

Challenging Dominant Discourses: Subaltern Voices and Resistance in Ahmed Ardalan's the Gardener of Baghdad and Elif Shafak's Honor

Dr. Qusay Khalaf Hussein

Anbar General Directorate of Education

Qusayhussein560@gmail.com

تحدي الخطاب السائدة: الأصوات المهمشة ومقاومتها في رواية "بستاني بغداد" لأحمد أردلان و"شرف"

إليف شافاك

د. قصي خلف حسين

المديرية العامة لتربية الانبار

Abstract

Utilizing Gayatri Spivak's concept of the subaltern, this article explores the recurring themes of dominating discourses, resilience, and resistance in Ardalan's novel, *The Gardener of Baghdad*, and Shafak's novel, *Honor*. Through an analysis of selected passages from the two literary works, this research paper investigates the prevailing discourses in a society where people experience marginalization in several aspects, namely in social and political domains. The study also clarifies the diverse strategies that people use to question these systems in an effort to construct a self-empowered personality and identity. Ahmed Ardalan's novel, *The Gardener of Baghdad*, tells the story of Ali, a young Iraqi man who sees war and occupation, and how his love for an English girl encounters several obstacles stemming from his cultural heritage and inferior social and political standing. Ali resists the challenges and prevailing discourses of the established political and social elite, who want to enforce their laws and responsibilities on him. In contrast, the novel Elif Shafak introduces the protagonist, Pempe, a Turkish immigrant woman who encounters numerous limitations and obstacles, particularly of a societal nature. She resides in a highly patriarchal culture that compels her to exist within a traditional society where women are expected to fulfill only their domestic responsibilities. Through Pempe's narrative, Elif Shafak reveals the stringent patriarchal regulations that seek to suppress women's voices and deny them their essential rights. This paper reveals both authors' approaches to elucidating the many limitations that marginalize people, as well as the strategies people employ to counteract these obstacles. The research further concludes by employing Spivak's theory of subalternity, which has extensive implications for postcolonial literature, cultural studies, feminist theory, and notions of identity, agency, and power. This adds a significant dimension to Spivak's theory and its relevance in contemporary literary interpretation, as well as major future investigations.

Keywords: Subaltern voices, resistance, dominant discourses, Spivak, feminist theory, Shafak, Ardalan.

ملخص البحث

يلقي هذا البحث، ومن خلال نظرية الكاتبة غياتري سبيفاك لمفهوم التبعية، الضوء على تحدي الخطاب السائدة ومقاومتها في كل من رواية الكاتب أحمد أردلان "بستاني بغداد"، ورواية الكاتبة التركية إليف شفق "شرف". يدرس البحث من خلال تحليل بعض النصوص في الروايتين وكيف يتعرض الكثير من الأفراد للتمييز في جوانب عديدة خصوصاً تلك التي تتعلق بالجانب السياسي والاجتماعي. كما يوضح البحث مختلف الاستراتيجيات التي يتبناها هؤلاء الأفراد لكبح جماح هذه الخطاب والسعي لبناء شخصية جديدة وهوية مستقلة. تتناول رواية أحمد أردلان "بستاني بغداد" قصة شاب عراقي اسمه علي، الذي يختبر الحرب والاحتلال، وهو واقع في حب فتاة انجليزية اسمها ماري، ثم يصطدم بالعديد من العقبات

