

Reading Ahmad Mahmoud's 'The Neighbors' as a Subaltern Narrative

Reza Alborzi¹

Islamic Azad University

Nazila Heidarzadegan²

Islamic Azad University

*T*he present study examines the Iranian novelist Ahmad Mahmoud's *The Neighbors* in the light of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of Subaltern. Reading the novel as a subaltern narrative, our essay investigates the main characters' experience of subalternity as well as their survival in the light of the resistance of the committed intellectuals. In his narrative, Mahmoud depicts a society where intellectuals play a major role in resisting colonization despite the fact that they have different understandings and expectations about their society. Affected by the cultural and economic pressures foisted on them by the colonizer and colonized and their relationship, the central characters undergo hard times until they either leave their country or become imprisoned. Understanding the circumstances and necessities of their society, some intellectuals are able to help the common people out of trouble. The intellectuals who prefer to leave the country have to go under the processes of Othering and Worlding. This essay, therefore, tries to show how Mahmoud's novel provides a third space through which the Subaltern can speak and transform the conditions of impossibility, hopelessness and negative feelings into the Subaltern and marginalize them into possibility.

Keywords: Subaltern, Third World, Worlding, Othering, Persian Novel, *The Neighbors*, Ahmad Mahmoud

¹ Reza Alborzi, Department of English Language, Islamic Azad University, Khoy Branch, Khoy, Islamic Republic of Iran.

² Nazila Heidarzadegan, Department of English Language, Islamic Azad University, Khoy Branch, Khoy, Islamic Republic of Iran. naziheidarzade@yahoo.com

Reading Ahmad Mahmoud's 'The Neighbors' as a Subaltern Narrative

Reze Alborzi

Nazila Heidarzadegan

Introduction

Ahmad Mahmoud (1931-2001) published *The Neighbors* in 1974. Widely known for its exploration of the current socio-cultural and political issues of (the Southern) Iran during the 1950s³, the novel, however, can also be read considering the representation of the struggle of the subaltern in colonial society. He was a contemporary novelist and short story writer. He came from a working class family. Supporting the leftist political views, Mahmoud got involved in the oppositional activities from the early years of his life and spent some time in prison for his political views. He published several novels and short story collections and his style is social realism.

Ahmad Mahmoud's *The Neighbors* is set around nationalization of the Iranian oil industry in 1951. In early twentieth century, South of Iran became the site of the first direct clash between Western and Iranian cultures and ways of life. The reason, of course, was oil, discovered in abundance in that region. In that time, South of Iran became the residence of the relatively large number of British citizens who lived in the affluent section in comfortable Western-style homes, and poor Iranian people as sweet shop laborers migrated from other parts of Iran lived in crowded, small oil company housing or in shantytowns. The difference between Iranian and the British inhabitants led to conflicts between them. *The Neighbors* was written in that time, which not only reflects the social and political events during those turbulent years when Mahmoud was growing up from a naïve boy into a young man with dreams of social, political and economic progress for his country, but also the lives of poor working-class families. In this novel like the literary and non-literary works of the period, colonial agents can be detected. To probe *The Neighbors* from a Spivakian perspective is very rewarding, since Mahmoud's endeavor to present the rights of the Subaltern resembles Spivak's enterprise for rewriting the history of the Subaltern of the Third World.

Spivak's theory implies the ways in which discourse can be loaded with strong political implication. In that sense, Iranian writers involved themselves in political and social events, though differently, in terms of disclosing the danger of the emergence of Subaltern and making oppressed working-class voice be heard. Mahmoud was under the yoke of colonization, undoubtedly, he experienced the Subaltern life. Foreigners had been provided with a good situation for a long time residency, but the native people had lived with difficulty.

