Rooms that judge: domestic space, moral surveillance, and selfhood in Uzbek and English literary discourse

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Annotation *This article examines domestic space as a conceptual-metaphorical structure of moral surveillance and selfhood formation in Uzbek and English literary discourse. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory and spatial literary criticism, it compares Abdulla Qahhor's "Dahshat," O'tkir Hoshimov's Ikki eshik orasi, Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea, and Kazuo Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day. The study argues that houses, rooms, compounds, thresholds, attics, halls, windows, and walls function not only as narrative settings but also as cognitive and ideological structures through which social power becomes visible and internalized. The governing metaphor, THE HOUSE IS A MORAL AUTHORITY, is analyzed in relation to patriarchal custom, Soviet ideological surveillance, colonial authority, racial hierarchy, and English class discipline. The comparative reading shows that domestic space may judge, discipline, restrict, or absorb selfhood while preserving culturally specific forms of resistance, memory, and moral witness. It also demonstrates how metaphor organizes plot, character, and ethical conflict.*

Keywords *Conceptual metaphor, domestic space, moral surveillance, selfhood, Uzbek literature, English literary discourse*

Hukm chiqaruvchi xonalar: o'zbek va ingliz adabiy diskursida maishiy makon, axloqiy kuzatuv va o'zlik

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Annotatsiya *Ushbu maqolada maishiy makon o'zbek va ingliz adabiy diskursida axloqiy kuzatuv hamda o'zlik shakllanishining konseptual-metaforik tuzilmasi sifatida tadqiq etiladi. Konseptual metafora nazariyasi va makoniy adabiyotshunoslikka tayangan holda Abdulla Qahhorning "Dahshat" hikoyasi, O'tkir Hoshimovning Ikki eshik orasi romani, Jean Rhysning Wide Sargasso Sea hamda Kazuo Ishiguroning The Remains of the Day romanlari qiyosiy tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot uy, xona, hovli, ostona, chordoq, zal, deraza va devor shunchaki badiiy fon emas, balki ijtimoiy hokimiyatni ko'rinadigan qiluvchi hamda personajlar ongiga singdiruvchi kognitiv va ideologik tuzilmalar ekanini ko'rsatadi. Asosiy metafora THE HOUSE IS A MORAL AUTHORITY patriarxal urf-odat, sovetcha ideologik nazorat, irqiy iyerarxiya va ingliz sinfiy intizomi bilan bog'liq holda ochib beriladi. Qiyosiy yondashuv maishiy makon o'zlikni hukm qilishi, cheklashi yoki ichki tarzda bo'ysundirishi mumkinligini yoritadi. Shuningdek, metafora syujet, obraz, xotira va axloqiy qarorlar tizimini qanday tashkil etishi, hamda madaniy farqlarni ochishda qanchalik samarali ekanligi ham*

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ko'rsatiladi. Natijalar qiyosiy adabiyotshunoslik uchun muhim nazariy xulosalar beradi.

Kalit so'zlar *Konseptual metafora, maishiy makon, axloqiy kuzatuv, o'zlik, o'zbek adabiyoti, ingliz adabiy diskursi*

Судящие комнаты: домашнее пространство, нравственный надзор и субъектность в узбекском и английском литературном дискурсе

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Аннотация *В статье рассматривается домашнее пространство как концептуально-метафорическая структура нравственного надзора и формирования субъектности в узбекском и английском литературном дискурсе. Опираясь на теорию концептуальной метафоры и пространственную литературную критику, работа сопоставляет рассказ Абдуллы Каххара «Дахшат», роман Уткира Хошимова Ikki eshik orasi, роман Джин Рис Wide Sargasso Sea и роман Кадзуо Исигуро The Remains of the Day. Доказывается, что дом, комната, двор, порог, чердак, зал, окно и стена выступают не только как элементы художественного пространства, но и как когнитивные и идеологические структуры, через которые социальная власть становится видимой и внутренне усваивается персонажами. Центральная метафора THE HOUSE IS A MORAL AUTHORITY анализируется в связи с патриархальным обычаем, советским идеологическим надзором, колониальной властью, расовой иерархией и английской классовой дисциплиной. Сравнительный анализ показывает, что домашнее пространство способно судить, дисциплинировать, ограничивать или поглощать субъектность, сохраняя культурно специфические формы сопротивления, памяти и нравственного свидетельства. Такой подход помогает связать метафору с сюжетом, образом персонажа, идеологией и этическим конфликтом.*

