

# A Comparative Althusserian Analysis of J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and Ahmad Mahmoud's *The Neighbors*

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## Abstract

The present study presents a comparative Althusserian reading of two novels; one written in Iran as a Middle East country and the other written in the U.S as a Western country. Both novels, *The Neighbors* (1974) by J.D Salinger and *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) by Ahmad Mahmud, are written during the Second World War and both focus on the growth, psychological development and unconscious subjugation of a young adult facing conflicts amid socio-political or socio-cultural challenges. Reading the novels under Althusserian notions of Ideological State Apparatuses, Internal Police and Unconscious Subjugation can help deciphering the root problems of internal and external conflicts of Kahaled and Holden, the protagonists of the novels. Functioning through Ideological State Apparatuses, state power acts covertly without exerting particular force by manipulating individuals' unconscious and culture. Despite experiencing different socio-cultural events, ultimately both characters find peace of mind in the shelter of family and a female character. The journey of transition from innocence to experience ends for Holden by finding Phoebe, his sister, as the source of solace and for Khaled by finding a beloved, the Black-Eyed.

**Keywords:** Ahmad Mahmud, J.D Salinger, Louis Althusser, Ideological State Apparatus, Institution, Subjugation, Interpellation

## 1. Introduction

Jerome David Salinger (1919-2010), the American well-celebrated author, mostly features adolescents, juveniles' conflicts and adults' internal world in his works. He is a writer of the Second World War, when the world is on the verge of change and transition; life style, families, ways of communication, society and host of other phenomena are changing and changing individuals' internal and external world. Fragmented families, lonely children, smoking problems are the consequences of such transition. The protagonists of his works are mostly young adults suffering from a kind of neurosis partly due to the reason that they are in conflict with social system and the norms of the community and partly because of the internal conflicts youth experience during adulthood. *The Catcher in the Rye* which "caused a sensation when it was published" (Pinto 5) depicts Holden Caulfield amid his rebellion against norms and fixities. The novel "introduced a brand-new voice in American writing, and it quickly became a cult book, a rite of passage for the brainy and disaffected" (Reiff 125). The book creates a clear picture about modern adolescent identity (Thacker 2015).

Ahmad Mahmud (1931-2002), the contemporary Iranian author, also pens down his war time experience particularly his experience of prison and exile. His works reflect the suffering, labor, pain and hardship of Iranian people -particularly lower classes of the society- during the Second World War. In that, Salinger and Mahmud share the same general nurturing background. *The Neighbors* (1974), the prototype of his works, was translated to English by Nastaran Kherad in 2008. Mahmud's *The Neighbors*, like Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, introduced a "special type of writing" because of its outstanding temporal and spacial depiction (Atashsoda 343). *The Neighbors* (1974) happens during WWII when under the presidency of Dr Mosadegh Iran is witnessing a revolution for the Nationalization of Oil Industry.

Louise Althusser (1918-1990), the contemporary French Marxist critic and philosopher pens down most of his theories about ideology. In his view, ideology is a special weapon at the service of the State to maintain power relations status quo. Althusser in his first thesis about ideology mentions: "*Ideology* represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. It distorts our view of our true conditions of existence" (Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* 181). In his second thesis, "Ideology Has a Material Existence" Althusser formulates that law, religion, educational system and host of other institutions are all means to make ideology work in the society.

Reading *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Neighbors* under Althusserian theories of ideology reveal that Power at every spot of the world effects its force in the same way. The same *Ideological State Apparatuses* work approximately in the same way to homogenize people's unconscious and subjugate them to the dominant power. The present paper seeks to answer the following questions:

\*What evidence can be traced in the novels to support the point that Khaled and Holden are transformed to concrete *subjects* living in false *consciousness*?

\*Are the means and methods of ideology the same in Western and Eastern settings?

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Louis Pierre Althusser (1918-1990), the French Marxist structuralist philosopher, conceptualizes ideology in a new way; different from Marxists' view. In his paper, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes toward an Investigation" (1970) and his book *Essays on Ideology* (1970), Althusser develops his theories of ideology. According to Althusser, ideology constructs individual's view of his situation and condition of existence. In essence, ideology constructs an imaginary world for an individual which he assumes as real: "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of *individuals* to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* 36). In this regard, *ideology* is the ruling class's power tool for governing the individuals: "This *ideology* does a great deal more to make workers go than repression does" (Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* 42).