³ For example, in his essay "The Journey into Adulthood: Study of Military Service as a Rite of Passage in Ahmad Mahmoud's *The Neighbors*" (2013), Karam Nayeypour shows how in Mahmoud's storyworld the compulsory military service, functioning as a cultural rite of passage, is conventionalized within the represented society and how it facilitates the adolescent narrator's journey into adulthood.

Another side of this exploitation is the native people exploited by the foreigners. On the one hand, foreigners have many facilities such as cinema, pool, football club, etc., and on the other hand, the agony and tough life of Iranian people in South.

Along with Said's *Orientalism*, and her article titled "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is the most influential work in the field of Post-colonial theory, and as the translator of the English version of Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, "she helped to introduce deconstructive critical strategies not only into literary criticism but also within a wider culture analysis" (Barry 124), and her main works have concluded *In Other Worlds, A Critique of Post-Colonial Reason* and *Death of a Discipline*. In these varied works, Spivak brings a feminist perspective to bear on both deconstruction and postcolonial theory, critically examines imperialism and colonial discourse, and uses Marxism to analyze capitalism and the international division of labor. Post-colonial criticism, international feminism, higher education on a global scale, and the economic super exploitation of Third World female labor have been treated with special passion throughout Spivak's career. She is best known for her serious political, cultural and critical theories to challenge the legacy of colonialism on literature and culture, "who is highly attentive to issues of class, but refuses to prioritize this over issues of race or gender, and whose work is centrally concerned with the problematic nature of representation" (Forsdick 206), her aim is to articulate the exploitation of the oppressed people such as new immigrants, the working class and women "who are often marginalized by dominant western culture" (Selden 194) and to find out the way to heard them. It should be mentioned that "literature or the teaching of literature has been instrumental in the construction and dissemination of colonialism as a ruling idea or the major factor of opposing to continuing colonization" (Viswanathan 2). Spivak's literary criticism has greatly informed and influenced the practicing of reading literary texts in relation to the history of colonialism. "she argues that literature provided a cultural representation of England as civilized and progressive: an idea which served to justify the economic and political project of imperialism" (Morton 112).

According to *Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies* edited by Hawley, "Spivak is concerned with the international division of labor, the status of the migrant, the epistemic violence of colonialism and the agency of the Subaltern" (418). The reason for thinking of Spivak's ideas for analyzing this novel from difference of culture and society is that the most important key term of Spivak's, the notion of the Subaltern, one of the areas of Post-colonial studies, can explore *The Neighbors* in the atmosphere of colonization. The presence of the native intellectual to signify the voice of the Subaltern emerges in work and with helping margins for predominance of center is the most important of their duty in the novel. In fact, "the intellectual and political world is indebted to Spivak's insight into global capitalism and would have been much poorer without her writing, her theories and her political stance" (Wisker 195).

Intellectuals and the Subaltern

The function of subalternity can be surveyed in *The Neighbors*, since what Spivak ponders upon as the definition of the Subaltern are similar to the world that is portrayed by Mahmoud in this novel. In most of his writings, Spivak states that the colonized society is filled with the relation of the Subaltern and the vital role of the intellectuals in representing of the voice of them. Quite in the same way in *The Neighbors*, there are many cases which indicate a community where Subalternity has taken the place of the real. In many of Spivak's writings,

she argues that her theories confirm that some aspects of the present society leads to colonization and leaves no space for the peasants, workers and women to speak about their rights, “millions have come and gone under the colonial dispensation without leaving a trace, men, but more so women” (Bertens 211). Spivak is one of the Post-colonial theorists whose works have been important in challenging Said’s notions of the homogeneity of colonial discourse; although she had located herself theoretically more within deconstruction, Marxist and Feminism, her focus on the Subaltern subject, the non-elite colonized subject is clear whereas she notes that colonial texts tend to represent only certain sectors of the society (Loomba 120). What interests Mahmoud and the other writers who support the life of this class of the society is exactly on the bases of Spivak’s idea. In the process of critically discussing the novel, the notion of the silencing of the Subaltern subjects in Mahmoud’s novel by the dominant ideologies of colonialism will be discussed. From the beginning of the story, the situation of the people in South of Iran and their obstacles to reach a calm life can be seen easily. The world in this novel continues to move on in a chaotic path for the people. Khaled as the protagonist has no chance to follow his literacy. His father has no job and he must leave the country to find the job. His mother has forced to work in the house of the others. Other neighbors have no chance to have a good life and they have different fates in difficult conditions.

