

A Theoretical Defense of The Corridor Where Secrets Echoed

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Abstract

The Corridor Where Secrets Echoed is a quiet narrative, developed by atmosphere, the spatial pressure, and the subtle weight of human behavior. This paper will explain the theoretical background that grounds such quietness and show how the novella's emotional power finds its articulation in restraint instead of dramatic expression. By drawing on phenomenology, the building will be analyzed as a field of perception reflective of the inner states of its characters. Spatial theory unmasks the way architecture becomes a means of control that governs movement and expectation. While micro sociology underlines the importance of small gestures and the rituals through which people maintain dignity in institutional settings, organizational theory deepens that understanding by demonstrating how structure and routine shape behavior in their quiet confluence with conformity. Ethical minimalism ties these various frameworks into a unified interpretation by showing how silence, atmosphere, and exacting details can convey emotional depth without hyperbole. Through these lenses, this paper will argue that the novella's stillness is not emptiness but presence, and that meaning often emerges through sensation more so than words.

Keywords: Phenomenology; Spatial theory; Micro sociology; Organizational theory; Ethical minimalism; Symbolic architecture

1. Introduction

Quiet fiction, particularly, lends itself to misunderstandings. There is an expectation, particularly, of dramatic confrontations, of instantaneous emotional revelations. On the other hand, there are other fictions. These fictions create their own world with atmosphere, with spatial conflict, with the unspoken weights of human behavior. There is The Corridor Where Secrets Echoed. It is the kind of story formed out of stillness, formed out of the compressed spaces of people who rarely speak their truth aloud.

It lays out a rationale for that decision, explaining how this paper describes the building as a field of memory, and why characters move with such care, their precision cultivated. The story avoids melodrama. The work draws heavily from phenomenology, which conceptualizes perception as something shaped by the spaces we inhabit [Husserl] [Merleau Ponty]. The work is also imbued with spatial theory, which states that architecture impacts behavior and social meaning [Lefebvre] [Tuan]. Another layer was added through micro sociology, which shows how small gestures and very subtle interactions will assume disproportionate emotional weight [Goffman, Interaction Ritual]. That foundation was deepened further with organizational theory, which shows how institutions shape behavior through structure and routine, and the quiet force of conformity [DiMaggio and Powell] [March and Olsen]. The narrative here fits within a tradition of ethical minimalism found in writers who trust silence and atmosphere more than overt drama [Ishiguro] [Kawabata].

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The point here is not to argue with the critics but rather to explain the underlying principles used. The slow pace and quiet nature of the novella are all a part of what the writer intended. They reflect the emotional nature of institutional life in which individuals often interact through hesitation and body position. By exploring the theoretical underpinnings of the narrative, the paper seeks to demonstrate how the novella locates its power in subtle ways and the meaning of the quiet.

2. Phenomenology and the Building as a Field of Perception

Phenomenology begins with the idea that perception is never neutral. We do not simply observe the world. We experience it through the structures that surround us. Husserl describes this as the shaping of consciousness by lived experience rather than abstract reasoning [Husserl]. Merleau Ponty extends this idea by arguing that the body and the environment form a continuous field of perception [Merleau Ponty]. The building in *The Corridor Where Secrets Echoed* is written with this understanding. It is not a backdrop. It is a perceptual force.

The opening lines make this clear. The narrator states that “there are buildings that remember more than the people who walk through them.” This is not metaphorical decoration. It is a phenomenological claim. The building holds memory because the characters project their emotional states into its rooms, corridors, and objects. When Baneri enters the ledger room and feels the fan turning in “tired circles,” the fan is not simply a mechanical object. It becomes a perceptual mirror. It reflects his internal fatigue and the slow unravelling of the company.

Phenomenology also helps explain why the building appears to respond to the characters. The flickering lights, the shifting temperature, and the hum of machines are not supernatural events. They are expressions of how the characters interpret their environment under pressure. Merleau Ponty writes that perception is shaped by the body’s tension and expectation [Merleau Ponty]. When Disma walks through the corridor and notices the lights tremble above her, the tremble reflects her uncertainty. The building becomes a field where her emotional state is amplified.

The novella uses this approach consistently. When Baneri straightens the crooked photograph, the act is not symbolic in a literary sense. It is phenomenological. He is trying to correct the imbalance he feels inside himself. The photograph’s tilt is part of his perceptual world. It is a disturbance that he tries to resolve through physical action. Phenomenology teaches that objects in our environment carry emotional weight because they participate in our lived experience [Husserl]. The crooked frame is not just a frame. It is a disturbance in Baneri’s field of perception.