التي تقف عائقا بينه وبين حبيبته ماري. ان هذه الاختلافات نابعة من كونه ينتمي لطبقة اجتماعية وثقافية اقل رقيا من طبقة ماري الاجتماعية التي تنتمي لطبقة النبلاء، وكيف يحاول علي جاهدا مقاومة هذه الاختلافات السياسية والاجتماعية التي تحاول حرمانه من الارتباط بحبيبته. في الجانب الاخر، تقدم رواية اليف شافاق "شرف" قصة امرأة تركية اسمها بمبي، تهاجر من تركيا الى اوريا بعد ان كانت تصطدم بعراقيل اجتماعية كونها تعيش في مجتمع ذكوري له قوانينه الصارمة حيث لا صوت ولا رأي للمرأة وعليها ان تقوم بواجباتها المنزلية ودون ان تنبس بنت شفة. تكشف شافاق ومن خلال قصة بمبي، كيف ان القوانين التي يفرضها الرجل في مجتمع تقليدي تحرم المرأة من ابسط حقوقها الأساسية. يهدف البحث ومن خلال الروايتين الى لقاء الضوء على القيود الاجتماعية والسياسية التي تفرض سيطرتها على الافراد وتؤدي الى تهيمشهم، ثم يتناول البحث الاستراتيجيات التي من خلالها يقاوم الافراد هذا المنهجيات. كما يهدف البحث الى أهمية نظرية سبيفاك حول مفهوم التبعية وكيف ان كتابات سبيفاك قد كان لها الأثر الواسع في الادب ما بعد الاستعماري والدراسات الثقافية والنظرية النسوية ومفاهيم القوة والهوية والوكالة على حد سواء. كما يضيف البحث بعدا ادبيا مهما الى نظرية سبيفاك في التفسير الادبي المعاصر فضلا عن دورها في النتاج الادبي في الفترة القادمة .

الكلمات المفتاحية: الافراد المهمشين، المقاومة، الخطابات السائدة، سبيفاك، النظرية النسوية، شافاق، اردلان.

Introduction

The term "subaltern" mostly refers to marginalized populations that lack political representation and are therefore voiceless. This phrase specifically denotes those who occupy a lesser position in the social hierarchy compared to other societal groups due to factors such as social status, religious affiliation, racial background, gender, and sexual orientation. Intellectuals often use the term "subaltern" to characterize any group that faces social disadvantage or holds a lower status compared to other social strata: "a person rendered without agency by his or her social status." (Young 2003) The Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci used the term "subaltern" to characterize the oppressed proletariat at that time. Gramsci used the word "subaltern" to emphasize a position of inferiority or subordination based on factors such as caste, gender, class, and culture. (Gramsci, 1971) According to some academics, Gramsci may have used the phrase "subaltern" as a substitute for the proletariat, potentially as a secret word to bypass prison censors. However, others argue that his use of the term is more complex and not easily defined. Gramsci argued that while the history of the bourgeoisie, or ruling class, is often considered "official," the history of subaltern classes is equally intricate and significant. Gramsci asserts that the historical narratives of the dominant class subject subaltern groups to intermittent, periodic, and fragmented occurrences. Since the 1970s, we have used the word 'Subaltern' to refer to individuals colonized on the South Asian subcontinent. Over time, its scope has expanded to embrace other disciplines such as history, culture, anthropology, sociology, human geography, and literature. Individuals such as workers, laborers, and farmers, excluded from achieving hegemonic authority, comprised the subaltern classes. (Ashcroft 25) Gayatri Spivak advanced the concept of subaltern studies to a greater extent, "emphasizing that the western Marxist model of social change that these historians employ does not do justice to the complex histories of subaltern insurgency and resistance which they seek to recover" (Morton 7). Spivak has advanced the historical study of the Subaltern Studies Group by explicitly focusing on the lives and experiences of subaltern, marginalized women, a topic that official Indian history has utterly disregarded and failed to recognize. She acknowledges with enormous depth of understanding that the prevailing educational, economic, political, and cultural approaches have severely harmed the lives of several marginalized and disempowered populations. She uses deconstruction as a means to express this realization in a critical way. She argues that the deconstruction viewpoint allows the reader to critically examine the issue under investigation, preserve the expert's knowledge, and transform impossible situations into feasible ones. She writes: To investigate, discover and establish a subaltern or peasant consciousness seems at first to be a positivistic project- a project which assumes that if properly prosecuted, it will lead to firm ground, to something that can be disclosed. This is all the more significant in the case of recovering a consciousness. (Spivak 278) In an interview with a magazine, Spivak expresses her justified opinion that she appreciates the term 'subaltern' for a specific reason. Its existence is entirely dependent on the specific circumstances. The term 'subaltern' originally referred to a specific position or rank within the military. Gramsci used the term while operating inside a system of censorship: He called Marxism 'monism,' and was obliged to call the proletariat 'subaltern.' That word, used under duress, has been transformed into the description of everything that doesn't fall under strict class analysis. I like that, because it has no theoretical rigor." (Spivak 141) According to Spivak, there may be no vantage point or viewpoint from which people belonging to a marginalized group, specifically identified by their gender, can effectively articulate their views or share their experiences. She highlights that the subaltern women were unable to express themselves due to the full

