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THRESHOLDS OF BELONGING: LIMINAL SPACE AND CULTURAL PASSAGE IN TO THE LIGHTHOUSE AND IKKI ESHIK ORASI

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Abstract This article offers a comparative reading of Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse (1927) and O'tkir Hoshimov's Ikki eshik orasi (1986) through the interlocking lenses of liminality and threshold poetics. Departing from the well-charted question of childhood memory, it argues that both novels organise their meaning around a threshold — the window in Woolf and the door in Hoshimov — that operates at once as an architectural feature, a narrative device, and a figure for existential and cultural passage. Drawing on Arnold van Gennep's and Victor Turner's anthropology of the rite of passage, Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope of the threshold, Gaston Bachelard's phenomenology of the half-open door, and Homi Bhabha's notion of interstitial "third space," the study shows that the two writers put the threshold to opposite ends. In Woolf, the window and the deferred voyage frame an individual, existential liminality that remains suspended and elegiac, extended into the emptied ten-year interregnum of "Time Passes." In Hoshimov, the "space between two doors" names a collective, cultural liminality between tradition and modernity that the narrator finally crosses and integrates. Threshold poetics thus emerges as a shared structural grammar of world literature that nevertheless encodes divergent cultural models of selfhood: separation and vision in the English modernist tradition, passage and communal continuity in the Uzbek. The article contributes a new theoretical frame for two canonical works and a portable method for cross-cultural spatial analysis.

Keywords: liminality; threshold poetics; chronotope; spatial symbolism; comparative literature; Virginia Woolf; O'tkir Hoshimov; cultural belonging; third space; phenomenology of place.

1. Introduction Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse and O'tkir Hoshimov's Ikki eshik orasi belong to two literary formations that rarely meet: English high modernism of the interwar decades and Uzbek prose of the late-Soviet period. Each has generated a substantial critical tradition within its own culture, yet the two are seldom brought into comparison, and when they are, the point of contact has almost always been the theme of childhood or of memory. This article proposes a different meeting point. It reads the two novels together through the figure that both, in their distinct idioms, place at the structural centre of their imaginative worlds: the threshold.

The threshold is not incidental to either book. Woolf titles the long opening movement of hers "The Window," and the window — the pane through which Mrs Ramsay is seen, beyond which the lighthouse stands across the bay — governs the entire architecture of vision and desire in the first part. Hoshimov goes further still and lifts the threshold into his title. Ikki eshik orasi, "between two doors," names not a place but a position, a standing-between that the narrative will spend its length inhabiting and interrogating. In both works the threshold is where crisis gathers, where desire is suspended, and where the decisive turns of a life are staged.

To the present author's knowledge, no study has yet read these two works together through the anthropology and poetics of the threshold. The aim of the article is therefore twofold: to demonstrate that both novels are organised around a limen — window and door — and to show that

they exploit its constitutive ambiguity to opposite ends, producing two contrasting models of passage and of belonging. The novelty of the study lies in applying an integrated threshold apparatus — the anthropology of the rite of passage (van Gennep, Turner), the threshold chronotope (Bakhtin), the phenomenology of the door (Bachelard, Bollnow), and the interstitial "third space" (Bhabha) — to a cross-cultural pair that has not previously been joined, and in showing that threshold poetics, although a shared resource of world literature, resolves differently in the two cultural settings.

The argument proceeds in four steps. Section 2 assembles the theoretical frame, moving from the rite of passage to a composite "threshold poetics." Section 3 states the corpus and method. Sections 4 and 5 read the window in Woolf and the door in Hoshimov respectively. Section 6 draws the comparison together, and Section 7 states the conclusions and their implications.

2. From rite of passage to threshold poetics

The conceptual starting point is Arnold van Gennep's analysis of the rite of passage. Van Gennep (1960 [1909]) showed that rituals marking a change of status share a tripartite structure: a phase of separation (préliminaire), a phase of transition or margin (liminaire), and a phase of aggregation or incorporation (postliminaire). The pivotal middle phase takes its name from the Latin limen, threshold: the initiand is, quite literally, on the threshold — detached from a former condition and not yet joined to a new one. Passage is thus not an instant but a structured movement across a marginal zone.

Victor Turner (1967; 1969) generalised the liminal into a category of wide analytic reach. The liminal persona is "betwixt and between" the positions assigned by law, custom, and ceremony; structurally ambiguous, it is neither here nor there. Turner further observed that the shared marginality of the liminal can generate communitas — an unstructured, levelling solidarity among those who undergo passage together. These terms allow us to read not only characters but whole narrative intervals as liminal, and to ask whether a text supplies or withholds the communal support that carries a subject across the margin.