The issue of Subaltern in *The Neighbors* can be foreground through the analysis of different aspects of the novel and there are many instances including the position of the peasants and workers that are apparent from the beginning of the novel. Nicely, Mahmoud has portrayed the difficult life of these people to elaborate the conditions of the society. From the beginning of the story, the protagonist has challenged with other members of the family about job and good condition of life. He is the Subaltern, “someone is not belong to the middle class and with access” (Chanter 108), actually, they have a difficult life, the father has no good job, “My father was out of a job all winter, these days, the blacksmith business is really slow” (*The Neighbors* 9), this situation could be spread for all city and workers, because, they could not produce what they consume inside the country and they have forced to use the productions of the Britain or other countries, “Nowadays even the shovel handles are imported from abroad” (*The Neighbors* 10). In the absence of intellectuals, they have no voice to utter their problems to the government to solve their problems. These people did not want to mime other cultures and they want to maintain living in their native culture. But they could not represent their opinions. They need someone to present them. Khaled as the member of the poor family from the Subaltern class of this society really did not know anything about their situation in his society. Pendar, as an intellectual thinker who works in bookstore, has begun to campaign against the government and foreigners in South of Iran. Khaled gets to know Pendar by chance, but he does not know what they write or do. He says that:

The writing on all the papers is the same. I cannot make any sense of it. Eventually I am able to spell out a word and read it, but I cannot understand what it means. I cannot figure out what kind of a beast this bloodthirsty exploiter is that feeds only on blood and has an appetite that is insatiable...I am beginning to comprehend that it also sucks oil sometimes instead of blood; that clues me in as to why on some of the papers, instead of bloodthirsty, it’s also described as oil-thirsty (*The Neighbors* 59).

This passage reveals that Khaled exactly belongs to the fairly underprivileged and the Subaltern society and knows nothing about his society. He does not know the exact details of the events of his country to plan for the future and let the others or foreigners write for them.

Friendship with Pendar and Shafagh promotes his information about his country and this event is the starting point of some committed intellectuals to campaign for the country against colonization. According to Loomba “it is the duty of intellectuals to represent her/him” (224), this duty from the Mahmoud’s point of view is the responsibility of the intellectuals to enlighten the society. After the acquaintance with Pendar, Khaled asks some questions about the oil and the role of it in presence of the Britain in Iran. He says that: “I would have asked the man why the British should beat it. I would ask him what the hell the British are doing in our country” (*The Neighbors* 68).

In another instance in *The Neighbors*, Khaled wants to help Pendar to distribute the declaration of these groups to inform the people to know them that what is happened in the country. First of all, Shafagh and Pendar help Khaled to gain literacy to know what exactly to do. This is the responsibility of the intellectuals about the Subaltern. In this complicated society in which different groups live, there is committed intellectual to articulate the lives and histories of such Subaltern groups in an appropriate and non-exploitative way. This is the role of the writer as the native intellectual to write the story of the working-class characters and some intellectuals to save them. In fact, “the performance of the intellectuals is appreciated by the author” (Mirabedini 486). Within the story; we can see the role of native and committed intellectual who is concerned to excavate the disempowered and silenced voices of the past from the material and political context of the present. Khaled says that:

I know what “united” means, but I still cannot make out “bloodthirsty exploiter”. These words have left their mark in my memory. Words like “united”, “autonomy”, “plunderers”, and other words that are all unclear to me. There is this one word that cannot even pronounce something like “imperils” or “imperialist”. It’s a tough word. My tongue twists when I want to say it. (*The Neighbors* 77)