Althusser introduced many technical concepts including but not limited to anti-humanism, over determination from psychoanalysis, historicism, idealism, economist, historical materialism, process of reproduction of productions and relation of workers. However, the present paper merely focuses on his theories of ideology and *Ideological State Apparatuses* as these theories can appropriately be related to Freud's and Lacan's theories of unconscious and the way individuals are unconsciously turned to internal police subjugated to dominant power relations.

### 2.1 Ideological State Apparatuses

Marxists theorized that what is believed to be *state* is in fact *State Apparatuses* which reinforce the powerful and upper class of the society by repressing the lower and weaker class through the government, the police, the courts, the civil service, the army and prisons. However, Althusser redefines this Marxist assumption. Althusser, introduces two kinds of *state apparatuses*; the *Repressive State Apparatus* and the *Ideological State Apparatus*. He argues that they are different from each other in their base. *Repressive State Apparatus* functions first through repressing and second through ideology: "There is no such thing as a purely *ideological apparatus*" (Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other essays* 145). But, *Ideological State Apparatus* functions first through ideology and second through repression.

For Althusser, the *Repressive State Apparatus* is extremely near to Marx's definition of State or *State Apparatus*. He applies the term, repressive, to demonstrate that, by nature, power is violent. *Ideological State apparatuses* are in essence different institutions such as religion, education system, family, court, political system, culture, media, arts, literature and host of other institutions.

*Repressive State Apparatus* assists the ruling class to preserve its dominance through activities that involve coercion, violence and force. *Repressive State Apparatus*, RSA, are institutions like army, police, courts and other institutions which enforce domination directly. When people are *subjected* to such institutions they are compelled to certain actions by the use of direct force. *Repressive State Apparatus* subjugates the subjects to the dominant power. Althusser explains the subjection process in Pascalian way, he discusses that the *individual* transforms to a *subject* only by obeying *ideology's* rules: "Althusser insists on the Pascalian

thesis “Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe in order to indicate that it is the *subjection* and not the *subjectivation* of an *individual* to the rituals themselves” (Choi 10).

The *Ideological State Apparatus* functions in different ways and acts through numberless institutions, systems and organizations: “all large-scale institutions of society take part in domination and class struggle” (Bidet 67). On the surface glance, it may seem that social institutions have different functions, however, the reality is that all institutions are unified by the aim of operating through and reasserting the *ideology* of the dominant class. The important point in Althusser’s theory is that he sees *Ideological State Apparatus* as a site to exert dominant ideology to the dominated social classes. In Althusser’s view, *ideological apparatuses* belong to the *state*, even if it appears extremely separate from it.

He discusses the pre-capitalist time when religion and theological discourse functioned as dominant *Ideological State apparatuses*. He found the traces of these apparatuses in churches. Based on Althusser’s theories, in pre-capitalist time, the major tools of *ideology* were family and religion. Surprisingly enough, the family’s treatment of children is unconsciously under the influence of the dominant ideology: “The family or the familial *apparatus*, which is supposed to have the same *structure* of triple division, father, mother and the child, is often inserted between the level of the *individual* and that of the social” (Choi 212). Althusser believes that family is under the control of the *state* because it is at the service of developing the dominant *ideology*: “The domestic sphere of family life is included in the domain of the *state*, because it functions to maintain and develop an *ideology* that will maintain psychological adherence to and participation in class society” (Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* 134). Families are prime small *states* which sustain the process of generating *subjects*. They function under the power of *state* and follow the rules of training children demanded by the dominant power.

After capitalist era, the functions of ideology were transformed to family and educational system: “what the bourgeoisie has installed as its number-one, i.e. as its dominant *ideological State apparatus*, is the educational *apparatus*, which has in fact replaced in its functions the previously dominant *ideological State apparatus*, the Church” (Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* 103). Family and educational system train individuals according to the rules and regulations of the dominant discourses.