Ключевые слова *Концептуальная метафора, домашнее пространство, нравственный надзор, субъектность, узбекская литература, английский литературный дискурс*

Introduction

A room is never merely a room in literary fiction. The house, compound, great hall, corridor, threshold, window, attic, or pantry may become a moral environment that watches its inhabitants and measures them against social norms. This article treats such interiors as judging rooms: domestic spaces that translate abstract authority into visible architecture and thereby shape the selfhood of the characters who live inside them.

The article compares four texts: Abdulla Qahhor's short story "Dahshat," O'tkir Hoshimov's novel Ikki eshik orasi, Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea, and Kazuo Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day. The selection brings together Uzbek and English literary discourse not to claim direct influence, but to show how similar spatial metaphors acquire different historical meanings. In Qahhor and Hoshimov, domestic space is shaped by patriarchal custom, communal visibility, and Soviet ideological pressure. In Rhys and Ishiguro, it is shaped by colonial hierarchy, racialized possession, and English class discipline.

The central argument is that domestic space in these works functions as an active conceptual structure rather than a passive narrative setting. The governing metaphor may be formulated as THE HOUSE IS A MORAL AUTHORITY. Related mappings include THE ROOM IS SURVEILLANCE, SELFHOOD IS INHABITED SPACE, MORAL CHOICE IS CROSSING A THRESHOLD, and IDENTITY LOSS IS SPATIAL CONSTRICTION. Through these mappings, physical architecture becomes a cognitive model for moral judgment, social pressure, and the unstable formation of selfhood.

The problem is important because literary houses often appear harmless precisely when they are most ideological. A domestic room may seem private, but it can reproduce the expectations of family, community, state, empire, or class. Such a space judges not through explicit legal punishment alone, but through shame, silence, habit, visibility, and inherited rules of behavior. For this reason, domestic space is especially useful for studying the relation between selfhood and authority: it is where social power becomes intimate.

The article also responds to a methodological need in comparative literary studies. Uzbek prose has often been discussed through social, historical, or moral categories, while Anglophone texts such as Wide Sargasso Sea and The Remains of the Day have been widely analyzed through postcolonial, feminist, or memory studies. Reading them together through spatial metaphor does not erase these traditions. Instead, it offers a shared analytical vocabulary for explaining how culturally different forms of power become narratively visible through rooms and thresholds.

Theoretical framework

Conceptual Metaphor Theory provides the main cognitive basis for the analysis. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphor is not only a decorative feature of language but a basic mechanism of thought, allowing abstract experience to be understood through concrete embodied domains. Spatial experience is especially important because human beings understand power, freedom, constraint, identity, and morality through containment, movement, boundary, orientation, and visibility. Literary texts can intensify such mappings, extending conventional spatial metaphors into plot, character, and narrative form (Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Semino, 2008).

Spatial theory helps explain why the domestic interior is never ideologically neutral. Bachelard (1964) famously describes the house as a shelter for memory and imagination, but later theories complicate this idealization. Lefebvre (1991) argues that space is socially produced, while Foucault (1977) shows how spatial arrangements can discipline bodies and internalize surveillance. Feminist geography further demonstrates that domestic space may be both home and prison, especially where gendered and social hierarchies restrict mobility and visibility (Massey, 1994; Rose, 1993).

