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<http://www.supportscience.uz/index.php/ojp/about>**THE LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF GOOD–EVIL OPPOSITION THROUGH METAPHOR AND IMAGERY IN KHALED HOSSEINI’S NOVELS****Shahram Aslonov***Independent researcher of**Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages*shahramaslanov97@gmail.com*Samarkand, Uzbekistan***ABOUT ARTICLE**

Key words: conceptual metaphor, imagery, good and evil, moral evaluation, cognitive stylistics, Khaled Hosseini, Afghan diaspora fiction, literary translation.

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Abstract: This article examines how the conceptual opposition of good and evil is linguistically constructed through metaphor and imagery in three novels by Khaled Hosseini: *The Kite Runner* (2003), *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007) and *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013). The study combines Conceptual Metaphor Theory with a discourse-oriented account of literary metaphor, and applies the Metaphor Identification Procedure to a purposively sampled corpus of evaluative passages in which moral judgement is expressed figuratively rather than named directly. The analysis identifies five recurrent source domains that carry the moral load of the three narratives: light and darkness, vertical space, natural cycles of water and drought, predation and disease, and culturally salient artefacts such as the kite, the wall and the blade. Results show that Hosseini rarely lexicalises moral categories with abstract nouns; instead, goodness and evil are encoded in perceptual imagery, and their evaluative polarity is frequently reversed or suspended within the same image, so that a single source domain serves both poles. The article argues that this internal reversibility, rather than a stable binary scheme, constitutes the distinctive feature of Hosseini’s moral idiom, and that it produces specific problems of equivalence for translators working into typologically and culturally distant languages, including Uzbek. The findings contribute to cognitive stylistics,

to the study of Afghan diaspora fiction, and to the description of figurative moral language in literary translation.

XOLID HUSAYNIY ROMANLARIDA “EZGULIK – YOVUZLIK” OPPOZITSIYASINING METAFORA VA OBRAZLILIK VOSITASIDA LINGVISTIK IFODALANISHI

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MAQOLA HAQIDA

Kalit so'zlar: kontseptual metafora, obrazlilik, ezgulik va yovuzlik, axloqiy baho, kognitiv stilistika, Xolid Husayniy, afg'on diaspora adabiyoti, badiiy tarjima.

Annotatsiya: Maqolada Xolid Husayniyning “Shamol ortidan yugurib” (2003), “Ming quyosh shu'las” (2007) va “Tog'lar ham sado berdi” (2013) romanlarida “ezgulik – yovuzlik” kontseptual oppozitsiyasining metafora va obrazlilik orqali qanday til vositalarida ifodalanishi tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot kognitiv metafora nazariyasini badiiy metaforaning diskursiv tahlili bilan birlashtiradi va axloqiy baho bilvosita, obrazli tarzda berilgan parchalardan tuzilgan maqsadli korpusga metafora identifikatsiyasi protsedurasini (MIP) tatbiq etadi. Tahlil natijasida uch romanning axloqiy mazmunini tashuvchi beshta doimiy manba sohasi aniqlandi: yorug'lik va zulmat, vertikal makon, suv va qurg'oqchilik, yirtqichlik va kasallik hamda madaniy jihatdan belgili artefaktlar (varrak, devor, tig'). Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadi, ki yozuvchi axloqiy kategoriyalarni mavhum nomlar bilan deyarli atamaydi; ezgulik va yovuzlik sezgi obrazlarida kodlanadi, ularning baho qutbi esa bir obraz doirasida teskarisiga o'zgarishi mumkin. Shu obrazli teskarilanish Husayniy axloqiy idiomasiining o'ziga xos belgisi bo'lib, tarjimada, xususan o'zbek tiliga o'girishda, ekvivalentlikning alohida muammolarini keltirib chiqaradi.

ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКАЯ РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦИЯ ОППОЗИЦИИ “ДОБРО – ЗЛО” ПОСРЕДСТВОМ МЕТАФОРЫ И ОБРАЗНОСТИ В РОМАНАХ ХАЛЕДА ХОСЕЙНИ

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О СТАТЬЕ

Ключевые слова: концептуальная метафора, образность, добро и зло, моральная оценка, когнитивная стилистика, Халед Хосейни, афганская диаспорная литература, художественный перевод.