The protagonist of the novel is very different from the one we saw at the beginning of the novel. He has decided to know about his around. What the colonizer did in the Third World is exactly what happened for the Iranian on that time. With the assistance of the hegemony in society, nobody asks about the production of the oil and the benefits of it. “For the resistance of the intellectuals against the catastrophic consequences on the dependence to the foreigners causes the enlightenment among the Subaltern” (Mirabedini 1008). Khaled has decided to know more about his country, “I gather that the prime minister is a conniving man and collaborates with British, who is this prime minister, who dares to impose all this without anyone standing up to him” (*The Neighbors* 91), now he is working in the teahouse, a public place to see different persons with different attitude about the country, but there is the first place in which he heard the slogan, “The Oil Industry Must Be Nationalized” (*The Neighbors* 121). This slogan is another positive feature of the presence of the intellectuals in the course of the events inside the country. These intellectuals such as Pendar and Shafagh know the real history of the country, the real problems of the Subaltern and they did not give up the campaign against the British in South of Iran and not like some intellectuals prefer to stay inside of the country and no leave the people, “in our history, the responsibility of enlightening of the people is the duty of the intellectuals” (Bavi 22). Khaled for getting the new phase of his life has no choice except to change his attitude to his country, because “if Pendar or Shafagh were not, undoubtedly, he could not have found the way” (Dastghaib 105). Another instance for the enlightening of Khaled as the Subaltern influenced by the intellectuals has depicted in chapter three when Khaled has talked about his new life:

Everything is new to me. I have opened my eyes to a new world. Now, from the sorts of things I hear, I can grasp why the lives of the destitute worsen each day, and why people like my father have to pack up their bundles and go from one foreign country to another in search of work so that they can earn a petty sum of money. I head out of the meeting thinking about the things I have heard. There are things that I cannot make sense of. (*The Neighbors* 143)

“In colonial discourse, there is no right for the developing nations to have a normal voice” (Abrams 245), it signifies that their linguistic system which assumes the superiority and normality of the West versus the inferiority and abnormality of the East or Others. It means that imperialism makes attempt to improve power in the subjugated colonies discourse or the master narrative of the world imperialism. What exactly happened in Iran on that time is the severe deprivation of people to have facilities for good life, suffering from poverty, disease, illiteracy and so on. According to Spivak, the Subaltern has no voicing capability, because he or she has been deprived of the theory socio-cultural structure surrounding him or her, the only voice is the voice of the superior, colonizer in which they subjugated the passive voice of the Subaltern (Spivak, *In Other Worlds* 325), but some intellectuals have broken the wall of deprivation, against the willing of British in Iran, they understand the real potential ability of Iranian people and effort to aware them from their wealth.

Morton in his book, *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, elaborates the idea of Marx in his book, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* in which Marx offers a description of small, peasant society. Marx believes that “their conditions of economic and social life prevent them from having class-consciousness, for this reason, they depicted by a political representative, who speak on their behalf” (57). For Spivak, the representation of the Subaltern is one of the responsibilities of the intellectuals to support the interests of the peasants and workers of the society and guarantee their political rights, the intellectuals who are concerned to excavate the disempowered and silence voices of the past from the political context of the present. What Pendar and Shafagh and other intellectuals such as Bidar do in this novel is the recognition of the rights of the Subaltern to reach their rights and wealth of the country after nationalization of the oil, it means that “they highlighted the role of the Subaltern and discharged from margin” (Shahmiri 152). Step by step Khaled knows something about the conditions of his life and he wants to find out the root of their problems. He says that: “the way things are going to these days, I doubt there will be any improvement in the economy and unemployment” (*The Neighbors* 190), most of the people with no work sitting about all troubled and worried in teahouses. But again, Bidar and Pendar talk to him about the recent news from government and their reflection to it.

