificium obtains
centrality not by the physical position but because of the importance given to it. This is revealed through the elaborate descriptions given on the Aedificium. A considerable part of William’s and Adso’s investigation takes place in the Aedificium. It is with the description of this construction that the architectural surround develops. Therefore it can be called the Vāstu nābhi of the abbey. Nābhi is the centre of human body and a metaphor for centrality. The Aedificium is the centre of the building since it gains primary importance. It can be equated with the garbhagriha of Indian temples. Garbhagriha is the central building in a temple where god resides. The minor constructions in the temple are done in proportion to this. In the novel the monks live for knowledge and they consider knowledge as their God. So the Aedificium, the centre of all mystery, is the garbhagriha of the entire abbey. Moreover, “The Aedificium is older than the rest of the buildings (276), the rest of the buildings must have been built not in relation to the church but in relation to the Aedificium” (Hallissy 2001: 276-77). The master glazier of the abbey, Nicholas of Morimondo says, “. . . the Aedificium had been completed at least two centuries before” (Eco 1998: 85).

Reading the plan of the abbey within the text, there are ten buildings that draw our attention – the Aedificium, Church, Cloister, Dormitory, Chapter House, Balneary, Infirmary, Pigsties, Stables, and Smithy. Of this the Aedificium, which is considered the most important and widely accepted as deviant, has been analysed to test how far it is deviant. Haft in his analysis says, “Only the Aedificium disturbs the perfect symmetry of Eco’s abbey. The first sight of this building excites Adso’s rapturous description of its square shape converted into an octagon by the addition of four heptagonal towers, one at each corner” (Haft 1995). The omissions, if any, in the construction are worth analysing since the Aedificium is the most important part of the abbey as well as the novel.

4. CONSTRUCTIONAL ASYMMETRIES IN THE NOVEL

The structure of the Aedificium can be analysed borrowing the concept of Vāstu Purusa Maṇḍala, the architect’s square pad. The following lines from Manusyalayachandrika explain the formation of Vāstu Purusa Maṇḍala of a plot:

Treading through the maze
 naïyaḥ prāgudgrgā dasa dasai – kāśītkōsthe siva
gnyagrāh panca prthuvārmiguvākōrmiguṇako – sthstāstāda rjjvḥ
maṟāṇya?tharasāṣugābdigunasm – khyānairakoṣthstitaiḥ
sūtriryōgasamudbhavāni ca satam
vāṛjjyāṇi kudyādiṣu. (Moosath 80)

The slōka reveals that the maṇḍala is divided into 81 squares along with the figure of the universal man lying in the space (Fig. 1 & 2). When we place the plan of the Aedificium over this maṇḍala, the errors committed in executing the plan are revealed (Fig. 4). According to the rules of Vāstu, several important things should be taken into account while building a structure. After selecting the plot, Vāstu Puruṣa Maṇḍala should be traced out and it should be divided into 81 squares. As shown in Fig. 1, the lines indicate the veins of Vāstu Puruṣa

Fig. 1. Vāstu Puruṣa Maṇḍala divided into 81 squares with all maṛmās
The slōka shows that the joints formed by the combination of 8, 6, 5, 4, and 3 lines are generally known as Vāstu Mārmās. Out of them those formed by the combination of 8 lines are called Mahamārmās. They are the most vulnerable parts of Vāstu Puruṣa. So constructions such as pillars and heavy beams should be omitted from these positions. Besides, the body of the Vāstu Puruṣa should not be left incomplete. Other than the mahamārmās, there are thirty six mārmās joining six lines; eight joining five lines; twenty four joining four lines; and twenty eight joining three lines.
Fig. 3. The Aedificium - Eco’s Sketch

Fig. 4. Figure showing the Vastu Mandala of the Aedificium
Based on the rules of *Vāstu Puruṣa Maṇḍala*, the structure of the Aedificium is found faulty. From Fig. 4, we find that there are five points (marked x) at which the *Vāstu mārmās* are wounded since the weighty construction as part of the tower falls on this portion. Similarly the Aedificium mutilates the body of *Vāstu Puruṣa* by excluding the head, throat, thighs, and legs of the *Purusa* from the *maṇḍala*. In *Vāstu* this is called *vedham* (mutilation of the body). If it happens the consequences are dangerous: “If head, throat and thighs are subjected to *vedham* the result is death of the inhabitant. If legs are excluded it results in quarrel” (Moorthy 149). In the novel, deaths occur, and quarrels take place in relation to the Aedificium. Those who wanted to dive into the mysteries of Aedificium by entering it were dead. Jorge quarrels with William in relation to the discussions about the Aedificium, and an unpleasant talk between the two takes place finally when he enters the *finis Africae*, the most important room in the labyrinth.