Аннотация: В статье рассматривается, как концептуальная оппозиция “добро – зло” языково выражается через метафору и образность в трех романах Халеда Хосейни: “Бегущий за ветром” (2003), “Тысяча сияющих солнц” (2007) и “И эхо летит по горам” (2013). Исследование соединяет теорию концептуальной метафоры с дискурсивным анализом художественной метафоры и применяет процедуру идентификации метафоры (MIP) к целенаправленно отобранному корпусу оценочных фрагментов. Выделены пять регулярных сфер-источников: свет и тьма, вертикальное пространство, вода и засуха, хищничество и болезнь, а также культурно значимые артефакты (воздушный змей, стена, лезвие). Показано, что автор почти не использует абстрактные моральные наименования, а оценочная полярность образов часто инвертируется. Такая обратимость создает особые проблемы эквивалентности при переводе, в том числе на узбекский язык.

Introduction. Moral evaluation is one of the most abstract domains of human experience, and one of the most consistently expressed through concrete language. Cognitive linguistics has long argued that speakers do not reason about virtue and vice in purely propositional terms but structure them through embodied source domains such as verticality, cleanliness, light, balance and straightness [4], [5]. Empirical work has confirmed that these mappings are psychologically real and cross-culturally robust: moral concepts are processed faster when aligned with upward spatial cues [9], are systematically associated with straightness rather than curvature in Chinese cultural discourse [10], [11], and can be traced historically in the formation of the English moral lexicon itself [8]. Literary discourse intensifies this general tendency, because a novelist can extend, cluster and deliberately invert conventional mappings across an entire narrative [6].

The novels of Khaled Hosseini offer an unusually productive site for such analysis. The Kite Runner [1], A Thousand Splendid Suns [2] and And the Mountains Echoed [3] are organised around acts of betrayal, sacrifice, complicity and belated atonement, yet their narrators seldom pronounce explicit moral verdicts. Existing scholarship on Hosseini has concentrated on thematic and sociological readings: guilt and self-actualisation in Amir’s development [13], ethnic prejudice

between Pashtuns and Hazaras [14], classism and persecution [15], the trauma and resistance of Afghan women [16], [19], the awakening of female self-consciousness in Mariam and Laila [17], [21], the redemptive function of sisterhood [18], and subaltern silence [22]. A smaller body of linguistic work addresses Hosseini's texts as language data, for example in politeness-based translation analysis of Mariam's speech [20]. What remains underdescribed is the specifically figurative machinery through which the good–evil opposition is built: which source domains recur, how they are distributed across the three novels, and how their evaluative polarity behaves.

This gap matters for two reasons. First, if moral meaning in these novels is carried largely by imagery rather than by moral vocabulary, then thematic paraphrase inevitably loses the evidence on which its own claims rest. Second, figurative moral language is the component most vulnerable in translation. When a novel encodes evil in a dried riverbed or goodness in a kite string, the translator must reproduce not a lexeme but a mapping, together with its cultural licensing. For Uzbek renderings of Hosseini, where the source text already mediates Afghan Persian and Islamic ethical vocabulary through English, this problem is compounded.

The article therefore addresses three research questions. (1) Which conceptual source domains systematically encode good and evil across the three novels? (2) How stable is the evaluative polarity of these domains within and across the texts? (3) What consequences does the resulting configuration have for the description of Hosseini's authorial style and for its translation? The study is thus positioned at the intersection of cognitive stylistics, literary criticism and translation-oriented text analysis, and it treats metaphor identification as an evidential procedure rather than an interpretive flourish [7].

Materials and methods. The corpus consists of the three English-language novels listed in Table I, used in their first Riverhead editions. All three were read in full; the analytical corpus was then narrowed by purposive sampling to passages in which a moral judgement is realised without explicit moral naming, that is, passages where evaluation is inferable from imagery, action, symbol or narratorial framing rather than from words such as good, evil, sin or cruelty. Passages containing explicit moral nouns were retained separately as a control set, in order to compare direct and figurative realisation.

Table I. Composition of the analytical corpus

Novel	Edition used	Narrative situation	Primary moral focus
The Kite Runner (2003)	Riverhead Books, New York [1]	First-person retrospective narration; Kabul, Fremont, return to Kabul	Betrayal, complicity, atonement
A Thousand Splendid Suns (2007)	Riverhead Books, New York [2]	Third-person alternating focalisation; Herat and Kabul, 1974–2003	Endurance, sacrifice, gendered violence

And the Mountains Echoed (2013)	Riverhead Books, New York [3]	Multiple narrators and time frames; Shadbagh, Kabul, Paris, California	Separation, obligation, partial knowledge
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Metaphorically used words within the sampled passages were identified with the Metaphor Identification Procedure of the Pragglejaz Group [7]. For each lexical unit the contextual meaning was established, a more basic contemporary meaning was sought, and the unit was marked as metaphorical only where the two meanings contrast yet can be understood by comparison. Dictionary-based checking of basic senses was applied throughout, as the procedure requires. Because MIP operates at word level and reserves conceptual labelling for a later stage, mappings were named only after the annotated material supported them; no source domain was posited in advance.