suppression of their voices and actions under the dominant Hindu patriarchal norms of morality, as well as their portrayal as victims of a savage society in British colonial accounts. Despite their efforts to express their stories, these marginalized women in a society dominated by males were not acknowledged, leading to their lack of voice within the existing political systems of representation. In a nutshell Spivak's well-known essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" functions as a straightforward critique of Western patriarchal ideology. Spivak illustrates that individuals and groups categorized as disadvantaged and excluded as a result of colonialism and other factors have faced several challenges in terms of self-expression and independent voice. Furthermore, Spivak's work expressly encourages writers and intellectuals who advocate for the subaltern to prioritize their cultural identity above preoccupation with dominant discourses. She highlights the need to challenge the widely accepted assumptions in Western feminist thought and the universality of women's narratives and experiences. In addition, she emphasizes the need for a thorough comprehension of the worldwide political environment and its influence on the oppression of women. According to Spivak, researchers from other countries face significant challenges when attempting to reclaim the voices of marginalized groups without undergoing significant changes.

Literature Review

Subaltern studies concentrate on individuals or groups that experience marginalization and exclusion from social and political power within the dominant colonial system. Subaltern studies emerged as a distinct subject in the early 1980s. Spivak's works explore the ways in which social, historical, and cultural practices and traditions marginalize groups and individuals. "The Gardener of Baghdad" and "Honor" portray individuals who gain agency and the capacity to resist, challenging the dominant power and asserting their presence, aiming to restore equilibrium in previously marginalized cultures. Ahmed Ardalan's novel "The Gardener of Baghdad" offers a captivating narrative that explores the rich history of Baghdad, focusing on two distinct periods and interconnected people. Adnan, the proprietor of a library, discovers memoirs inside one of his books, which bring these characters together. According to the memoirs, Ali develops romantic feelings for Mary, who is the daughter of an English commander from the royal court. The narrative explores the societal, financial, and governmental dimensions of two distinct cultures connected by a romantic relationship between Ali and Mary during periods of conflict. The work also illuminates other concepts, including love, war, identity, ethnicity, gender, and other cultural elements. Elif Shafak's novel "Honor" is captivating and intellectually stimulating. This narrative explores the intricacies of family, love, and honor while examining the conflict between Eastern and Western civilizations. Shafak depicts traditional values and contemporary challenges by interweaving many people's narratives. The tale is replete with emotional profundity, affording a deep understanding of the human condition. The tale takes place in both London and a town in Turkey, providing readers with an insight into the conflict between Eastern and Western civilizations. The juxtaposition of these two places provides a context for the characters' inner struggles and the obstacles they encounter in harmonizing their cultural background with the expectations of modern society. Pempe, the female protagonist, is grappling with her sense of self, romantic relationships, and the conflict between different cultural backgrounds. Research on Ahmed Ardalan's novel, *The Gardener of Baghdad*, has been scarce, underscoring the importance of this literary work. Samira Aghacy's "Writing Beirut: Mappings of the City in the Modern Arabic Novel" (2015) provides valuable perspectives on how Arab writers, such as Ardalan, portray metropolitan areas as locations of defiance and recollection. "Love and War in Ahmad Ardalan's *The Gardener of Baghdad*" (2023) by Baydaa Ahmed and Luma Shakir argues that wars and conflicts have a significant influence on the mental and physical welfare of humans. Nevertheless, it contends that through the potency of love and compassion, people may persevere and conquer the catastrophic consequences of war. Several prior studies have examined Elif Shafak's novel "Honor," with scholars exploring a range of subjects. The subsequent investigations aimed to explore some of the ideas covered in the novel. "The New Cultural Climate in Turkey: Living in a Shop Window" (2011) by Nurdan Gurbilek examines Shafak's approach to the conflicts arising from the clash between traditional values and modernization in Turkey. Sibel Erol's "Narrative Constructions of Identity in Elif Shafak's *Honor*" (2014) explores how Shafak's characters traverse and defy the limitations imposed by their socio-cultural surroundings. "Turkey: The Insane and the Melancholy" (2016) by Ece Temelkuran provides a contextual framework for the socio-political environment in which Shafak works, enhancing comprehension of her opposition to prevailing ideologies. Lilia Zouari's "Male Pride/ Female Shame: Gender Violence in Elif Shafak's *Honor*" (2022) demonstrates how Shafak's work reveals the inner workings of female inequality within her culture, which stem from men exploiting religion rather than religion itself. "Clash of Identities: Men and Women Search for Recognition in Elif Shafak's *Honor*" (2023) by Djazia Benmokrane delves into the various facets of hybridity and their manifestation in the lives and