Combining these approaches makes it possible to read domestic architecture as a metaphorical system. In this article, the judging room is not simply a symbol. It is a literary and cognitive structure in which walls, doors, gates, windows, halls, and rooms organize the relation between private life and public authority. The method therefore focuses on how concrete spaces generate abstract meanings of shame, obedience, fear, resistance, discipline, and moral witness.

Bachelard's account of the house remains useful because it recognizes that domestic interiors shape memory and imagination (Bachelard, 1964). However, the texts examined here repeatedly overturn the reassuring image of the house as shelter. Their rooms do not simply protect inwardness; they expose it to judgment. This reversal is precisely why Lefebvre's and Foucault's theories are necessary. If space is socially produced, then the house can carry the invisible structure of the social order. If surveillance can become internalized, then the judging room may function even when no visible watcher is present.

The feminist dimension of this framework is equally significant. Massey (1994) and Rose (1993) show that domestic space is often organized by gendered divisions between inside and outside, protection and confinement, belonging and exclusion. In the present corpus, such divisions affect women directly in Qahhor and Rhys, but they also structure male selfhood in Hoshimov and Ishiguro. Stevens, for example, is not confined as Antoinette is, yet his identity is disciplined by a domestic order that demands emotional invisibility.

Methodology

The study uses spatial-metaphorical close reading. First, it identifies scenes where domestic interiors or boundaries become central to the narrative: compounds, rooms, thresholds, windows, walls, attics, halls, and pantries. Second, it determines which conceptual mappings are activated by these spaces. Third, it examines how those mappings function within each narrative's treatment of moral authority and selfhood. Finally, it compares the Uzbek and English corpora in order to distinguish shared embodied logic from culturally specific historical content.

The four primary texts were selected because domestic space is structurally important in all of them. In "Dahshat," the patriarchal compound organizes fear, gendered enclosure, and social death. In Ikki eshik orasi, the title itself presents the threshold as a moral zone between private truth and public ideology. In Wide Sargasso Sea, the movement from estate to honeymoon house to attic stages the gradual spatial reduction of Antoinette's identity. In The Remains of the Day, Darlington Hall becomes the moral architecture through which Stevens understands dignity, loyalty, and service.

The comparison is differential rather than universalizing. The article does not treat the judging room as an identical archetype in all four works. Instead, it asks what each room judges, whose authority it embodies, what form of selfhood it produces or damages, and what possibilities of resistance remain available within or beyond it.

Because the study is limited to four primary works, its purpose is interpretive depth rather than statistical representativeness. The selected texts are read as exemplary cases in which domestic architecture performs unusually visible moral and ideological work. The analysis therefore privileges scenes of spatial pressure: moments when a character approaches a gate, enters or leaves a room, is watched through a window, stands before a wall, occupies a hall, or imagines the self as enclosed, displaced, or divided.

The article also treats translation as part of the method. Uzbek terms connected with domestic space, such as hovli, dargoh, ostona, ichkari, and tashqari, carry cultural meanings that cannot always be fully replaced by English equivalents. For this reason, the analysis emphasizes the conceptual force of these terms: enclosure, household authority, threshold, inside, and outside. The aim is not to flatten Uzbek spatial vocabulary into English categories, but to show how both traditions use domestic architecture to organize moral experience.

The Uzbek Corpus

In Qahhor's "Dahshat," domestic space is organized around the traditional compound, a seemingly private interior that functions as a structure of patriarchal judgment. The

compound does not protect Unsinnoy; it encloses her within an order where female movement, speech, and value are controlled by custom and the husband's authority (Qahhor, 1935). The story's most powerful conceptual mapping is THE COMPOUND IS A LIVING GRAVE. The actual graveyard that Unsinnoy crosses appears less terrifying than the household she has left, because the household has already imposed a kind of social death upon her.