Annotated units were then grouped into source domains following the analytical conventions of Conceptual Metaphor Theory [4], [5], and each domain was examined as a discourse pattern rather than an isolated expression, in line with Semino's account of extended and clustered literary metaphor [6]. Three descriptive parameters were recorded for every domain: recurrence across the three novels; evaluative polarity, understood as the direction of judgement the image invites; and narrative function, that is, whether the image characterises an agent, an act, a setting or a moral consequence. Imagery that is not metaphorical in the strict MIP sense but performs comparable evaluative work — recurrent visual detail, symbolic object, sensory description — was coded separately as non-metaphorical imagery, so that the two mechanisms could be distinguished in the results.

Two methodological limitations should be stated. First, the density values reported below are interpretive rather than statistical: they record the relative salience of each domain in the annotated sample on a three-point scale, and they are not corpus-frequency counts over the full texts. Second, because moral evaluation in these novels is often distributed across long stretches of narrative, unit boundaries were set at the level of the evaluative episode rather than the sentence, which favours qualitative comparison over quantification. Page references are given only where the cited wording could be verified against the editions in Table I; elsewhere the relevant chapter or narrative episode is indicated.

Results. Five source domains account for the great majority of figurative moral evaluation in the corpus. Table II summarises their distribution and polarity; each is then described with textual evidence.

Table II. Source domains of moral evaluation across the three novels (density: +++ high, ++ moderate, + occasional; based on the author's annotation of the sampled passages)

Source domain	Representative mapping	R	SS	E	Polarity
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Light / darkness	Goodness is light; moral worth is hidden light	++	++	+	Reversible
Vertical space	Power is up; moral worth is down	++	+	+	Inverted
Water / drought	Moral decay is aridity; goodness is cultivation	+	+	++	Reversible
Predation / disease	Evil is a predator; harm is an unhealed wound	++	++	+	Fixed
Artefacts (kite, wall, blade)	Moral relation is a held object	++	+		Reversible

Light and Darkness. The most conventional of the five domains is also the most carefully manipulated. In its unmarked form the mapping GOODNESS IS LIGHT / EVIL IS DARKNESS underlies the imagery of concealment throughout *The Kite Runner*: the alley in which Hassan is assaulted is figured through shadow and narrowing space, and Amir's subsequent years are rendered as a condition of moral obscurity from which Rahim Khan's phrase "There is a way to be good again" offers an exit [1]. The metaphor here is not decorative: the plot itself is built as a movement out of darkness, which is why the novel's resolution is figured in open sky rather than in explicit absolution.

A Thousand Splendid Suns complicates the same domain by relocating light behind barriers. The title, drawn from the Persian poet Saib-e-Tabrizi's lines on Kabul, refers to suns hidden behind walls [2]. Radiance is thus predicated not of the visible public order but of what that order conceals, and the mapping acquires an additional component: MORAL WORTH IS HIDDEN LIGHT. This licenses the novel's central evaluative move, in which Mariam, socially defined as harami and therefore as a shameful remainder, becomes the text's principal locus of goodness. Critical readings of Mariam's trajectory as legitimation through sacrifice [21] and as an awakening of self-consciousness [17] are, in linguistic terms, readings of this reversal of the light mapping.

In *And the Mountains Echoed* the same domain is dispersed. The novel's opening fable of Baba Ayub and the div stages moral choice under conditions of imperfect knowledge, and its resolution turns on a glimpse of a bright garden that cannot be told to those left behind [3]. Light here indexes neither innocence nor guilt but the unbearable partiality of moral knowledge, which corresponds to the Rumi epigraph placing the field of encounter beyond wrongdoing and rightdoing. Across the three novels, then, one conventional mapping is successively narrowed, inverted and finally suspended.

Vertical Space and Moral Position. The verticality mapping moral is up / immoral is down, well attested experimentally [9], operates in the corpus mainly through social topography. In *The Kite Runner* the elevated house in Wazir Akbar Khan and the servants' mud hut on the same property encode ethnic and class hierarchy spatially [14], [15]; the flying of kites transfers the same axis to the sky, where ascent is achievement and the cut string is loss. Assef's brass knuckles

and later his authority under the Taliban attach dominance to physical elevation over a kneeling victim, which the novel repeatedly stages.