There are other concepts in *Vāstu* that aid the study further. Drawing attention to the structure of the Aedificium, it resembles the square shaped building in *Vāstu* called the *Nālukettu*. But its octagonal shape reminds us of the Ettukettu buildings in *Vāstu*. From Fig. 3, it is evident that the Aedificium is a combination of *Nālukettu* and Ettukettu. But it does not serve the purpose of a *Nālukettu*. Both the *Nālukettu* and Ettukettu serve the purpose of uninterrupted energy flow. The central courtyard formed in such constructions leaves out the *Brahmastān* without roof, resulting in the unhindered positive energy flow. In the case of the Aedificium the presence of an open air space is not seen. The roof is closed, and for the flow of light there are windows. In Adso’s description of the Aedificium we see that the “three rows of windows proclaimed the triune rhythm of its elevation, so that what was physically squared on the earth was spiritually triangular in the sky” (Eco 1998: 22). If the roof appears triangular from the sky, it means that the roof top is closed. Unusually large windows are used for the provision of light which reinstates the absence of the open area. The closure symbolises the closure of positive spirit. In the description of the Scriptorium the presence of abundance of windows is perceptible:
three enormous windows opened on each of the longer sides, whereas a smaller window pierced each of the five external sides of each tower; eight high narrow windows, finally allowed light to enter from the octagonal central well. The abundance of windows meant that the great room was cheered by a constant diffused light, even on a winter afternoon. The panes were not coloured like church windows, and the lead-framed squares of clear glass allowed the light to enter in the purest possible fashion not modulated by human art, and thus to serve its purpose, which was to illuminate the work of reading and writing. (Eco 1998: 71-72)

The abbey is situated in an octagonal plot. Vāstu does not prefer octagonal shapes for plots. These are instances of disorder of the Vāstu of the building. Rather than going for a detailed description of the sickness of the abbey, Eco’s interest revolves round the architectural surround within which the sickness reigns. The faults of the architecture stand as a metaphor for the sickness that has enshrouded the whole abbey.

The abundance of glassed windows does not signify abundance of light, wind, and freedom, but a prop of feigned openness. The windows are hindrances for free flow of light and wind since they are mediated by glass. The windows stand for corrupt knowledge. Though they provide light even during the winter season and facilitate learning and scholarship, the privacy they enhanced led to curiosity for forbidden knowledge. Windows are related to the notion of secrecy, a value which is at the core of monastic life. And the enhancement of secrecy by the privatization of spaces is the reason for all maladies. The windows intended for the provision of knowledge turn out to be propagators of danger.

Another factor that does not follow the logic of Vāstu is the position of the well. It is said that the octagonal well is at the centre of the abbey. According to Vāstu, it is an unpardonable mistake since the central portion is the most fragile part of Vāstu Puruṣa. The well can either be in the eastern, north eastern, or southern positions. But here it is in the central octagon. Non-observance of this rule would debilitate the flow of positive energy. This adds to the malady that has overwhelmed the abbey.
Analysis of the plan reveals that the entrance is from the western part of the abbey. The entrance of the church also falls in the same direction. It is said that the church door opens westward. The altar faces the east so as to see the sun rise. Since the abbey has only one entrance from the west, it faces west, which is a rare orientation. Usually the orientation of a building is primarily given to east, only secondarily to north, and rarely to west and south.

![Fig. 5 The abbey entrance facing the church](image)

![Fig. 6 The sketch of the abbey by Eco](image)
The Vāstu Maṇḍala of the abbey can be estimated based on a 9X9 matrix. There are three types of divisions. We can divide it also into an 8X8 matrix or a 10X10 matrix. The matrix of 64 columns is used for houses, and those of great temples and churches can be divided into 100 columns. For the abbey a division of 91 columns is well enough. This is used for larger constructions like palaces that include small constructions within the boundary. Before looking into the Vāstu of the major buildings other than the Aedificium, within the abbey the Vāstu Maṇḍala of the abbey itself is taken into consideration. The largest possible square is determined as the Vāstu Maṇḍala (Nair 2012: 67). If so the Vāstu Maṇḍala of the abbey will be as shown in Fig. 7.