The building thus becomes a character not by personification but by perception: it lives only insofar as the characters experience it as living. Their respective states of emotion influences how they perceive it, and it reflects back to them their states. This sets up an unbroken circuit between inner life and outer space. The novella deploys this circuit in the service of a broad concern: to demonstrate the degree to which institutional environments absorb human tension and reflect it back in subtle, atmospheric ways.

Phenomenology helps the story stay silent but significant. The building does not speak but communicates. It does not move yet reshape the characters’ self-consciousness. Phenomenology in the novella helps to create a world where silence is not only felt as a lack, where space becomes a partner to human existence.

3. Spatial Theory and the Architecture of Control

Spatial theory argues that space is never neutral. It shapes behaviour, influences emotion, and creates subtle forms of power. Henri Lefebvre describes space as something produced through social relations rather than something that simply exists [Lefebvre]. Yi Fu Tuan adds that space becomes meaningful only through the way people move through it and interpret it [Tuan]. These ideas help explain why the building in *The Corridor Where Secrets Echoed* feels alive with tension. The architecture is not passive. It regulates the characters and guides their emotional responses.

The corridor is the most ideal example of this. It is presented throughout the novella as a long corridor with flickering lights and the sound of footsteps. If Baneri is walking towards the CEO’s office, then the corridor stretches “ahead, long and quiet,” and then lights flicker before settling. Such flickering, however, is not a technical issue. It has been presented in a specific way as a message. It is wished that the corridor is a space within which authority can be felt, not in a direct manner, but in how long it is, how silent it is, and how quiet it is as an entity as the character approaches an enclosed space. According to Lefebvre, spaces within institutions tend to bear the imprint of control and hierarchy [Lefebvre].

Yet another example of the CEO's office it is said to be a room which "had learned to hold its breath." It is decorated with blinds, and there is a pattern of stripes created due to the passage of light through them, giving it the look of bars placed on its desk. Here, one may observe the notion of spatial control, but through interior design. The room controls those who enter it. Silences are planned, so are its objects, and temperatures, though lower than those in the rest of the spaces, still prevail here. According to Tuan, there is no doubt spaces are capable of producing emotional climates; the CEO's office creates one of caution.

The Technical Planning Department also participates in this architecture of control. The cluster of four desks placed in the east corner forces proximity. The arrangement is described as "deliberate, almost strategic." It removes the characters' ability to retreat into private space. They must face one another, share silence, and navigate tension in close quarters. This is spatial design used as managerial pressure. It echoes real organizational strategies where physical layout is used to enforce collaboration or surveillance [Meyer and Rowan] [DiMaggio and Powell]. These pressures reflect the broader institutional tendency to shape behaviour through structure rather than through explicit instruction [March and Olsen].

Even small objects play their role in the architecture of control. The askew photo on the ledger room wall, rulers racked on Rajiv's drafting board, or the slats of shade cast on the CEO's desk all inform the emotional character of a given moment. There is no attempt to use these objects metaphorically, the way they might be interpreted in a novel. Instead, they matter as space. They determine how characters perceive their own place within it all. As Lefebvre argues, space is a system of signs which inform behaviour. The novella tells us much about the nature of institutional behaviour through these signs.

Spatial theory assists in understanding why the building is portrayed as a quiet authority figure in the story. The building does not make any noises, yet it directs. It does not have the ability to move, yet it affects movements. The architectural design creates a form of control that affects the thought process, feeling, and action of characters. Therefore, the novella utilizes space theory to illustrate that it is possible to express power through corridors, rooms, and the arrangement of furniture. The building, in this sense, is depicted as a silent actor in the progress of tension, directing the characters through a space that is structured and expected.

4. Micro Sociology and the Weight of Small Gestures

Micro sociology is a division of sociology that focuses on the minute interactions that govern our lives. According to Erving Goffman, all micro-interactions are rituals that help maintain our sense of dignity, identity, and emotional control, especially in a daily environment [Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*]. The best scenes in **The Corridor Where Secrets Echoed** are not those where budget officer Rita insists that she and Nardi find the embezzlers but are rather the small acts that demonstrate the thin veneer of workplace social life.

A good example of this is the coffee spill incident. Disma approaches Rajiv with a simple greeting, which she has prepared mentally. Her foot hits a tile, and coffee spills on Rajiv's sleeve. This scene is portrayed with simplicity. The stain develops "like a dark bloom," and we see a calm reaction from Rajiv's side. He says, "It is fine. Do not worry." This incident, though minor, implies a whole social process. Goffman says, "There is a constant effort at maintenance of others' face" [Goffman, *Presentation of Self*]. The incident is a social process that protects one person from shame and another from being annoyed. There can be different implications, but one thing is sure, i.e. a social process.