relationships of migrants. Moreover, it explores the elements that constitute femininity and masculinity in Turkish culture. The study emphasizes the impact of seeing women as 'the other' on their identities and, therefore, on their children's identities.

Theoretical Framework

The research article draws upon Gayatri Spivak's theoretical framework presented in her 1988 work "Can the Subalterns Speak?". Spivak's theory focuses on the oppression and marginalization of a subordinate social class that lacks access to power and control. Specifically, she employs the term "subaltern" to refer to the oppressed and subjugated women in society. The qualitative technique is used to conduct a textual analysis of two novels: Ardalan's "The Gardener of Baghdad" and Elif Shafak's "Honor." This study is conducted within the framework of the "Can the Subalterns Speak" paradigm, which was introduced in 1988. This research project aims to empower subaltern and marginalized women by providing them with a platform to express their perspectives. Additionally, it seeks to provide an accurate portrayal of a culture that oppresses, marginalizes, and devalues subaltern classes. Most people understand the concept of a subaltern in relation to issues of dominance and authority, democracy and membership, opposition, and change. Spivak defines subalternity as a state of lack of identity, "where social lines of mobility, being elsewhere, do not permit the formation of a recognizable basis of action" (Spivak 2005, 476). Initially, individuals of lower social status were the target of the term "subaltern." However, Antonio Gramsci expanded its meaning to encompass a broader symbolic and political investigation of the dynamics experienced by subordinate social strata. Gramsci analyzed a range of social groupings, including peasants, slaves, women, religious groups, different ethnicities, and the proletariat. Gramsci's interpretation of the subaltern diverges from Spivak's subsequent understanding of this concept. Gramsci saw subalternity as the quintessential form of political representation, when certain elites actively influence the state's policies and parties. The State is solely responsible for the unification of ruling or hegemonic social classes, so the group left behind as a minority group is considered a 'subaltern' group (Smith, 2010). Other marginalized groups that lack political representation also experience oppression; just as subordinate groups do. Consequently, a single group retains control over the corridors of power, wielding unlimited authority and obstructing the participation of others in meaningful political activities. According to Gramsci's conception of subalternity, these groups possess the prerogative to oppose the political system and regain influence at its core by actively engaging in political parties. On the contrary, if they allowed the powerful elite to lead them as before, the Subalterns would never rise to any substantial power (Ciocchini et al., 2021). Spivak's idea differs from Gramsci's in that it focuses on the marginalization and subjugation experienced by Indian women. Spivak's influential work, "Can the Subaltern Speak (1988)," brings attention to the double colonization of Indian women. The first colonization occurred in Indian culture, where males exercised dominance due to the rigid patriarchal structure and the concept of sati women, or widows. In the post-colonial environment, Indian women experience a second sort of captivity. Spivak's influential work reveals that Indian women's subjugation stems from their limited opportunities for self-expression and their increased susceptibility to patriarchal and colonial social norms and practices. This study will examine Spivak's idea of the subaltern by analyzing selected passages from Elif Shafak's story of "Honor" and Ahmed Ardalan's novel "The Gardener of Baghdad." The research will demonstrate the applicability of Spivak's subaltern concept to the main characters in the two novels. The research will delve into how social factors, including the strict patriarchal system's treatment of women, as well as political and economic factors related to race, gender, religion, and social status, subjected these characters to persecution, marginalization, and exclusion.