For finding out the positions of the buildings within the abbey a detailed sketch based on Eco’s is necessary. This is elaborated in Fig. 8.
This sketch shows that the construction of the abbey is out of the structure. There are buildings outside the *manḍala*. Only the church, the cloister, the eastern part of the Aedificium, Dormitory, Chapterhouse and a part of Smithy are within the *manḍala*. This structural analysis unexpectedly illustrates the instability of the abbey in standing within the structure. Therefore the architecture foreshadows the rotten state of the abbey.

In Fig. 8, the *Vāstu Puruṣa Manḍala* of the abbey is shown. It is not strictly based on the mathematical calculations of *Vāstu Sastra*. This is because the novel provides no accurate measurements, and only the positions and directions are partially given. So a rough sketch of the largest possible square is drawn, which is based on Eco’s sketch of the plot. Based on the figure it is possible to test whether the organs are mutilated. The outcome is that there are many buildings that are outside the structure.

A *manḍala* is divided into four parts – *Asura*, *manuṣya*, *dēva*, and *yama* (Fig. 9). The auspicious positions for house construction are *manuṣya* and *dēva* parts of the mandala. But here the dormitory where the monks live is positioned in *yama* position. Yama is the god of death and the result of the construction in this part is death. This seems to build an architectural surround where there is uncontrollable influence of death.

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Fig. 9 Parts of *Vāstu* in a plot
Analysing the positions occupied by different rooms in the abbey in the light of Vāstu Sastra, it may be seen that there are serious omissions in the plan. For example, while reading the plan of the kitchen there are serious errors in its execution. Eco gives the sketch of the kitchen like this:

‘Facing the garden is the door leading to the kitchen,’ he [Severinus] said, ‘but Kitchen occupies only the western half of the ground floor; in the other half is the refectory. And at the source entrance, which you reach from behind the choir in the church, there are two other doors leading to the kitchen and the refectory.’

The kitchen was a vast smoke-filled entrance hall, where many servants were already busy preparing the food for supper. (Eco 1998: 69)

The kitchen is situated in the west tower. ‘K’ stands for kitchen (Fig. 10). The other half accommodates the refectory. South east is the auspicious position for the kitchen. But here it is in the south west position of the west tower. This position, is not favourable, and generates tensions in the inhabitants (Moorthy 2010: 442). The novel reveals that the kitchen is a vast area which is never advisable. South east is the position of Nṛiti, or devil. Extensive constructions in this position amplify the flow of negative energy, and thereby subsume the positive mood of the residence. There are also multiple entrances to the kitchen. The kitchen is also one of the entrances to the library. According to Fig. 8, the second
half of the ground floor is situated in the south east position which is not at all entertained in Vāstu.

The play of negative forces can be seen in Adso’s uncontrollable passion for the girl whom he meets in the kitchen. This episode shows how the architectural body triggers and facilitates bodily desires. Adso explains the surge of his passion as a sudden epiphany on reading the *Book of Revelation* and the artist’s account of the “woman’s form”:

I compared her face, her bosom, her curving thighs with the statue of the Virgin I had seen with Ubertino. The line was different, but this mulier also seemed very beautiful to me. I thought I should not dwell on these notions, and I turned several more pages. I found another woman, but this time it was the whore of Babylon. I was not so much struck by her form as by the thought that she, too, was a woman like the other, and yet this one was the vessel of every vice, whereas the other was the receptacle of every virtue. But the forms were womanly in both cases, and at a certain point I could no longer understand what distinguished them. Again I felt an inner agitation; the image of the Virgin in the church became superimposed on that of the beautiful Margaret. ‘I am damned!’ I said to myself. Or, ‘I am mad.’ And I decided I should leave the library. (Eco 1998: 241)

As he realises that he is overcome by bodily desires which he should avoid as a novice, he goes out of the library, and reaches the refectory which is near the kitchen. But the architectural peculiarities facilitate his vision of the girl with whom he gets into a relation. He records:

The light of the moon came through the windows, very radiant, and hardly needed the lamp, which would have been indispensable for cells and for passages of the library . . . . Since the kitchen was near, I crossed the refectory and slowly opened one of the doors that led to the second half of the ground floor of the Aedificium. (Eco 1998: 242)

Adso felt the presence of someone else and he blew out his lamp, and the other person also did the same: “But in vain, because the moonlight
illuminated the kitchen sufficiently to cast before me one or more confused shadows on the floor” (242). The light-induced architecture of the kitchen gives the vision of the person present or at least a feeling of the presence through the play of light and shadow: “From the shadows, in fact, came a groan, a kind of subdued weeping, rhythmic sobs of fear” (242). Adso in his curiosity to know the identity of the person “approached the shadow, until, in the moonlight that fell from the high windows” (243). Later he “found [himself] against her body, feeling its warmth and the sharp perfume of unguents never known before” (246).