Other gestures carry similar weight. When Baneri straightens the crooked photograph, the act is not symbolic in a literary sense. It is a micro sociological attempt to restore order in a moment of internal imbalance. The photograph's tilt disrupts the emotional equilibrium of the room. Straightening it becomes a way to manage the tension he feels. Goffman writes that people often use small physical actions to stabilize their emotional state in social environments [Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*]. Baneri's gesture reflects this principle.

The drafting table in the Technical Planning Department offers another example. Rajiv aligns two metal rulers with precise care. The rulers form a perfect right angle. This is not simply a habit of an engineer. It is a micro sociological expression of control in a space where he feels watched, evaluated, and increasingly distant from others. The alignment becomes a quiet assertion of competence and stability. It is a way to maintain face in an environment where expectations are high and emotional expression is limited.

Even silence is made into an action. When the four desks are pushed together in the east corner of the classroom, the characters are given a shared space in which silence is an inevitability. They perform the silence with body positions, breathing, and the adjustments of notebooks and pens. These are not minor actions. They are the adjustments required

for coexisting with one another. Goffman writes of how silence can be used as communication for those with a shared social frame. In the novella, the use of silence is for illustration of the adjustments the characters make regarding the presence of each of the other.

Micro sociology provides an explanation for just why these moments feel so significant. Emotion is clearly never directly discussed by the characters, yet all actions say it all. A dropped coffee cup, adjusting a frame, a ruler precisely placed, waiting to enter a room is significant. These actions portray the importance of dignity in institutional environments and how tension can manifest. By using micro sociology to create the framework of the story, the novella explains the importance of small actions.

5. Minimalism as Ethical Choice

Normally, considering minimalist writing, people think that this is no emotion, that the author is not reaching out to express anything with complexity; however, minimalist writing can be an ethical decision. It can be an application of respect to the reader's intellect and the characters' dignity. Ishiguro and Kawabata are writers who can be given as examples of how minimalist writing can achieve deep emotional importance without dramatic expression. The Corridor Where Secrets Echoed is writing that is not accidental, its silence is not accidental; its minimalist tone is an ethical choice.

The reason why the novella avoids melodrama is because it is a world without space for it. A world of institutional settings is one where emotions are suppressed. People become careful with what they say, how they walk, and how they show what is inside. Thus, when Baneri closes the ledger and hears "the soft thud of the cover" sound, it is not loud, yet it is full of resignation. It does not need to be loud or dramatic. It is enough, as it is a fitting expression of what is inside a man who has carried a burden for too long.

Minimalism protects the characters from being reduced to symbols, too. They are not vehicles for plot reveals or dramatic disclosures. They are people in the space, which shapes them. The moment when Disma spills coffee on Rajiv's sleeve is described in gentle, new precision. The stain spreads "like a dark bloom," and Rajiv says nothing but is calmly accepting. This scene is small, but it discloses vulnerability, embarrassment, and the fragile balancing of relations at the workplace. A noisier novel would have swamped this subtlety. Minimalism lets the moment breathe.

The text does not over-explain. It assumes that the reader will intuitively get the tension from the atmosphere. When the lights flicker in the hallway or the blinds cut the light into horizontal slivers across the CEO's desk, the text does not bother the reader with its interpretation. It simply shows. This technique is in line with Ishiguro's theory of the use of silence as a means of self-expression more than speech is able to do [Ishiguro]. It is also reminiscent of Kawabata's intent in his use of small detailed pictures as self-expression.

Minimalism is ethical because it doesn't manipulate. Minimalism doesn't manipulate feelings. Minimalism doesn't manipulate conflict. Minimalism doesn't manipulate drama where drama isn't necessary. Instead, minimalism is observational. Minimalism is a form of listening. Minimalism treats the characters in the environment and allows them to exist within that environment without ever manipulating them into some form of expression. That's a very ethical approach to their complexity because it understands that often, people feel more than they say and sometimes reveal more by not saying anything at all.

As a form of minimalism, the novella establishes a world where quiet moments have the potential for power. A tilted photograph, a quivering light, a ruler positioned deliberately, or a pause before entering a room can be significant. These moments encourage the reader to become a part of the emotional world, not just observe it. It's a form of minimalism as a means of shared responsibility for meaning. It's a form of collaboration.