Pendar begins by reading the editorial in the paper. It’s about Franco, Spain’s dictator:

I am surprised that tonight’s discussion is not about the recent speech by the prime minister. I really wanted to know why the government refuses to accept the proposal from the stockholders delegation. I wanted to learn more about the British attempts to con us, since it seems that is the main issue these days (*The Neighbors* 191).

This passage reveals that the Subaltern has to know the main issues of the country. But the role of the hegemony in the society causes the obstacle to illustrate the problems of the country. According to Gramsci, Italian Marxist philosopher, people’s everyday lives and identities are defined in and through dominant social structures that are relatively autonomous of economic relation (Morton 65), so what exactly the government and the British do in Iran

is the hegemony against the people, although along with ideology, some of the people have agreement and consent with this. The disempowered Subaltern has the limitation of applying in their life and with the help of the intellectuals try to know their rights. Now Khaled becomes older and understands the situation of the society, “he knows that the importance the oil in the current situation when most of his compatriot are unemployment” (Sepanloo195). With the continuation of his campaign against the government and foreigners, he is imprisoned. In jail, he is acquainted with other poor people from the lower class of the society, they could not write or read and they have dealt with drugs, violation and so on. In jail, they have a strike against the conditions of the health, food etc. He believes that they should gain their rights to reach their aims in their life.

According to Spivak, every movement of the Subaltern to attain their rights has been defined as rebellion, and colonizers for justifying their colonization, have used the epistemic violence. What Khaled and his friends did in jail is attempting to stand against violence. In fact, people of that region are not literate enough to know about their country and the presence of the foreigners in Iran. What the intellectuals have taught them is making them conscious about their situation in the society. Colonizers believe that the Subaltern is illiterate and there is nobody to educate them, so they can subjugate and control the people and plunder their wealth and oil, but the role of native and committed intellectuals in Mahmoud’s work show that not only these intellectuals leave the country comply with colonizers, but also they have campaigned against them and supported the Subaltern. The resistance of the intellectuals is the turning point of *The Neighbors*. At the end of this section, it raises a question that can the voice of the Subaltern such as Khaled be presented by the intellectual or does he understand Subaltern enough to present himself? Opposing Spivak’s colonial theory, Mahmoud points out “how intellectuals of Iran highlighted and emphasized the various ways in which Iranians who have always been active in making their histories in colonial era” (Taslimi 98), not waiting for them to be conjured up by foreigners. Khaled answers that question when he is imprisoned, because of campaign against the foreigners or colonizers, it means that “he has changed from the naïve person to the political man” (Aghae 44)

If I am in jail, maybe... I pause. I wanted to say, maybe it was for you, for Mother, for Jamileh, for Amo Bandar, and for people like Mash Rahim and KhajTofiq, and ... but I stop. I feel so small before Father overflowing generosity that all these words sound ridiculous to me. Father’s voice rings in my ears. I see Mother sitting in front of me as I am reading his letter, ‘there is plenty of work here, but there is also humiliation. It seems like Arabs are the servant of the European and we are the servant of the Arabs. (*The Neighbors* 353)

Worlding and the Intellectual’s Attitude

According to Edward Said in his book, *The World, the Text, the Critic*, “All texts are influenced by the social events” (4), even, apparently, some critics have denied the role of these events in the texts; nevertheless, they are part of the social world, human life and historical moments (Selden 225). It means, the writer could not be indifferent towards the events of his country. “It is important to remember that Spivak thought does not take place in a historical or intellectual vacuum” (Young, *White Mythologies Writing History and the West* 312), Ahmad Mahmoud is also one of the great and committed writers in Iran who was not indifferent toward the events in his society such as the nationalization of oil industry, the presence of the foreigners in South of Iran and the condition of the Subaltern in his country,

“So his style is directly the reflection of the social and historical events” (Golestan 29). After the presence of the British men in South of Iran because of oil, they thought that people of this region are uncivilized and we should bring civilization to them, but by colonization and exploitation.