Discussion

Shafak's novel depicts a socio-cultural reality that faithfully captures the true status of women in a society under the strict control of traditional male rules. These rules have defined women's identity and restricted their position exclusively to the realm of home and domestic affairs. You could call your child 'Honour', as long as it was a boy. Men had honour. Old men, middle-aged men, even schoolboys so young that they still smelled of their mothers' milk. Women did not have honour. Instead, they had shame. And, as everyone knew, Shame would be a rather poor name to bear. (p.20) It is customary for women in the community to perform the task of cleaning up after males, almost like a ritual. They are used to it. Their upbringing instills it and passes it down from one generation to the next. The societal framework establishes an individual's position based on their association with a dominant and important lineage, marginalizing, excluding, and subjecting those who do not belong to an elevated social class to exploitation. If you are not a member of an influential lineage, you have no significance. Regardless of your diligence or moral character, others would not regard you seriously or with respect. Therefore,

societal and cultural norms consider women as the most vulnerable part of this social structure, obliging them to adhere to these regulations, confine themselves to their homes, and dutifully carry out their domestic responsibilities without voicing their opinions. Men are the only ones who can participate in activities outside the house. This aligns precisely with Spivak's statement, "between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears...into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization." (p. 102) This quotation illustrates how societal norms and political powers have denied women the opportunity to have a unique sense of self, which would provide them the freedom to make independent choices and decisions. However, men exclusively dominate the realm of politics, denying women the authority to intervene or express even the most basic of opinions. Women suffer from a disadvantaged social and political status, which results in their loss of agency and marginalization in society. Shafak poses "they would like their daughters to be modest and virtuous, and yet they wanted them to get married and have children in due course. Their daughters' names and dispositions might be similar to the midwives, but their fates had better to be different." (p.36) Consequently, gender disparities marginalize women from the political sphere, creating an insurmountable barrier that prevents women from effectively participating in politics, primarily dominated by men. Shafak gives a compelling societal perspective on how men embody strength, power, and capability, as seen by their names. Conversely, women's names embody characteristics such as vulnerability, compliance, and acquiescence to the societal expectations set by males. Male names embodied power, ability and authority, like Muzaffer, 'the Victorious One'; Faruq, 'the one who Distinguishes Truth from Falsehood'; or Husam al Din, 'the Sword of Faith'. Females' names, however, reflected a delicate daintiness, like a porcelain vase." (p.163) People often perceive men as all-encompassing, portraying them as possessing extraordinary abilities. Man is the center of all existence. He possesses inherent strength, while women, like delicate cambric fabric, are comparatively weaker in creation. Ahmed Ardalan's novel, *The Gardener of Baghdad*, highlights the cultural subalternity discussed by Spivak in her article. The passage reveals how Westerners depict Ali and confine him to a specific stereotype, resulting in significant exclusion and marginalization while receiving minimal recognition and equality: Like many times before, Mary and I were slapped in the face with the harsh reality of our different worlds. I was blatantly insulted on two occasions by one of the guests. Right after dinner, one of the Thompsons' neighbors, asked, "Aren't you simply ecstatic being here, Omar, in real civilization, rather than that dreadful, dry, sticky desert you come from, where everything reeks of camel dung and is covered with sand and grit?" I attempted to ignore the remark and avoid conversation with him, but he continued talking, comparing the "amazingly convenient modern transportation systems of Britain" to the "four-legged, furry, slow-going animals" we all supposedly relied on to get around. "Tell me, Omar, what is it like to travel by bus and car and airplane rather than horse or camel or whatever other smelly creatures you have to ride back home?" (p. 128) The aforementioned quotation demonstrates the Western perception of Eastern civilization as a desert or camel civilization, implying that it is underdeveloped, insignificant, or unfamiliar to the rest of the world. This perception stems from the belief that Western civilization is the epitome of true civilization due to its technological advancements, progress, automobiles, and urbanization, while Eastern civilization remains primarily focused on animal-related activities. This demonstrates the marginalization, exclusion, and deprivation of other civilizations and diverse cultures in terms of their importance, decision-making power, self-expression, and the development of a genuine, autonomous identity. The novel *The Gardener of Baghdad* portrays Ali and Mary's love story as robust. However, Ali particularly felt secure and self-assured when he was alone with Mary, away from the prying eyes of others, especially the English. The English reject Ali because of their perception that he hails from a less sophisticated and advanced culture compared to theirs. They also believe that he lacks the privilege to marry an English woman of high social standing because he comes from a lower-class background with no political or social power. Strangely, the little structure felt like a home of our own. Inside it, we were alone—just my Mary and me—and no one could judge us by race, color, religion, or nationality. It was just Ali and Mary in that beautiful place, away from the cruel and narrow-minded of the world, at least for the few hours we spent there. (p.125) When Ali and Mary are alone, he is immune to the criticisms that others make about him. These regulations are based on the principles of race, color, religion, and nationality. This illustrates that the cultural context in which Mary resides perceives Ali from a narrow perspective, deeming him unsuitable to be Mary's spouse due to his inferior racial background and distinct identity. Mary's community views Ali as an outsider, believing he is not a member and should not be involved. Education is one of the methods Shafak used in her novel to confront the conventional structure of a male-dominated society controlled by rigid male regulations.