The window and gate intensify this spatial logic. The window is not a sign of openness; it becomes a one-way instrument of surveillance. The gate, by contrast, marks both the possibility of departure and the danger of exclusion. When Unsinnoy leaves the compound, she crosses a boundary that exposes the violence of the domestic order but does not provide secure freedom. The story therefore presents resistance as spatial exit, yet also shows that patriarchal judgment continues to operate even beyond the walls of the house.

Hoshimov's Ikki eshik orasi develops a different but related version of the judging room. Here the central figure is the threshold, the space between two doors. The title can be read through the mapping MORAL CHOICE IS CROSSING A THRESHOLD. Characters must live between private memory and public ideology, between what they know and what the Soviet social order demands them to say. The domestic interior is no longer governed only by family or custom; it is penetrated by political surveillance.

The arrest and investigation scenes show ideology entering the home, handling books and papers, and reclassifying family life as political evidence (Hoshimov, 2012). The wall, too, becomes ideological when Stalin's portrait appears as an ordinary object within everyday space. In this setting, surveillance has become domestic. The home cannot fully protect the self, but it can preserve moral witness through memory, testimony, and inner speech. Oqsoqol's moral position and the mother's interior monologues show that threshold space may still sustain integrity when public life is ruled by fear.

Thus, the Uzbek corpus presents two stages of domestic judgment. In Qahhor, authority is personal, patriarchal, and concentrated in the compound. In Hoshimov, authority becomes systemic, ideological, and able to enter any room. Yet both texts preserve some form of resistance: the act of leaving, the symbolic refusal of the compound, the threshold between two doors, and the private voice that refuses to let public ideology erase witnessed truth.

The gendered structure of the compound is crucial. In the world of "Dahshat," the inner domestic space is presented as the proper place for women, but that properness is inseparable from surveillance (Qahhor, 1935). The more securely the household claims to protect female honor, the more thoroughly it turns honor into spatial restriction. The metaphor of the living grave therefore condenses a whole social order: the house is alive because people continue to move and speak inside it, yet it is a grave because those movements are already determined by patriarchal judgment.

Nodirmohbegim's response to Unsinnoy's death gives the story its moral counterpoint. Her symbolic gesture against the compound does not change the structure of power, but it exposes the falseness of the household's moral authority. The judging room depends on being accepted as natural; her refusal interrupts that acceptance. In this sense, Qahhor's spatial irony is not merely descriptive. It allows the reader to see that the room which claims to preserve order has itself become ethically disordered.

In Hoshimov's novel, the social meaning of the threshold is broader because Soviet authority reorganizes the relation between private and public life. The home remains emotionally central, but it is no longer fully separable from the school, collective farm, teahouse, or administrative office. Political language crosses the threshold and enters

family biography. Once a father is labelled an enemy, the child, the mother, the house, and even the past become vulnerable to reinterpretation. The judging room thus expands from the domestic interior to the entire ideological environment.

Yet Ikki eshik orasi also insists that moral memory can survive inside damaged space. The novel's multiple voices function like rooms of testimony. Each narrator preserves a partial truth that public ideology has tried to simplify or erase. This narrative structure supports the spatial metaphor: selfhood is not a single closed interior but a set of remembered rooms connected by thresholds. The ethical task is to keep those thresholds open so that private truth is not completely absorbed by public accusation.

The English Corpus

In Wide Sargasso Sea, domestic space judges Antoinette through colonial, racial, and patriarchal categories. Coulibri, Granbois, and Thornfield Hall are not merely settings through which she moves; they are stages in a spatial reduction of identity. The governing mapping is IDENTITY LOSS IS SPATIAL CONSTRICTION. As Antoinette's physical world narrows, her name, agency, memory, and social legibility are progressively taken from her (Rhys, 1966).

Coulibri first presents the house as social exposure rather than shelter. The family is judged by both colonial white society and the Black Jamaican community, and the decaying estate materializes this double exclusion. Granbois initially appears closer to Antoinette's own world, but Rochester's alienation transforms the house into a site of colonial classification. His renaming of Antoinette as Bertha is both psychological and spatial: it relocates her into an English symbolic order that cannot recognize her Creole identity.