Althusser argues about the political overtones of education: “In any case, this educational task remains the number one task of political education, and must be carried out” (Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* 134). At every point of time, numberless individuals graduate and enter the market armed with the ideology required by the dominant power to maintain its status quo. Educational system is only one state apparatus among many. Althusser argues that the dominant ideology exists and functions everywhere and in every era. It appears in individuals’ minds and ideas prior to their actions supported by the presence of other Ideological State apparatuses.

Other ISAs cooperate with educational system: “no other *ideological State apparatus* has the obligatory, and not least, free, audience of the totality of the children in the capitalist social formation, eight hours a day for five or six days out of seven” (Althusser, *On the Reproduction*

of *Capitalism* 134). Unconsciously through educational system, every individual comes to act, live and behave as required by the dominant power. The *individual* feels an unconditional freedom and he never knows, this is a feeling that *ideology* makes for him. A real unreal world. In Althusser's view, *ideological* practices have the defining property of constituting *individuals* as *subjects*.

## 2.2 Althusser and Psychoanalysis

Louis Althusser builds on Jacques Lacan's theories to explicate the way *ideology* functions and exerts force in the society. In his model, *ideology* creates what is named false consciousness, a false understanding of the way the world functions due to the *interpellation* and *subjugation* of the individuals.

Althusser's paper, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1970), defines *ideology* as the *interpellation* of the *individual* as a *subject*. Regarding the *Interpellated Subject*, Jacques Bidet in *Beyond Althusser and Butler* mentions: "A subject constituted as such through the injunction to conform to a law. A subject is only a subject at the cost of its voluntary submission. This is, in fact, a true paradox. Especially if we add that the consciousness that recognizes the law thereby recognizes itself as guilty" (63). The *subject* defines his subjectivity through *subjection*. The subject exercises the very power that he conceals, while finally exceeds the power from which it proceeds: "It is a question here of the emergence of the *subject* as such: in its attachment to *subjection* is formed a will, a capacity of resistance that realizes itself in creative excess" (Bidet 74). Althusser presents that *ideology* has a major relationship with *subjective* experience and the construction of concrete *subjects*.

Althusser theorizes that all *ideology interpellates* concrete individuals as concrete *subjects*. Everything seems to be normal and everyone assumes that he lives and acts in the way that he desires, he never understands that he lives under the hidden power of *ideology* which controls his life. This way, he never knows he is a constructed *subject*.

The *Ideological State Apparatuses* function in different ways. They are means of ideology, they exert *ideology* and make the process of *subjugation* function in every aspect of an individual's life. Surprisingly enough, this process is naturalized through certain rules of living. To maintain its stability, the dominant power needs to hide its real aim and the way that it injects its own ideology in individuals' unconscious.

Althusser's theories explicate how the individual's unconscious is constructed: "If eternal means immutable in its form throughout all of history, *ideology* is eternal, just like the unconscious." (Bidet 74). Althusser in *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* mentions:

I address myself to you, a human *individual* called Peter, in order to tell you that God exists and that you are answerable to Him... This is who you are; you are Peter! This is your origin: you were created by God from all eternity, although you were born in 1928 Anno Domini! This is your place in the world! This is what you must do! In exchange, if you observe the law of love, you will be saved, you, Peter, and will become part of the Glorious Body of Christ. (266)



Althusser presents concrete *subject* as the construct of ideology: “there is no *ideology* except for concrete *subjects*, and this destination for *ideology* is only made possible by the *subject*: “in other words, by the category of the *subject* and it’s functioning” (Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* 266). However, Jacques Bidet in *The Interpellated Subject beyond Althusser and Butler* mentions:

If this is so, being a question of the evocation of the concrete subject, of its promulgation as Butler says, ideology in general seems to possess, in relation to ideologies, an anthropologically sovereign privilege. The subject’s concreteness, captured in its ontogenesis, is to be considered for itself below the historical variants of its particular socialization through certain particular ideologies. (74)

Power relations transform every individual into a concrete subject: “It is a relationship in which concrete *individuals* are *interpellated* into *subjects* of the society” (Choi 13). Referring to Sigmund Freud, Althusser presents that a child is already a victim of *ideology* even before he is born. He mentions that a baby is already a *subject*.