There are other wrongly positioned buildings in the abbey. According to Vāstu, “East and West are related to solar pranik flow” (Sahasrabudhe 2010: 11). The eastern side, which is supposed to be a source of positive energy flow, should be used for those constructions that are integral to the lives of human beings. But the plan of the abbey entails the inversion of positive spirit due to wrongly positioned constructions. Adso says:

There almost against the outside wall, where it joined the east tower of the Aedificium, were the stables; the swineherds were covering the jar containing the pig's blood. We noticed that behind the stables the outside wall was lower, so that one could look over it. Beyond the sheer drop of the walls, the terrain that sloped dizzyingly down was covered with loose dirt that the snow could not completely hide. (Eco 1998: 85)

The auspicious position for stables is north west (Moorthy 2010: 425). But here it is on the eastern side. Similar misplaced buildings are further seen in the abbey. According to Vāstu, the infirmary is supposed to be on the southern part of north eastern side. But in the abbey it is on the western side. The constructions near worshipping places should not disturb them. It should not hamper the existence of God, who is superior to all. Houses should not be constructed higher than temples, and the limits concerning the proximity of a worshipping place near the place of residence are testimonies to this account. Vāstu, an architectural discourse backed by spirituality, advocates the superiority and centrality of God. Usually temples and churches are seen as integral to the smooth life of human beings, and they occupy the centre of energy in a place. Medieval
architectural discourse bears a close similarity to the age-old Indian architectural discourse with regard to religion. It opens up immense possibilities of interpretation based on the centrality of religion and God. As John Harvey observes, “For Medieval architects, geometry was not just a school subject, but the science used by God himself to create the world. Using the rules of Geometry ‘the very laws that order heaven and earth,’ the architect could create a microcosm according to the same principle by which God created the macrocosm” (1985: 70). But the architectural surround of the abbey subverts this notion.

In the novel, by assigning the central position to the Aedificium, the abode of learning, the Benedictine notion of centrality of the church and God is subverted. According to the Benedictine rule, “the church is the physical as well as the spiritual centre of monastic life and all other buildings are planned in relation to it” (Hallissy 277). The subversion lies in considering the Aedificium as the centre or the reference point for other buildings in the abbey. What is noteworthy about the subversion is that it is done through the structuring and subsequent hierarchization of architectural spaces. The church, which appears in the upper strata of the pyramid, loses its position in the restructuring process. According to Anthony C. Meisel and M. L. del Mastro, “the composite plan of a medieval Benedictine monastery shows a library structure less than a quarter of the size of the church building, and even that small space is shared with living quarters for the abbot” (1975: 114 – 15). The divergence from the Benedictine notion amply substantiates the priority the monks have given for secular learning, over God. From the novel it is evident that anything that evokes laughter is forbidden in the monastery. Laughter is a not a religious emotion. Therefore a senior monk like Jorge forbids reading those books that evoke laughter.

The text also raises the question of which is dominant - knowledge or faith. Adso finds that the Monks are “dominated by the library” (Eco 1998: 184). This is complimented by the architecture of the abbey. The labyrinthine library is in the Aedificium. The extensive windows in the Scriptorium and its vastness which could accommodate forty persons in learning at the same time also testify to the superiority accorded to knowledge. Adso expresses his wonder when he sees the extensive scriptorium:
When we reached the top of the stairs, we went through the north tower into the scriptorium, and there I could not suppress a cry of wonder. This floor was not divided in two like the one below, and therefore it appeared to my eyes in all its spacious immensity. The ceilings, curved and not too high (lower than in church, but still higher than in any chapter house I ever saw), supported by sturdy pillars, enclosed a space suffused with the most beautiful light, because three enormous windows opened on each of the longer sides, whereas a smaller window pierced each of the five external sides of each tower; eight high narrow windows, finally allowed light to enter from the octagonal central well. (Eco 1998: 71)