According to Spivak, “imperialist project had to assume that the earth that it territorialized was in fact previously uninscribed” (*In Other Worlds* 19), so the British wanted to decide about the oil instead of Iranian. But the reflection of Ahmad Mahmoud as the Iranian intellectual against the willing of the British was remarkable. They wanted to silence the Iranian people but he represents the voice of the Subaltern and presents in *The Neighbors*. It is important to acknowledge that there is no complicity in silencing of the Subaltern.

In some Western text, Eastern people are represented as uncivilized and “we should help them” (Morton 19), but the intellectuals react against the Worlding in Iran, in fact, this metaphor thoroughly describe the subjugation, oppression and exploitation of this country, but the awareness of the intellectuals condemn it. If Iranian people wanted to speak themselves, not the other speak for them, they should learn how to write, how to read, how to defend their culture and rights and to construct their worlds. One of the responsibilities of the intellectuals is the learning of the Subaltern to read and write. For justifying the expansion of colonization, generally they had declared them as uncivilized people, but intellectuals of the novel such as Pendar and Shafagh have rejected them. The first example of this function is when the protagonist, Khaled, explains about the condition of his father when he was unemployed. He says that:

My father was out of a job all winter. Even now that the weather is warmer, he is still out of work. Every morning he goes to his blacksmith shop, and then returns home empty-handed. These days the blacksmith business is really slow. Nowadays even the shovel handles are imported from abroad, even the hobnails and pickaxes. (*The Neighbors* 8)

This sentence shows that British people had the pretense to help Iranian people. They subjugated them to reach their economic and political goal. They did not want to recognize the legal rights of the Subaltern and decided for them. One of the crucial points of the story is the role of oil in Iran. Because of the oil, British and other foreigners are in Iran. But they did not let the government of Iran has gained the benefits of selling oil. The intellectuals have revealed the relation of the some companies of the British in extraction of oil without any payment to the government.

The Neighbors elaborates the idea of the Iranian novelist about the Subaltern of the society. Mahmoud did not let the foreigners to write the story of his city and their problems in reaching the real independence. “The author of *The Neighbors* as the intellectual of Iran has the responsibility in his work to inform the Subaltern about the events of the society” (Golestan 52), because of the most of the events of Iran were related to the politics and most of the officials of the time tried to hide the reality of the society. “What the intellectuals want for the Subaltern is the justice, justice in society, in economy, in politics and Mahmoud articulates these messages for the worlds so well” (Ata 319). Spivak has invited us to pay attention to the large majority of the colonized that are ignored in that course of history because it was not successful in making itself to be heard (Wisker 157), Mahmoud is also with *The Neighbors* emerged a number of problems leading to ignoring the rights of the Subaltern and stop the process of Worlding from the non-native intellectuals. Mahmoud in this novel believes that:

The time when they could plunder us is over. The lion should fling his tail over his shoulder and hit the road. Now there are possessions and their lawful owners. Everything is well accounted for. People are their own bosses...I take a look at the driver's helper. The Oil Industry Must Be Nationalized. I ought to ask him. I ought to find out what that means. If a driver's helper is wearing a tag, why should not I wear one? Why should not Ebrahim, Hassani and Omid wear one? Why should not Khaleq, Chinuq and all the other boys in the neighborhood wear one? (*The Neighbors* 67)

Othering beside the Hegemony

The problems of the Subaltern after colonization, at the age of independence, do not come to an end. Spivak's definition for Othering in which describes the various ways such as culture, economy and politic that the colonial discourse produces the subject to subjugate them for attaining their goals to show that the owner of power, the big other, as the center of the world or the colonizer, creates the small other and forces the smaller to be the margin of the world (Ashcroft et al. *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies* 156). The British authority, some of the officials of the government and police who control the country with force and torturing people prevent intellectuals from representing the problems. The government assisting British force creates the hegemony to gain their goals. The officials of the country had not succeeded in solving the colonization and discrimination in country:

Once a government is capable of doing away with the exploitation of an individual by another individual, rest assured that it will be able to solve the problem of plunderers and colonialism because colonialism has its roots in the exploitation of individuality by individual. (*The Neighbors* 140)

What British did exactly in this country is that the possibility of the answering to the Subaltern is impossible; it means there is no right for the Subaltern to know the current events in the country. Here, some intellectuals help the Subaltern to be freed from Othering, they believed that the Subaltern is the real owner of the wealth of this country and deconstruct this term, they should be at center of the country, not in the margin. Another instance of the Othering is the role of some landlords about the Subaltern. What they do is exactly the colonization of the foreigners, it means, sometimes there is no need for the foreigners to exploit them. That is the auto-colonization. Some of the Subaltern know the reality, but there is no chance to change the poor conditions.

I listen to what they say. They talk about the lands on which the villagers have to work their lives away for the landlords. They talk about the pretty portion the farmer gets annually. They talk about the village children who do not have a school. They talk about proper hygiene, medicine, and the partitioning of the land. (*The Neighbors* 144)

This paragraph reveals that the Subaltern, peasants, workers have some requests to improve their life, but nobody answers them. The actions of the landlords of that time were the process of the Othering. In fact, "the Subaltern is the main factor to produce the agricultural products or industry, but have been ignored by the government or the colonizers and always were the second class citizen" (Abjadian 137). The Subalterns were the only workers and have no right for owning a piece of land. In fact, living under the veil of the hegemony, is the process of the Othering to continue colonization in the era of independence. The Subaltern was at the service of the government and their voice should be silent. But the silencing of the voice of the Subaltern is against the democratic promises of the anti-colonial nationalist movement. Intellectuals in this novel did not improve the silence of the Subaltern voice and tried to

enlighten them, “the risk of political complicity with dominant social and political structures as a necessary part of all intellectuals practices” (Morton 40). They did not continue the universal mistakes that the Subaltern should always be the Subaltern; it means that the ethics for the intellectuals in *The Neighbors* is outstanding.

In this story, colonization was not happened only from the British and foreigners, some officials of the government are also complicit with the process of the Othering. Police or the security force is the big other and control the small other in Iran. They did not let them to have a legal demonstration to utter their complaint, “He makes me understand that the government does not like these flyers, and if the police were to catch me with them, they would put me in jail” (*The Neighbors* 94). The paradox of ethical approach from the government toward the Subaltern and other people has depicted Othering spread in the country. They have divided the society into some parts to control their rebels, although, the government has realized all the voices of the Subaltern as the rebellious, and the injustice is the reflection of the officials, in fact, “the alibis of development to exploit the tribals and destroy their life-system” (Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* 256), but the intellectuals disagree with the government to continue the process of the Othering. The committed intellectuals in everyday struggle, willing to say a reality and the history of the Subaltern groups to save them from the Process of the Othering. Intellectuals against the movement of the British and some officials of the government have campaigned for the Subaltern to become literate. What the Subaltern needs on the time of colonization is the confidence to resist against Othering. Pendar and Shafagh believe that they can produce what they consume, especially about the oil. Most of the people know something about the events of the country.