### 3. Althusserian Reading of *The Catcher in the Rye*

#### 3.1 Ideological State Apparatuses

Althusser introduces different institutions as the means of Ideology and *Ideological State Apparatuses*; family, religion, educational system, law, police, culture, literature, sports and many other institutions are the means to enforce the ideology of the state. Althusser in his article “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus” (1970) sets: “I shall call ideological state apparatuses a certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions” (11). Through *Ideological State Apparatuses*, individuals unconsciously act and behave so as to maintain the status quo. Althusserian reading of *The Catcher in the Rye* reveals Holden Caulfield as a constructed subject and above all relates his conflicts to his unconscious subjugation to the dominant power relations.

Initially, it appears that the dominant ideology is working through American culture. When Holden talks about Minister’s school speeches, he considers his method unreasonable. It seems that Holden cannot not accept American lifestyle, he suffers from people’s style of meeting, talking, greeting and communicating. Most of the time he calls them, *phony*: “God, I hate that. I don’t see why the hell they can’t talk in their natural voice. They sound so *phony* when they talk” (Salinger 58). Educational system is a determining object in his life. He feels disappointed about living alone in a school dormitory far from his family. Holden mentions the point in his conversation with a girl:

I mean do you like school, and all that stuff?

It’s a terrific bore.

I mean do you hate it? I know it’s a terrific bore, but do you hate it, is what I mean.

Well, I don’t exactly hate it. You always have to

Well, I hate it. Boy, do I hate it,” I said. “But it isn’t just that. It’s everything.

I hate living in New York and all. (Salinger 76)

In Holden’s opinion, his life is mainly about bearing hateful stuffs, especially school. He discovers that he almost hates everything as they appear *phony* and annoying. Holden demonstrates his dissatisfaction with American lifestyle and culture by utilizing words such as *phony*, lousy, goddam and a few other words. He explains his reasons for leaving the school as: “I left Elkton Hills because I was surrounded by *phonies*. That’s all. They were coming in the goddam window. For instance, they had this headmaster, Mr. Haas that was the *phoniest* bastard I ever met in my life” (Salinger 6). Holden cannot *assimilate* change. He cannot tolerate his brother’s loss. His description of his dead brother demonstrates the point. He considers his dead brother the most intelligent student and the nicest person all over the world. Holden talks with his dead brother:

I started sweating like a bastard my whole shirt and underwear and everything. Then I started doing something else. Every time I’d get to the end of a block I’d make believe I was talking to my brother Allie. I’d say to him, “Allie, don’t let me disappear. Allie, don’t let me disappear. Allie, don’t let me disappear. Please, Allie. And then when I’d reach the other side of the street without disappearing I’d thank him. (Salinger 115)

As he cannot tolerate his brother’s death, he resorts to his world of dreams and imagination the result of which is more loneliness:

My favorite author is my brother D.B., and my next favorite is Ring Lardner. I read a lot of classical books, like *The Return of the Native* and all, and I like them, and I read a lot of war books and mysteries and all, but they don’t knock me out too much. What really knocks me out is a book that, when you’re all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone. (Salinger 11)

Holden’s mind is full of complicated ideas. He presents his positive opinion about classical objects which are far and remote; the symptom of his loneliness and depression.

Besides school as the epitome of an ISA, Holden’s family in a parallel way acts as an ISA to subjugate him. His father exerts his power: “My father wants me to go to Yale, or maybe Princeton, but I swear, I wouldn’t go to one of those Ivy League colleges, if I was dying, for God’s sake” (Salinger 62). Holden could not accept his father’s decision, hence, he could not bear school’s atmosphere, and as a result, he escapes for the fourth time. His sister’s reaction to his decision is a great example of father’s dominance: “Daddy will kill you!” (Salinger 96). Holden acknowledges his father’s *power*: “My father’s quite wealthy, though. I don’t know how much he makes, he’s never discussed that stuff with me but I imagine quite a lot. He’s a corporation lawyer. Those boys really haul it in” (Salinger 63). Holden’s father is a prototype model for him. Holden tries to be like his father by imitating his behavior, his Cross luggage, his style of talking, his calling others *phony* and his drinking. Holden’s unreasonable behavior,

reactions and decisions are all the result of turning to a subject subjugated to *Ideological State Apparatuses*.