Education empowers women, enabling them to develop strong and independent personalities that challenge and defy the restrictive regulations imposed by men. How different she was from the women who worked in the sun and bore children until they had enough sons. Here was a female who was used to having people, including men, hang on every word. Even Berzo had taken off his cap and dropped his shoulders in her presence. (p. 16) Pempe discusses the female doctor and highlights her contrast with the conventional women in her community, who mostly focus on carrying boys and doing household tasks. Men have a high regard for women who have had a formal education. The father, Berzo, has a demeanor characterized by reverence and respect for her. Education empowers women. It maintains their societal worth. Pempbi, the protagonist of the novel Honor, lives in a civilization mostly composed of males and ultimately resolves to defy the stringent regulations of her community. She resolved to pursue her independence, irrespective of the steep cost she had to bear, "Pempe wanted to see the world beyond the River Euphrates. She had the nerve to pursue her heart, and not pay attention to others thought about her." (p.39) Pempe is distinct from the women of previous generations. She is a modern-day woman. She yearns for emancipation. She is indifferent to the opinions and judgments of others. She desires liberation and has her own passions. Pempbi and her husband, Adem Toprak, immigrated to the West in search of better opportunities and prospects for themselves and their families. She sought every chance to live autonomously, with her own distinct personality and independence. In the west, her husband Adem abandoned her for another woman, burdening her with significant familial obligations. She had to provide for herself and her family, exerting considerable effort to ensure their survival, "Mum started to go to the houses of the rich, where she would take care of their toddlers, cook their food, clean their rooms, scour their saucepans, iron their clothes and occasionally offer a shoulder to cry on." (p. 72) In addition to her home responsibilities, Pempbi, the mother, diligently strives to compensate for her husband's absence. She engages in domestic labor in order to earn income for her family. The husband is neglecting his family by engaging in flirtatious behavior with another woman, leaving the whole duty of managing the household on the mother's shoulders. Spivak once again highlights the discriminatory customs and cultures that devalue and disrespect women in comparison to men, especially in colonial and male-dominated societies. These societies exhibit a hierarchical structure that marginalizes women, depriving them of recognition and a distinct identity. Spivak argues, "in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow." (p. 83) This quotation exemplifies how the colonial perspective, bolstered by the patriarchal social hierarchy, has marginalized women by denying them any social or political agency. Consequently, women have endured both the oppressive societal conditions they inhabit and the foreign influence exerted by colonialism. Western norms, traditions, and perspectives subject women to a dual subaltern position, marginalizing them and depriving them of agency, historical recognition, and consequently, social and political identity. Spivak discusses the idea of "the planned epistemic violence of the imperialist project," (p. 78) which refers to the Western inclination to force its ideology and perspective on others, so depriving them of their uniqueness, voice, and social or political representation. Ali experienced marginalization, exclusion, and contempt when coming to Britain to meet Mary. However, he steadfastly maintained his self-assurance and resolutely safeguarded his culture and civilization while facing derogatory remarks and ill-treatment from the British. I responded in a very calm, dignified, mature manner, using far fewer and far kinder words than I secretly wanted to. "We have cars in Baghdad," I said. "As a matter of fact, I have two." I then kindly and intelligently reminded him that Arabs had invented the wheel, and when most of the human beings in the world were still living in caves, we had palaces. Careful not to sound too sarcastic, I said, "If you have any doubt about that, sir, perhaps you should consult the history books written by your own British historians, or maybe you can pay a visit to your British Museum, which finds Arab and Middle East history interesting and significant enough to boast its treasures to your people here. (p. 129) This excerpt demonstrates that despite the continuous criticism of Ali's identity, race, and identity, he answered with composure, asserting his ownership of two cars in Baghdad. Ali passionately asserts his Arab heritage and national identity, highlighting the Arab civilization's pioneering invention of the wheel, which occurred when other regions of the globe were still in a state of primitive seclusion. Ali astutely points out that the British Museum and historical accounts authored by Western academics serve as evidence for this claim. Ali safeguards his identity, firmly believing that his national and ethnic identities have equal importance to those of others.