Narrative theory supplies a complementary instrument. In "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," Bakhtin (1981) identifies the threshold — together with its extensions, the staircase, the corridor, and the street — as a chronotope saturated with crisis and decisive change. Its temporality is essentially instantaneous: the threshold is a moment that seems to fall outside ordinary biographical duration, a point at which a life may break and turn. Where van Gennep describes the social mechanism of passage, Bakhtin names the specifically literary time-space in which passage becomes narratable.

Phenomenology deepens the account of the threshold as lived boundary. Bachelard (1994 [1958]) reads the door as a "half-open" cosmos that concentrates desire, hesitation, and temptation and that materialises the dialectic of inside and outside; Bollnow (2011) similarly treats the door and threshold as the articulation between the protected interior of the house and the open, demanding space of the world. Tuan (1977) and Casey (1993) add that place is space made meaningful through embodied experience, and that the threshold is a privileged site of such meaning, since it is there that the body registers the difference between one region of significance and another.

Finally, Bhabha (1994) reorients the value of the in-between. For Bhabha, interstitial passages — the "third space" of cultural enunciation — provide the terrain on which strategies of selfhood are elaborated and hybrid identities negotiated. Where van Gennep and Turner emphasise movement toward a new and stable status, Bhabha prizes the in-between itself as productive. This difference of emphasis will prove decisive: it is precisely the question of whether the threshold is a place to pass through or a place to inhabit that separates the two novels.

Taken together, these strands yield what may be called a threshold poetics: an apparatus that reads a doorway or a window at once as architecture (a boundary the body meets), as narrative machinery (a chronotope of crisis), as rite (a structured passage between statuses), and as cultural figure (the interstice in which belonging is renegotiated). It is with this composite frame that the window of Woolf and the door of Hoshimov are approached below.

3. Corpus and method

The study is a close comparative reading of two primary texts, Woolf's To the Lighthouse (1927) and Hoshimov's Ikki eshik orasi (1986). Its method is comparative-typological, combining hermeneutic close reading with narratological and phenomenological analysis. The pairing is justified on three grounds: the canonical standing of each work within its tradition; the wide chronological and cultural distance between them, which sharpens rather than obscures typological comparison; and, decisively, their shared foregrounding of a threshold in title or structure. The asymmetry of the two thresholds — a pane of glass on one side, a wooden door on the other — is treated not as a defect of the comparison but as its principal object, since that very difference proves to be semantically loaded. Passages from Woolf are cited from the first edition; Uzbek passages from Hoshimov are given in the original, with the correct orthographic apostrophes, and glossed in English.

4. The window: liminality, vision, and suspended passage in To the Lighthouse

The first and longest part of Woolf's novel is called "The Window," and the window is its master threshold. Mrs Ramsay sits framed within it; through it, across the bay, the lighthouse is visible. The pane admits the gaze but not the body: it is a threshold of vision, dividing the warm interior of maternal presence from the exterior of sea, weather, and the paternal reality principle. Young James, seated at his mother's knee, occupies this frame; the domestic scene is composed, as so much modernist description is, as a picture seen through glass. From the outset, then, the novel establishes a boundary that separates while it reveals — a threshold designed for the eye rather than the foot.

The proposed expedition to the lighthouse is set up as a rite of passage that the narrative deliberately defers. The phase of separation is furnished by the child's desire, so intense that the promised journey has been longed for, it seems to him, "for years and years." But the father's flat refusal arrests the rite at its very threshold, and the promised incorporation — the actual crossing of the water — is postponed for a decade. Part I therefore ends not with passage but with the threshold held open: desire is suspended at the pane, gazing at a destination it cannot reach.

The central section, "Time Passes," extends this suspension into an entire liminal interval. Here Woolf empties the house of human consciousness and lets ten years elapse in some twenty pages; the summer house stands on the threshold between one habitation and the next, invaded by

wind, damp, and slow decay. This is liminality raised to the scale of the building and of time itself — a marginal interregnum in which social structure dissolves, and Turner's anti-structure is literalised as an abandoned dwelling. Within it, the deaths of Mrs Ramsay and of Andrew are reported in square brackets, held at the very threshold of the narrating consciousness: enclosed in the typography of the parenthetical aside, they are present yet unassimilable, catastrophe kept at the edge of a mind that cannot fully take it in.