Crucially, the axis is inverted at the level of moral worth. Hassan, who occupies the lowest social position, is the bearer of the novel's most unambiguous good, expressed in the promise "For you, a thousand times over" [1]. Baba's often-quoted formulation that there is only one sin, theft, and that every other sin is a variation of theft [1] supplies an abstract moral rule, yet the narrative undermines its author, since Baba's own concealed paternity is precisely such a theft. The verticality mapping therefore does double duty: it encodes power upward and worth downward, and the tension between the two readings is where the novel locates its ethical argument.

In *A Thousand Splendid Suns* the axis is enclosed rather than open. Rasheed's house is a descent for Mariam and later for Laila; the burqa converts vertical exposure into a narrow field of sight; escape is figured as movement outward and upward and is punished by confinement below. In *And the Mountains Echoed* the commander known as Baba Jan builds his mansion on expropriated land, and his son Adel's moral education consists in learning what the elevation of that house rests upon [3].

Water, Drought and Natural Cycle. The third domain supplies the corpus with its most culturally specific moral imagery. Drought, dust and dried watercourses recur as the environment of moral collapse: the dry bed of the Kabul River, the drought years, the parched orchards abandoned in flight. Conversely, water, snowmelt, fruit and cultivated ground index conditions in which goodness remains possible. The pomegranate tree on the hill above Kabul in *The Kite Runner*, into whose bark Amir carves that he and Hassan are the sultans of Kabul, functions as the fullest instance: while the tree bears fruit it hosts friendship, and its later barrenness records the betrayal without naming it [1].

The mapping moral decay is aridity is reinforced by the seasonal organisation of the narratives. Winter in *The Kite Runner* is both the season of kite tournaments and the season of the assault; spring frames the return to Kabul. In *And the Mountains Echoed* the great oak of Shadbagh, felled for firewood, converts the same mapping into an image of irreversible loss, and the village's later transformation into a compound of new mansions extends it to postwar profiteering [3]. Because water and shade carry direct religious and hospitality values in Afghan cultural discourse, this domain also imports evaluative content that is not derivable from the English lexicon alone.

Predation, Contamination and Disease. Where evil is agentive rather than atmospheric, it is figured through predation and sickness. Assef is described in animal and mechanical terms rather than moral ones; the Taliban are rendered as a force that hunts, and the Kabul stadium episode presents execution as spectacle in which the crowd is complicit [1]. In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

Rasheed's violence is prefigured by images of appetite, weight and heat, and by his insistence on the burqa as a covering for what he treats as pollution. This is the domain in which Hosseini comes closest to a stable polarity: predatory imagery is never ironically redeemed.

Contamination imagery, by contrast, is systematically criticised by the texts. Nana's designation of Mariam as harami and her aphorism that a man's accusing finger always finds a woman, like a compass needle pointing north [2], articulate a social discourse of impurity that the novel exposes as itself the evil in question. The same structure appears in the ethnic slurs directed at Hazaras in *The Kite Runner* [14]. Linguistically, these are cases in which a conventional moral metaphor is quoted in the speech of characters in order to be discredited at narrative level — a device that translation must preserve, since a neutralising rendering silently endorses the slur.

Disease and wounding imagery mediates between the two poles. Roshi, the child in *And the Mountains Echoed* whose skull is split by an axe in a family massacre, becomes the measure against which the moral seriousness of the surgeon Idris and his cousin Timur is tested; the reader's judgement is directed less at the original atrocity than at the failure of promised care [3]. Evil, in this configuration, is not an act of violence but an abandonment recorded in an unhealed body.

Artefacts: Kite, Wall, Blade. The fifth domain consists of culturally salient objects that acquire moral value through repetition. The kite is the clearest case of a deliberately bivalent image: it encodes aspiration and paternal approval, then complicity, since the blue kite is won at the cost of Hassan's violation, and finally reparation, when Amir runs a kite for Sohrab and repeats Hassan's pledge [1]. One artefact therefore carries the whole moral arc, with its polarity determined entirely by narrative position. The glass-coated string that cuts the hands is part of the same figure: the instrument of victory wounds the one who holds it.

The wall is the corresponding artefact in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. It appears as the compound wall behind which the splendid suns are hidden, as the barrier of Rasheed's house, and as the surface against which public punishment is carried out. Its evaluative value is likewise unstable: it both shelters and imprisons, and the novel's ending depends on recognising that Mariam's final act converts an instrument of confinement into an instrument of release [2], [18].

The blade — axe, knife, shovel — recurs across all three novels as the point at which moral abstraction becomes irreversible physical fact: Hassan's cleft lip and its surgical repair, Mariam's shovel, the axe in Roshi's family. Notably, the same instrument may be curative or destructive, which reproduces at object level the reversibility observed in every other domain.