Conclusion

Applying Spivak's concept of subalternity, this study critically examines the novels *The Gardener of Baghdad* by Iraqi writer Ahmed Ardalan and *Honor* by Turkish writer Elif Shafak. This analysis provides a critical

examination of the political and social marginalization, dependency, and exploitation experienced by the major characters. It also explores their direct confrontation with the forces and dominant discourse that aim to suppress their voices in several domains. Throughout the novel Ahmed Ardalan, *The Gardener of Baghdad*, the author vividly portrays the political, historical, and social forces that attempt to oppress and suppress the other characters. However, these characters, particularly the main character Ali, persistently and successfully confront and defy these powers. In Shafak's novel, the patriarchal structure and rigid customs serve as the embodiment of distinct forces that endeavor to enforce their rules onto all individuals in society, particularly women. However, these disadvantaged people, especially the protagonist Pempi, make every attempt to defy these stringent regulations that seek to limit their freedom, constrain them, mute them, and make them silent. The current study introduces the academic concept of subalternity, and Spivak has made a significant contribution by shedding light on the substantial obstacles these people have encountered, which have destroyed their personal self-sufficiency and impeded their quest for an independent identity. Hence, Spivak's concept of subalternity illustrates that beyond the constraints imposed by dominant discourses, there are voices that oppose and propose alternative ideas and novel ways to structure relationships within the existing discourses. This study emphasizes the need to illuminate these voices that attempt to oppose the powers seeking to exert control and suppress them. It is essential for literary creation to articulate, protect, and reveal underrepresented perspectives, as well as narratives intended to suppress them. We accomplish this by thoroughly examining underrepresented characters, communicating their experiences, and transforming their narratives into recognizable literary masterpieces. The works of Ardalan and Shafak provide a fresh perspective on identity and resistance, consistently and resolutely demonstrating that literature is a potent and efficient instrument for questioning narratives that attempt to establish their dominance, thereby safeguarding those who lack a voice.

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