The attic at Thornfield Hall is the judging room in its most extreme form. It does not merely contain madness; it helps produce the madness it claims to contain. Gilbert and Gubar's (1979) figure of the madwoman in the attic is useful here, but Rhys radicalizes it through colonial and racial displacement, as Spivak (1985) also emphasizes. Antoinette's final fire destroys the house that confines her, yet this escape is also self-destruction. The space has so thoroughly defined her that she cannot burn it without burning the life it has reduced.

Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day offers a quieter but equally powerful version of the judging room. Darlington Hall does not imprison Stevens by force; it inhabits him. The dominant mapping is THE HOUSE IS THE SELF. Stevens builds his identity around the house's hierarchy, rituals, and ideal of dignity (Ishiguro, 1989). His moral life is therefore architectural: corridors, pantries, service rooms, and great halls become internal models of obedience and self-restraint.

The pantry reveals the paradox of Stevens's selfhood. It is the room that should be most private, yet it becomes the space of his strictest self-surveillance. Even emotional intimacy with Miss Kenton is refused because it threatens the professional order he has internalized. Darlington Hall also teaches him to translate moral compromise into duty, especially in his obedience to Lord Darlington. Unlike Antoinette, Stevens can physically leave the house, but the journey proves that he carries its judgment within himself.

Rhys's treatment of Coulibri is especially important because the estate is not only a family home but also a remnant of colonial plantation history. Its decay makes visible the collapse of an old hierarchy, but it does not create a just new order. Antoinette's family is judged by those who resent former slave-owning power and by English norms that refuse Creole belonging. The house therefore materializes a double bind: it marks Antoinette as connected to colonial privilege and at the same time as excluded from secure whiteness.

Granbois intensifies this instability because it is filtered through Rochester's perception. The landscape and house become excessive in his eyes, and his discomfort turns

into authority. He cannot inhabit the Caribbean space on its own terms, so he converts it into evidence against Antoinette. The domestic interior becomes a colonial courtroom in which unfamiliarity is treated as guilt. Renaming her Bertha is the linguistic equivalent of locking a door: it closes the space in which Antoinette's own memory and identity could remain intelligible.

The Remains of the Day differs because Stevens experiences the house as vocation rather than imprisonment. Nevertheless, the effect is still disciplinary. Darlington Hall gives him a vocabulary of greatness, dignity, and service, but that vocabulary teaches him to distrust spontaneous feeling and moral doubt. When he serves the house perfectly, he also narrows the range of what he permits himself to know. The judging room is therefore internalized as professional conscience.

Miss Kenton's role clarifies what Stevens loses. She repeatedly tries to transform service space into relational space: a pantry with flowers, a corridor with conversation, a professional routine with emotional recognition. Stevens rejects these openings because they would require him to inhabit the house differently. In Rhys, the room destroys selfhood through forced confinement; in Ishiguro, the room destroys possibility through voluntary obedience. Both novels show that domestic order can become ethically dangerous when it appears respectable, beautiful, or inevitable.

Comparative discussion

Across both corpora, domestic space reverses its expected meaning. Home does not reliably shelter; the room does not guarantee privacy; the window does not simply open toward freedom; the threshold does not always secure escape. In all four texts, domestic architecture becomes a source domain for abstract moral and ideological experience. The shared metaphor THE HOUSE IS A MORAL AUTHORITY makes social power visible by giving it walls, doors, windows, gates, halls, and rooms.

The sources of judgment, however, differ. In the Uzbek corpus, the judging room is linked to patriarchal custom and Soviet ideological intrusion. In Qahhor, the compound judges women by gendered obedience and social honor. In Hoshimov, the Soviet state enters domestic life and turns biography, memory, and even school experience into evidence of political loyalty or guilt. In the English corpus, Rhys presents the house as colonial and racial possession, while Ishiguro presents the great house as class discipline internalized as dignity.