Explicit Moral Vocabulary in the Control Set. The control set confirms the asymmetry that motivates the study. Explicit moral nouns occur in three restricted environments: paternal or authoritative pronouncement, as in Baba's definition of sin [1]; religious and legal register, particularly in the Taliban and courtroom scenes; and retrospective narratorial confession. In the

first two, the explicit term is regularly disqualified by subsequent events, so that abstract moral vocabulary in these novels functions as a marker of unreliable authority. Only in the third does it carry unqualified evaluative weight, and even there it typically follows rather than replaces the governing image. This distribution supports the claim that Hosseini's moral idiom is primarily figurative, and that his abstract moral lexicon is used chiefly to characterise those who speak it.

Discussion. Three findings deserve emphasis. First, Hosseini's moral figuration is not idiosyncratic but built from highly conventional embodied mappings — light, verticality, cleanliness, growth — whose psychological reality is independently attested [8], [9], [10], [11]. The originality lies in what is done with them. Second, in four of the five domains the evaluative polarity is reversible: the low-status servant is the moral standard, the hidden sun outshines the public order, the sheltering wall imprisons, the kite that signals betrayal also enacts repair. Only predation resists inversion. The corpus therefore does not realise a binary moral scheme with figurative decoration; it realises a gradient in which images retain their perceptual identity while exchanging their moral value. This is consistent with a non-binary reconstruction of the good–evil opposition and with critical accounts that read Hosseini's characters as morally ambivalent rather than allegorical [13], [16], [19].

Third, the mechanism of reversal is discursive rather than lexical. Polarity is assigned by narrative position, by who utters the image, and by whether the text subsequently endorses or discredits the speaker. This is precisely the level at which Semino locates the distinctive behaviour of literary metaphor [6], and it explains why word-level annotation alone is insufficient: MIP establishes that a unit is metaphorical [7], but only discourse analysis establishes which way it points.

The consequences for translation are direct and, for the Uzbek context, substantial. Four risks can be specified. (i) Domain substitution: replacing a source-domain image with a target-language idiom that expresses the same evaluation but loses the mapping — for example rendering aridity imagery with an abstract expression of hopelessness — removes the evidence for the novel's moral architecture. (ii) Polarity fixing: because Uzbek, like Russian, has a rich stock of conventional moral collocations, translators are drawn to formulations that pre-judge the image and thereby destroy its reversibility. (iii) Register neutralisation of quoted prejudice: softening harami or ethnic slurs converts a criticised discourse into an accepted one, reversing the ethical direction of the passage [20]. (iv) Loss of intertextual licensing: the Saib-e-Tabrizi allusion behind the title of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and the Rumi epigraph of *And the Mountains Echoed* are the authorities that make the hidden-light and beyond-judgement mappings readable; where they are unmarked or abridged, the corresponding imagery becomes ornamental. Since abridgement is a documented feature of some regional editions, this last risk interacts with the others.

Methodologically, the study also suggests that translation-oriented comparison of these novels should be organised by source domain rather than by lexical item. A translator's consistency in rendering the water–drought axis, or in preserving the bivalence of the kite, is a better index of fidelity to Hosseini's moral semantics than the accuracy of individual moral nouns, which the originals themselves treat with suspicion.

The limitations noted in Section II bound these claims. The density scale is interpretive; a full corpus-linguistic annotation of the three novels, ideally aligned with published Uzbek and Russian translations, would allow the distributional claims to be tested statistically and the reversal points to be located precisely. Comparison with other Afghan diaspora writers would further show whether the reversible-image strategy described here is authorial or generic.

Conclusion. The good–evil opposition in *The Kite Runner*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *And the Mountains Echoed* is realised chiefly through five conventional source domains — light and darkness, vertical space, water and drought, predation and disease, and culturally salient artefacts — and only marginally through explicit moral vocabulary, which the novels tend to attribute to unreliable authority. The defining feature of this system is the reversibility of evaluative polarity within a stable set of images: the same kite, wall, height or hidden light can index goodness or its betrayal depending on narrative position and speaker. Predatory imagery alone remains fixed, which makes it the negative pole against which the rest of the system is calibrated.

For cognitive stylistics, the case shows how a literary text can exploit the very conventionality of embodied moral mappings, using their automatic legibility as the condition for reversing them. For translation studies, it identifies domain substitution, polarity fixing, register neutralisation and loss of intertextual licensing as the four principal ways in which the moral semantics of these novels can be lost in target editions. Future work should test the proposed model against a fully annotated parallel corpus of the English originals and their Uzbek translations, and should extend the analysis to the reception of these images by readers whose cultural framing of water, shade, purity and hospitality differs from that presupposed by the source text.

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