The driver is passionate as he talks about oil and how the British plunder it:

These days, that’s what everyone talks about. The only way out is to nationalize it, even the schoolchildren say the same thing, even the bazaar merchants say the same thing, they are gone, those times when we needed a guardian... Now we are mature and capable. We should throw all the British into the sea... you think we are crippled? Or you think our own educated youth cannot replace the Farangi staff? Or is the ripe fruit good only for the animal to enjoy? (*The Neighbors* 123)

Conclusion

Unlike Spivak’s ideas that the Subaltern cannot speak nor can it be heard, and a little pessimistic picture of historically mute Subaltern is rendered through the combined epistemic violence of colonialism, the Subaltern of *The Neighbors* does speak. Of course, Khaled, the protagonist of the novel by Mahmoud, represents himself with the help of some committed intellectuals to discover the reality about his nation. Ahmad Mahmoud, as an Iranian intellectual has heard the voice of the Subaltern such as Khaled and has allowed him surpass trivialities of his life, represent his real request, and find out some answer with the enlightenment of the intellectuals such as Pendar and Shafagh. Furthermore, the reflection of intellectuals toward Worlding and Othering is appreciated by the author. They have never been silent on some crucial issues in Iran such as the nationalization of the Oil industry or the presence of the foreigners in perfect conditions as compared with the Subaltern in poor condition. The author is dissident to the British or officials of the government, instead of the Subaltern, deciding for his future, that is he as the Iranian intellectual is dissident to the Othering and respects the rights of the Subaltern. Additionally, in Worlding terms, Ahmad

Mahmoud has preferred writing the history and the story of his nation to let the Subaltern speak as well as be heard. Mahmoud as an Iranian intellectual, prefers to find a political way to solving the Subaltern's problems. The historical representation of the various lower-class Subaltern groups against the ruling power or dominant social class as well as the onus of the intellectuals to reveal the reality of the society have been discussed in *The Neighbors*. This novel has been written for the Subaltern to assure them that their voice was heard by intellectuals. Mahmoud has done what Spivak believes; "a literary text can provide an alternative rhetorical site for articulating the histories of the Subaltern" (Morton 55).

Works cited

- Ashcroft, Bill et al. *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- . *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literature*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Bertens, Hans. *Literary Theory; the Basics*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Castle, Gregory. *The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory*. Singapore: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.
- Chanter, Tina. *Gender: Key Concept in Philosophy*. London: Continuum, 2006.
- Chaturvedi, Vinayak. *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*. London: Verso, 2000.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1998.
- Habib, M.A.R. *A History of Literary Criticism and Theory: From Plato to the Present*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.
- Harasym, Sarah. *The Postcolonial Critic: Interview, Strategies, dialogues*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Landry, Donna. *The Spivak Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Lane, Richard. *Fifty Key Literary Theorists*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/ Post colonialism*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Lopez, Alfred. *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire*. New York: University of New York Press, 2005.
- Macey, David. *The Dictionary of Critical Theory*. London: Penguin Books, 2000.
- McLeod, John. *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Morton, Stephen. *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.
- Nayebpour, Karam. "The Adolescent Narrator's Journey into Adulthood Study of Military Service as a Rite of Passage in Ahmad Mahmoud's *The Neighbors*." *Persian Literary Studies Journal (PLSJ)*, 2.1. pp. 33-50. 2013, http://plsj.shirazu.ac.ir/article_1896_024d652edfcc6d3e8003e110d97bda69.pdf

- Ray, Sangeeta. *GayatriChakravortySpivak: In Other Words*. India: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. London: Penguin, 1978.
- . *The World, the Text, the Critic*. London: Penguin, 1983.
- Sandres, Mark. *GayatriChakravortySpivak: Live Theory*. New York: Methen, 2005.
- Selden, Raman. *A reader's guide to contemporary literary theory*. London: Longman, 2005.
- Spivak, GayatriChakravorty. *In Other Worlds*. New York: Methen, 1987.
- “ .---Three Women's Text and a Critique of Imperialism”. *Post colonialism Critical Concepts*. Ed. Diana Brydon. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- .---*A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- . *Selected Subaltern Studies*. New York: Oxford, 1988.
- Wisker, Gino. *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Wolfreys, Julian. *Introducing Literary Theories*. Edinburgh: Edinbrgh University Press, 2001.
- Young, Robert. *Post colonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University, 2003.
- . *White Mythologies Writing History and the West*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2004.