### 3.2 Althusserian- Psychoanalytic Reading of *The Catcher in the Rye*

In the ideological context, the subject lives in an illusory world which he assumes as real and also becomes a means of exerting and effecting the dominant ideology. Althusser in his book *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* (2014) states:

The reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class in words. (236)

As a member of American society, Holden has to transform his life style, his relationship, his manner and every aspect of his life to the dominant American culture. However, at a certain point in his life he turns to a rebellious character. He disobeys socio-cultural rules and regulations. He suffers from a conflict that gradually develops in him and becomes an obstacle for him. He has to obey rules, but he knows that these rules limit his liberty, they do not let him act and live in the way that he desires. Holden attempts to imagine his future by his own norms:

I even started picturing how it would be when I came back. I knew my mother's get nervous as hell and start to cry and beg me to stay home and not go back to my cabin, but I'd go anyway and then I'd go over to the other side of the living room and take out this cigarette case and light a cigarette, cool as all hell. I'd ask them all to visit me sometime if they wanted to, but I wouldn't insist or anything. What I'd do, I'd let old Phoebe come out and visit me. (Salinger 120)

Holden lies, he pretends to be another person due to his dissatisfaction with dominating socio-cultural rule. He requires other's attention, his conversation with a woman in the train is an instance his need for care and attention. He tells the woman that he is sick, while he is NOT: "No, everybody's fine at home, I said. It's me. I have to have this operation. Oh! I'm so sorry, she said. She really was, too. I was right away sorry I'd said it, but it was too late. It isn't very serious. I have this tiny little tumor on the brain" (Salinger 34). On the other hand, he calls people who are at the center of attention phony. When the pianist finishes playing the piano and everyone appreciates his performance, unlike all other audience, Holden depreciates him and feels sorry for him:

Anyway, when he was finished, and everybody was clapping their heads off, old Ernie turned around on his stool and gave this very *phony*, humble bow. Like as if he was a helluva humble guy, besides being a terrific piano player. It was very *phony*. I mean him being such a big snob and all. In a funny way, though, I felt sort of sorry for him when he was finished. (Salinger 49)



Holden cannot tolerate the people around him. He adopts an aggressive behavior and a lifestyle not in accordance with the norms of the upper American social class. He shows his rebellion against family rules of mutual respect and passion at the opening of the novel:

If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. In the first place, that stuff bores me, and in the second place, my parents would have about two hemorrhages apiece if I told anything pretty personal about them. They're quite touchy about anything like that, especially my father. (Salinger 1)

As the narrative proceeds ahead, Holden shows rebellion against other institutions above all educational system. The reason is that all institutions have one object; the subjugation of individuals. Psychologically speaking, Holden cannot assimilate such unconscious subjugation so he turns to a rebellious young adult.

#### **4. Althusserian Reading of *The Neighbors***

##### *4.1 Ideological State Apparatuses*

Althusser explicates that the dominant *power* makes “Beautiful lies” (Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* 180) to force people obey the dominant rules. As a case in point, every religious *subject* believes he obeys God, while, in fact, he obeys priests or despots: “Religious *ideology* is indeed addressed to *individuals*, in order to transform them into the *subject*” (Althusser, *On Ideology* 52). Every *subject* unconsciously acts and behaves in the way the dominant ideology dictates.

In Ahmad Mahmud's *The Neighbors* the functioning of ideology opens through family. The representation of family as an instance of ISA is supported by the facts that first and foremost the father exerts the dominant authority in the family. The father's authority over his family is naturalized in *The Neighbors* in a way that the female and the children do not find it unnatural. Khaled and Bolur Khanoom are the victims of patriarchal culture which was dominant in Iran for a long time. The father acts as a despot who gives little or no freedom to the dominated ones. Khaled utters: “If the father would leave the house, I could fly my pigeons and experience such bliss watching them. If Aman Aqa left, Bolur Khanoom would go back to her room, and perhaps she'd call me up to show me the bruises on her belly” (Mahmud 4).