Part III, "The Lighthouse," attempts incorporation. James, now adolescent, at last crosses the bay and reaches the tower; he receives, at the crossing's end, his father's praise, and a reconciliation is intimated. Yet the arrival does not close the threshold into a single meaning. Seen from near, the lighthouse is "a stark tower on a bare rock," and the childhood tower does not vanish before the adult one; the two coexist, for "nothing was simply one thing." The rite is completed in space but not resolved in meaning: the threshold of perception stays ajar, opening onto multiplicity rather than onto settled arrival.

A second threshold runs parallel to the first. Lily Briscoe's canvas is itself a framed surface across which vision must pass, and she cannot complete it until absence — Mrs Ramsay's death — has opened the distance her composition requires. Her closing declaration, "I have had my vision," enacts an aesthetic incorporation that is the only decisive crossing the novel finally grants. In Woolf, therefore, the threshold is ultimately elegiac. Passage, where it is achieved at all, is achieved in art, while lived experience remains suspended between windowpane and lighthouse. The Bakhtinian instant of crisis, the Bachelardian dialectic of inside and outside frozen at the glass, and the conspicuous absence of Turnerian communitas — for Woolf's liminality is solitary, borne alone or sublimated — together define a threshold that reveals loss without repairing it.

5. The door ajar: mahalla, generation, and completed passage in Ikki eshik orasi

Where Woolf's threshold is glass, Hoshimov's is wood — and made to be crossed. The difference begins with the domestic architecture itself. The hovli, the traditional courtyard around which the household is organised, is an open and permeable structure whose boundary with the surrounding community is deliberately porous:

Hovlimizda hamma narsa ko'rinardi — qo'shnilar devordan qarasalar, bizning hayotimizni ko'rishardi. Lekin bu bizni bezovta qilmasdi — ochiqlik, bu bizning an'anamiz edi.

(In our courtyard everything was visible — if the neighbours looked over the wall, they saw our life. But this did not trouble us; openness was our tradition.) The threshold here does not so much divide interior from exterior as grade the one into the other; the mahalla, the neighbourhood community, turns the wall into a membrane. Against Woolf's enclosing pane, which frames and holds the world at aesthetic distance, Hoshimov's courtyard opens the household onto a collective life that passes freely across its edge.

The title-symbol makes the liminal condition explicit and gives it a first-person voice. The narrator names his own position on the threshold:

Men ikki eshik orasida turibman. Bir eshik — buvimning dunyosi, u yerda hammasi tanish, issiq, xavfsiz. Ikkinchi eshik — yangi dunyo, u yerda men hali bilmaydigan narsalar bor. Qaysi eshikdan kirsam? Balki ikkalasidan ham kirishim kerakdir?

(I stand between two doors. One door is my grandmother's world, where everything is familiar, warm, safe. The other door is the new world, where there are things I do not yet know. Through which door should I enter? Perhaps I must enter through both.) This is van Gennep's liminal phase rendered as lived experience: the narrator is detached from neither status, suspended in the margin between a traditional world and a modern one. Turner's "betwixt and between" here becomes a cultural predicament rather than a ritual moment.

The content of the two doors is historically specific. The child is a late-Soviet Uzbek boy whose home transmits a religiously informed, tradition-bearing worldview — the grandmother's tales, her prayers, her recitation of the fatiha — while the school transmits a secular, modernising one. The seam between them is felt as a genuine contradiction:

Maktabda o'rgangan narsalarim buvimning aytganlariga to'g'ri kelmasdi ba'zan. Muallim bir narsa aytadi, buvim boshqacha aytadi. Men ikkalasini ham sevardim, ikkalasiga ham ishonardim. Lekin qaysi biri to'g'ri? Bu savol meni qiynardi.

(What I learned at school did not always agree with what my grandmother said. The teacher says one thing, my grandmother another. I loved them both, I believed them both. But which of them is right? This question tormented me.) The threshold is thus not merely personal but generational and civilisational — the standing-place of an entire cohort caught between the discourse of the classroom and the inherited world of the family. Crucially, and unlike Woolf's solitary margin, this passage is sustained by communitas: the social frameworks of the mahalla, the collective labour of the hashar, and the transmitted word of the grandmother carry the subject across the seam.

The resolution follows Bhabha's logic of the third space. The novel refuses the either/or that the two doors seem to demand:

Men ikki eshikdan ham o'tdim. Buvimning dunyosini yuragimda saqlab qoldim, yangi dunyoning imkoniyatlaridan foydalandim. Bu ikki dunyo menda birlashdi, va men buning uchun minnatdorman.