The vastness of the place of learning which is more spacious than the church metaphorically represents the prioritization of knowledge over faith. Benno says that the seduction of knowledge is for monks. The centrality of the library is revealed through Adso’s words: “I was not surprised that the mystery of the crimes should involve the library. For these men devoted to writing, the library was at once the celestial Jerusalem and an underground world on the border between terra incognita and Hades” (184). Jerusalem is geographically the centre of the world. So in the above words with reference to Jerusalem, the centrality of the library is established. These words are pregnant enough to reveal the architectural fallacy involved and the consequences upon human life. From the perspective of Vâstu the centrality assigned to the library over the church, the metaphors for knowledge and faith, is unpardonable. Faith requires blind credulity in dogmatic preaching. But knowledge involves interrogation and negotiation.

The privileging of knowledge can be seen as a process of decentring of absolute faith. It also re-centres knowledge, which is further decentred by the architectural props carefully executed throughout the story. The irregularity of the architecture of the spaces of learning and the death of those who experienced these spaces result in the decentring of knowledge. In the story the only building that is destroyed is the Aedificium, the centre of learning and knowledge. This also reinforces the idea of decentring.
There are self-reflexive references to the architectonics of the novel in several of its parts. Such references open up the possibility of reading a work of art in the light of an architectural science. This is traceable in the description of Adelmo’s psalter which is parallel to the description of the abbey with reflections upon the Vāstu-based notion of architecture as a microcosm of the universe:

We approached what had been Adelmo’s working place, where the pages of a richly illuminated psalter still lay. They were folios of the finest vellum – that queen among parchments – and the last was still fixed to the desk. Just scraped with pumice stone and softened with chalk, it had been smoothed with the plane, and, from the tiny holes made on the sides with a fine stylus, all the lines that were to have guided the artist’s hand had been traced. The first half had already been covered with writing, and the monk had begun to sketch the illustrations in the margins. . . . This was a psalter in whose margins was delineated a world reversed with respect to the one to which our senses have accustomed us. As if at the border of a discourse that is by definition the discourse of truth, there proceeded, closely linked to it, through wondrous allusions in aenigmate, a discourse of falsehood on a topsy-turvey universe, in which the dogs flee before the hare, and deer hunt the lion. (Eco 1998: 76)

The pages by Adelmo show an inverted world: “‘Babuoins: that is what they call them in Gaul,’ Malachi said. Adelmo learned his art in your country, although he studied also in France. Baboons, that is to say: monkeys from Africa. Figures of an inverted world, where houses stand on the tip of a steeple and the earth is above the sky” (78). The persons who die in the novel meet their destiny because of their desire to find the discourse on comedy by Aristotle. So the structure of the psalter itself anticipates the reason of death. The eagerness to know the path to finis Africae in the labyrinth, where the second part of Aristotle’s Poetics is kept, culminated in the deaths. Through the illustrations Adelmo was hinting at the inverted nature of the abbey which has been discussing. The prohibition of laughter shows the inverted nature of the world where
he tried to regenerate laughter, which is a gift only given to man. His illustrations are also a pointer to the necessity of inverting this world, which is already inverted by abnormalities. The mission which was inaugurated by Adelmo and carried out by several others turns out to have been in vain in the burning up of the library. Though the loss of the book on comedy shows the failure of the mission, the burning of the faulty architectural body opens up a hope for re-inverting the inverted world.

5. CONCLUSION

The novel presents restrained spaces as a cause of disaster. Access denied becomes the thrust of the story. The enclosure of certain spaces as inaccessible is the reason for all curiosity which resulted in the loss of life: “The library had been doomed by its own impenetrability, by the mystery that protected it, by its few entrances” (Eco 1998: 489). Gins and Arakawa (2002) remark: “Isolating persons from their architectural surrounds leads to a dualism no less pernicious than that of body and mind” (44).

In The Name of the Rose Eco makes us walk taking different paths of interpretation. He believes that the reader “plays an active role in textual interpretation because signs are constructed according to the inferential model. . . .” Signs lead the reader to “infinite series of progressive consequences” (Eco 1979: 44). It is the infinite possibilities that Eco has provided in the novel that entertains readings such as the present one based on an architectural discourse such as Vāstu Sastra. He has provided sufficient gaps to imagine the buildings based on the reader’s experience. The words create different images and different possibilities of viewing the abbey and the maladies that occurred. It is the freedom that an open text gives.
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