In this sense, minimalism is not a stylistic limitation. It is a quite philosophical position that reflects a belief that truth often in small gestures and silences that able to carry the weight of entire lives. The novella embraces this belief and uses it to shape a narrative that is quiet yet resonant, restrained yet deeply human.

6. Symbolic Architecture

Symbolic architecture is defined as the means by which physical matter is imbued with emotional and conceptual meaning. These symbols do not exist in the form of metaphors that occur outside of the narrative. They exist instead as organically resulting elements of the environment and the lived experience of those within it. In "The Corridor Where

Secrets Echoed" the physical architecture itself boasts a series of repeated elements that quietly inform the reader of the nature of those within it throughout the story.

The crooked photograph is one of the most persistent symbols. It appears early in the ledger room, hanging at a slight angle. Baneri straightens it repeatedly, yet it always returns to its tilt. The photograph reflects the imbalance Baneri feels in his role and in the company's direction. When he looks at his younger self in the image, he sees that confidence no longer matches his present state. The tilt becomes a quiet reminder of decline. Spatial theorists note that objects in institutional environments often carry the weight of organizational memory [Lefebvre]. The photograph performs this function by holding a version of the past that no longer aligns with the present.

The fan in the ledger room carries a different symbolic weight. It turns in "tired circles," carving the air into slow rotations. The fan's struggle mirrors the company's slow unravelling. It also reflects Baneri's emotional fatigue. The fan becomes a symbol of cycles that continue out of habit rather than purpose. This aligns with Tuan's idea that repetitive spatial elements can create emotional climates that influence perception [Tuan]. The fan's steady, weary rhythm becomes part of the room's atmosphere, shaping how Baneri understands his situation.

Light also functions as symbolic architecture. The corridor lights flicker at key moments, when characters feel uncertain or exposed. When Baneri leaves the CEO's office, the lights showing flickering once before settling. When Disma walks toward the Technical Planning Department, the lights tremble above her. These flickers are not supernatural signs. They are spatial cues that reflect emotional tension. They show how the building absorbs and returns the characters' unease. This echoes Merleau Ponty's view that perception is shaped by the body's emotional state [Merleau Ponty].

The rulers on Rajiv's drafting table form another symbolic element. They are aligned with precise care, creating a perfect right angle. This alignment reflects Rajiv's desire for order in a space where he feels increasingly distant from others. The rulers become a symbol of control, discipline, and the quiet pressure of technical work. Goffman notes that people often use small physical arrangements to stabilize their sense of self in social environments [Goffman, Interaction Ritual]. Rajiv's rulers perform this stabilizing function.

Even the ledger book is symbolic. Its thick pages and worn numbers are symbolic of the decline of the company. The act of Baneri closing the ledger and hearing "the soft thud of the cover" is symbolic. The ledger book is symbolic of responsibility and burden and the long history of choices that shape an organization's history. It is not just a book of numbers. It is a book that represents the history of the institution.

These symbols all work together to develop this sense of emotional architecture. These elements are faded into the work, with no explanation given. The reader can feel that such symbols have meaning. These elements work well within the minimalist genre, similar to Ishiguro or Kawabata, who use subtle elements to bring via emotional depth to the reader [Ishiguro] [Kawabata]. The novella follows this genre just due to this sense of allowing objects to have meaning in the natural world.

Symbolic architecture enhances this because it lends the building a sort of presence that is at once natural and emotionally affecting. The tilted photograph, the worn-out fan, the flickering lights, the lined-up rulers, and the bloated ledger are all part of a universe that incorporates space and object into the inner lives of the characters. These symbols are not what drive the narrative. They are what complement it.

7. Addressing Common Misreadings

Such quiet stories are particularly open to misreading, as they challenge the reader's expectations of the rules of conventional storytelling. "The Corridor Where Secrets Echoed" has been misread by some as a "story in which nothing happened," as a story in which the characters are lacking in action, as a story in which the building was too symbolic. Such misreadings can be explained in relation to expectations derived not from the history of phenomenology, space theory, and generic minimalism, but rather from the expectations linked to more conventional plot-driven storytelling.

One common misreading is the belief that the characters lack agency. This interpretation assumes that agency must be expressed through decisive action or dramatic speech. Yet micro sociology shows that agency often appears in small gestures and subtle negotiations [Goffman, Presentation of Self]. When Baneri straightens the crooked photograph or when Rajiv aligns the rulers on his drafting table, these actions reveal their attempts to maintain control in an environment that pressures them. Their agency is quiet, but it is present. It reflects the reality of institutional life, where people often act through small adjustments rather than bold declarations.