The most important contrast concerns resistance. The Uzbek texts preserve threshold spaces where moral integrity remains possible: the graveyard that exposes the deadliness of the compound, the gate that marks refusal, the space between two doors, and the private testimony that survives ideological pressure. The English texts present the judging room as more totalizing. Antoinette's resistance destroys the house but also herself, while Stevens's late journey cannot free him from the house he has already internalized.

This difference confirms Kövecses's (2005) argument that conceptual metaphors may be grounded in shared bodily experience while acquiring culturally specific meanings. The embodied experience of enclosure, movement, and visibility is common, but its literary meaning depends on the historical forces that occupy the domestic interior. Patriarchal custom, Soviet surveillance, colonial possession, racial hierarchy, and class service all use the same spatial grammar differently.

The figure of the wall illustrates the comparison. In Qahhor, walls and gates divide the female interior from the social exterior. In Hoshimov, the wall can carry the political gaze, as when a portrait transforms an everyday space into an ideological one. In Rhys, walls progressively reduce Antoinette's world until identity becomes indistinguishable from confinement. In Ishiguro, the walls of Darlington Hall are carried inward, becoming habits of narration, restraint, and denial. The

same spatial feature therefore performs different historical work.

Another shared feature is the tension between visibility and invisibility. Unsinnoy is judged by a household that controls when she may appear and where she may go. Robiya's family becomes politically visible in a way that turns private life into accusation. Antoinette is made hypervisible as racialized, sexualized, and mad. Stevens, by contrast, makes himself invisible in order to serve. These different forms of visibility show that surveillance does not always operate by the same method; it can expose, conceal, rename, silence, or train the self to disappear.

The comparative value of the judging room lies in its balance between similarity and difference. Similarity appears in the shared embodied logic of enclosure, threshold, direction, and visibility. Difference appears in the historical authority that occupies the room. This balance prevents the analysis from reducing Uzbek and English texts to the same pattern, while still allowing them to illuminate one another. The result is a cross-cultural model of domestic space as a moral technology.

Conclusion

The analysis has shown that domestic space in the selected Uzbek and English texts is never merely background. It functions as a conceptual-metaphorical structure through which literature represents moral authority, surveillance, and fragile selfhood. The house, room, compound, threshold, attic, hall, pantry, window, and wall become cognitive and ideological forms that judge, discipline, restrict, or absorb those who inhabit them.

In Qahhor's "Dahshat," the compound becomes a living grave in which patriarchal custom buries female selfhood. In Hoshimov's Ikki eshik orasi, the threshold becomes a moral space where private truth struggles against Soviet ideological visibility. In Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea, domestic space reduces Antoinette's identity through colonial and patriarchal confinement. In Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day, Darlington Hall becomes the internal architecture of Stevens's self-erasure.

The comparative reading demonstrates that conceptual metaphor in literature organizes not only isolated expressions but also plot, character, spatial design, and ethical conflict. The judging room is therefore a productive framework for comparative literary analysis because it connects embodied spatial experience with historically specific forms of power. Across the Uzbek and English corpora, rooms judge differently, but in each case they reveal how authority enters the intimate spaces where selfhood is formed.

The corrected scope of the article therefore remains focused: it does not attempt to survey all domestic-space imagery in Uzbek and English literature. Instead, it demonstrates through four concentrated examples that the domestic interior is one of the most powerful literary forms for representing the pressure of social authority on private life. The judging room names this form and makes its cognitive, spatial, and ideological dimensions visible.

Future research may extend this approach to other Central Asian, postcolonial, or modernist texts, especially works in which the mahalla, apartment, estate, school, or workplace functions as a moralized interior. Such research would further test how conceptual metaphors of space change across languages, genres, and historical periods. The present article establishes the foundation for that broader inquiry by showing that rooms do not merely contain literary characters; they help produce the moral worlds in which those characters become selves.

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