At the opening of the novel, one of Khaled's neighbor's is described as the victim of male dominated society. Bolur Khanoom is brutalized by his husband: “Aman Aqa is Bolur Khanoom's husband. He is usually an immoral man at home, and he is a kind, unrestrained alcoholic one outside” (Atashsoda 15). Bolur Khanoom seems to be one of the victims of *ideological* rules in the families clarified mostly in the men's authority: “Once again Bolur Khanoom's wailing resonates in the sprawling courtyard. Aman Aqa is at it again, beating her with his leather belt” (Mahmud 1). Bolur Khanoom is the symbol of repressed, voiceless, marginalized women in the families and society.

The second instance of ISA in *The Neighbors* is religion. The novel depicts Muslim characters under the influence of superstition. Althusser argues that family and religion together operate as means of circulating the dominant *ideology*. He theorizes the influence of religion on people: “The religious *apparatus* by recalling in sermons and the other great ceremonies of Birth, Marriage, and Death, that man is only ashes, unless he loves his neighbor to the extent of turning the other cheek to whoever strikes first. The family *apparatus*...but there is no need to go on” (Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays* 154). Khaled’s father is a religious person in a way that all aspects of his life are assessed through the criteria of religion: “First he pays his respect to Sheikh Ali, from whom he sometimes seeks advice on religious matters asking him questions about the rules on daily prayers, unintended transgressions, and prohibited acts. He consults with hajj Seyed Mohamad, and the discussion revolves around the history of Islam” (Mahmud 6). Khaled’s father is quite careful to say all his daily prayers and also is quite vigilant that all other family members do the same:

Khaled!

Yes, Baba?

Have you said your prayers yet?

I’ll say them right away, Baba. (Mahmud 4)

Khaled’s religious life is developed and controlled by his father. Dominant power used religion as an apparatus to exert its force. Religious people find disobedience of certain rules enmity to God. Religion transforms each *individual* into a submissive *subject*. Khaled’s father is a great symbol of this kind of religious subject. He believes he must tolerate his disappointing condition of life due to God’s will. The religious conversation between Khaled and his father is noticeable: “Father says this world is a prison for the believers” (Mahmud 16). His speech about his beliefs is another instance: “Father says God is the Provider. He hasn’t given up hope Mirza Nasrolla says. Father also says, No living soul’s mouth will be left without food” (Mahmud 14). In another instance, Khaled’s father and his friends such as Khaj Tofiq Talk about *Qasemi’s Secrets*; an important book for religious people:

Father and Khaj Tofiq are talking about *Qasemi’s Secrets*. Aman Aqa is just sitting there listening. Mohammad the Mechanic is there too. It’s been about half an hour since he got back from work. His nails are always black underneath. Father tells them if a person’s heart is pure and he tries following the instructions in *Qasemi’s Secrets*, then he can conquer the world. (14)

Under religious rules, children are deprived from attending schools: “Khaled worked in his father’s smithy but he was not satisfied and he did not continue it. Also, Hasani, Rahim Kharchaki’s son continue their fathers’ jobs. Kids have no right about their decisions in education. Father also follows religious learned ones” (Shahbazi 76). Khaled yearns for continuing his education, but his religious father cannot accept it:

I went to school up to the fourth grade. After I had taken the last test and passed it, Father said no more school. But I still want to go to school, Baba. It’s enough, he

said. But I wanna get my high school diploma. A real man is one that when you pat him on the back, dust rises in the air, he said. (38)

Iran's society was influenced by the nationalization of the oil industry in 1951. During that era, depicted in the novel, people were suffering from poverty, joblessness, hunger and host of other problems. However, such challenges were naturalized. Jafar is one of Khaled's neighbors. He is poor and jobless. He could not stand in such situations. He had nothing even to eat. He is jobless and earns nothing. The life condition leads him to kill himself by a rope. He hangs himself from the ceiling of his room and Khaled and other neighbors found his dead body. Committing suicide is one way to get rid of poverty's misconsequences. Khaled's question to his father about one of the Neighbor's suicide is noticeable: "Father, why did Jafar the brickmaker kill himself? Well, how long can a man stand hunger, joblessness, and humiliation?" (Mahmud 78). Poor people in the story work hard, they are not satisfied in their lives but they accept their faith.