(I passed through both doors. I kept my grandmother's world in my heart, and I made use of the possibilities of the new world. These two worlds united in me, and for this I am grateful.) This is precisely the interstitial resolution that Bhabha theorises: identity elaborated in the in-between, hybridity achieved rather than mourned. In van Gennep's terms the rite reaches its postliminal phase; the threshold is crossed, and the subject is reincorporated with a new and integrated status.

The narrator's return to the courtyard converts the threshold, finally, into a threshold of time:

Hovlimizga qaytdim — hammasi o'zgarmagan, lekin hammasi o'zgargan. Chinor hali ham o'sha chinor, lekin men boshqa odamman. Bu hovlida ikki men bor — bolakay men va hozirgi men. Ikkovimiz birga yuramiz, birga eslaymiz.

(I returned to our courtyard — everything unchanged, yet everything changed. The plane tree is still the same tree, but I am a different person. In this courtyard there are two of me: the boy and the present self. The two of us walk together, remember together.) The doubled vision of return here is unmistakably close to Woolf's "nothing was simply one thing" — both novels stage the encounter of the remembering adult with the child he was. But where Woolf's doubling opens onto unresolved multiplicity and elegy, Hoshimov's two selves "walk together": the threshold of time is

inhabited rather than mourned. The chinor, the plane tree planted by an ancestor, turns even the threshold of the generations into continuity.

6. Two thresholds: a comparative discussion

The architectural asymmetry between the two thresholds turns out to be semantically decisive. A window is a threshold of the eye: it transmits the gaze, frames and aestheticises, but arrests the body; it divides. A door is a threshold of the body: it exists in order to be crossed; it joins. Woolf's modernist subject stands behind glass, a spectator of a world held at aesthetic distance — a configuration consonant with modernist interiority, framing, and alienation. Hoshimov's subject stands in a doorway, a passer-through embedded in permeable communal thresholds — a configuration consonant with a relational, continuous model of the self. The pane and the door are compact figures for two anthropologies of the person.

The two liminalities differ correspondingly in kind. Woolf's is metaphysical and temporal: what must be passed is mortality and the passage of time itself, dramatised in the emptied decade of "Time Passes." Her liminal subject is solitary; Turner's communitas is conspicuously absent, and loss is either borne alone or transmuted into art. Hoshimov's liminality is generational and cultural: what must be passed is the historical seam between tradition and modernity, and the subject is carried across it by community — the mahalla, the hashar, the grandmother's transmitted word. The one threshold isolates; the other is thronged.

Most tellingly, the two novels resolve the rite of passage at different phases. Woolf arrests her narrative at, or just past, the liminal margin: the voyage is completed in space, yet meaning stays plural ("nothing was simply one thing"), and decisive incorporation is granted only to art, in Lily's "vision." Hoshimov completes the rite to its postliminal phase: "I passed through both doors," "these two worlds united in me." Woolf's threshold poetics is finally elegiac — an ajar door onto irrecoverable loss; Hoshimov's is integrative — a crossed threshold onto a hybrid but continuous belonging. Bhabha's third space names exactly what Hoshimov achieves and Woolf withholds.

From this contrast a more general proposition follows. Threshold poetics appears to be a shared structural grammar of narrative: both writers reach independently for the limen to organise crisis, desire, and change. Yet its resolution is culturally particular. The English modernist threshold tends toward separation, vision, and suspension; the Uzbek threshold tends toward passage, community, and incorporation. This finding parallels, on the axis of space and passage, the more familiar claim that childhood memory is at once a human universal and a cultural particular — but it isolates a distinct and portable mechanism, the threshold, by which world literature encodes cultural difference. What a culture does at its doorways, the comparison suggests, is a compact index of what it takes a person to be.

7. Conclusion

Read through liminality, the threshold chronotope, the phenomenology of the door, and the third space, Woolf's window and Hoshimov's door reveal a shared architecture of passage put to opposite ends. Woolf's threshold is suspended, solitary, and elegiac: it frames a world it cannot deliver, extends into an emptied decade, and grants decisive crossing only to art. Hoshimov's threshold is crossed, communal, and integrative: the narrator passes through both doors and inhabits the in-between as an achieved, hybrid belonging. Condensed into a single image, the

contrast is that between a spectator behind glass and a passer-through in a doorway — two cultural models of the person.

The frame proposed here is portable. It can be extended to other cross-cultural pairs and to the teaching of world and comparative literature, and to other threshold figures — the gate, the bridge, the veil, the station platform — across a larger corpus of Uzbek and Anglophone prose. Its principal limitation is the one that makes close reading possible: a single-pair design cannot by itself establish the generality of the window/door contrast. Testing that contrast against a wider typology of thresholds is a natural next step, and one this study is intended to invite.

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