Next, another form of misreading lies in the building itself. The building is misread as a supernatural element or as a symbol used in a heavy-handed manner. This is a misreading of the concepts of phenomenology, which states that the field of perception is determined by the emotional and bodily experiences of the observer [Merleau Ponty]. The flickering light, trembling corridor, and faltering fan are not supernatural elements but are part of the observer's perception of the environment. The building appears alive because the observer projects his emotions onto the building. This is a phenomenon and not a symbol.

A third misreading lies in the expectation that minimalism in the narrative signifies a lack of emotional depth. The moral content that moderate writing can create has, however, been eloquently described by authors like Ishiguro and Kawabata, who demonstrate that minimalism can, in fact, reveal as much as explicit writing can [Ishiguro] [Kawabata]. Similarly, the novella is in line with such an approach when it describes Baneri closing the ledger, upon which "the soft thud of the cover" sounds, as a quiet yet resigned and tired moment. The minimalism of writing does not reflect a lack of emotion; it simply helps preserve it from misinterpretation.

Some readers also expect a clear antagonist or a dramatic turning point. But this expectation results in a narrative model that prioritizes conflict as the engine of story. Yet institutional life often lacks a single antagonist. Power is distributed through space, routine, and expectation. Spatial theory explains how architecture itself can become a form of control [Lefebvre]. The corridor, the CEO's office, and the clustered desks shape the characters' behaviour more than any individual does. This pattern aligns with organizational research showing that institutions often pressure individuals into conformity through structure rather than through direct confrontation [DiMaggio and Powell]. Under such conditions, people make sense of their environment through small cues and ambiguous signals, a process described by Weick as sensemaking under uncertainty [Weick, "Collapse of Sensemaking"].

Some readers interpret the slow pacing as indecision, yet phenomenology teaches that slowness can reveal layers of perception unavailable to rapid narrative movement.

Finally, there is the misreading that the story's silence indicates emotional emptiness. Silence in the novella is not a void. It is a medium of communication. Goffman shows that silence could be in a form of interaction when people share a social frame [Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*]. The characters' silences reveal hesitation, respect, fear, and unspoken understanding. When Disma pauses before entering the Technical Planning Department, the silence carries more meaning than any spoken line could. It reflects her uncertainty and her desire to belong.

Such a treatment of these misreadings demonstrates that the quietness of the novella simply is not a hindrance. It is, instead, a thoughtful approach based on theory and emotional integrity. The narrative requires a form of reading where one listens, looks, and understands the value of small actions. It is, by necessary extension, a call for a more unhurried form of reading.

8. Conclusion

The Corridor Where Secrets Echoed is a quiet story. It is a quiet story by design. It is borne of the theory of phenomenology, spatial theory, micro sociology, and ethical minimalism. These theoretical approaches determine the feel of the story, why the building is alive, why the characters' movements are circumspect, and why the story's emotional core is found in its gestures. The quiet of this novella is not one of emptiness. It is a state from which perception, space, behaviour, and all things reveal themselves.

Phenomenology can demonstrate how the characters experience the building as a field of perception in accordance with their emotional condition. Spatial theory can clarify the influence of the architecture in its quiet power over the characters' movements. Micro sociology can clarify the role of small gestures and the rituals of face-saving. Organizational theory can qualify our understanding of these factors further by adding the dimension of structural influence and the power of conformity. Minimalism can preserve the emotional authenticity of the characters' experiences by eschewing exaggeration.

These frameworks together create a unique narrative where silence becomes expressive and space becomes a participant in human experience. The crooked photograph, the tired fan, the flickering lights, and the careful alignment of rulers are not decorative details. They are part of the story's emotional architecture. They allow the reader to sense tension without being told what to feel. They invite a slower form of reading, one that values perception and presence.

The novella requests the reader to listen closely. It shows the tremble of light, the pause before a doorway, the soft thud of a ledger closing in its own way. These moments reveal the inner lives of the characters more honestly than dramatic

scenes could bring about. They reflect a world where people navigate pressure through restraint, where institutions shape behavior through space, and where meaning emerges through the smallest of actions, a pattern consistent with how people make sense of ambiguous environments [Weick, "Collapse of Sensemaking"].

The story is grounded within this kind of theory, thereby appropriating the idea that quiet fiction is just as impactful as loud fiction. It further highlights the idea that quiet does carry substance, simplicity can be a virtue, and architecture can be impactful as well. The defense is not one of dismissal but one of intent, allowing for an easier understanding of the intentions behind the story and the efforts made to embrace simple human truth.

In celebrating the unobtrusive architecture of human experience itself, this novella argues that meaning is often found not in what is said, but in what is known or sensed.

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