Additionally, in Mahmud's *The Neighbors* poverty has become a culture. Khaled's family and other neighbors accept poverty and struggle to earn a little money. Amu Bandar one of Khaled's neighbors is an old man who must work hard and send money for her widow daughter and her children to buy some new clothes: "Amu Bandar's daughter is a widow. Her husband was a truck driver. He got into an accident and died instantly. Amu Bandar works all year round to save some money to send to his daughter and her children so they can buy new clothes for Nowruz" (Mahmud 15). Khaled's father cannot earn money. There is almost nothing to do in his shop in the winter: "At noon, father closes down his blacksmith shop and spends the afternoon at home. He says if I'm to sit idly doing nothing, I'd rather stay in my own house" (Mahmud 11). Khaled's father must work outside the country to support his family: "When father sent home money, we were able to pay off our debt to Habib the Baker. We're waiting for father to send us more money so we can pay off our debt to Mehdi the Grocer too" (Mahmud 128). These instances demonstrate the life condition of the labor class in Iran. The characters in *The Neighbors* work hard but earn almost nothing. Khaled's family and other neighbors are members of the poor social class which provide the ruling class's desires.

#### 4.2 Althusserian- Psychoanalytic Reading of *The Neighbors*

Modern psychoanalysis, founded by Sigmund Freud, is named as a byproduct of the late nineteenth century culture. Psychoanalysis can be related to human *subjectivity* and unconscious internalization of ideological norms. Althusser in *Psychoanalysis and the Human Sciences* (1996) sets:

In both case whether it is a matter of an interiorization of unconscious, in the form of the biological or in the form of meaning or of a recognition and its transcendence in the form of transcendental *intersubjectivity* we seem to be dealing with the same structure through which the real structure of the *subject* is *subjected* to the imaginary structure of the ego. That is to the same centered structure. (72)

Althusser explicates the linguistic and psychological structuring of the individual's unconscious. As a result of Lacan's claim in structuring the unconscious same as language, Althusser considers various relations between different objects: "The object of psychology is unconscious. Psychology can develop only by defining, by means of this essence, the object of psychology as the unconscious" (Althusser, *Psychoanalysis and the Human Sciences* 18) Althusser's theories can assist readers in understanding the logic of politics of resistance and freedom. Furthermore, Althusser delineates the constitution of the *subject* in society. Althusser in his essay "Ideology and Ideological state apparatuses" (1970) explains the religious *subject*:

And Moses, *interpellated*-called by his Name, having recognized that it really was he who was called by God, recognizes he is a *subject*, a *subject* of God, a *subject* subjected to God, a *subject* through the *Subject* and *subjected* to the *Subject*. The proof: he obeys him and makes his people obey God's Commandments. (34)

Althusser sets the process of *subjugation* in an example of the religious *subject*. He defines the *subject's* constitution in the process of *interpellation*. There are eternal relations between various *subjects*. Each *subject* is *subjected* by the upper-level *subjects* and at the head, there is a great *subject*, which is the master. The great *subject* orders and promises reward to one who obeys.

In *The Neighbors* Khaled's father is a simple and religious person who acts and behaves as religion demands. Khaled's mother and sister are defined as patient and kind characters who prove their obedience. In addition, Khaled's curious personality and sharp eyes over their neighbors are noticeable. He is around fifteen, extremely and full of passion and emotion. Khaled is sexually attracted to Bolur Khanom. One afternoon, Bolur Khanom calls Khaled and forces him go inside her bed room. She asks Khaled making love with her: "What are you looking at? She asked. At the bruises, I said... Touch it and see for yourself, she said... Don't be afraid it doesn't hurt, said Bolur Khanom" (Mahmud 2).

Khaled, like Holden, is attracted to people older than him: "It is dark and no one is in the streets. I think I can trust you now. Bidar's words stroke my ears. His words please me. I feel like he's counting on me, just like he would a man. I don't respond. Can you help us tonight? Bidar asks" (Mahmud 93). Khaled starts his political activity by working in Toodeh Party. Shafagh, a member of Toodeh Party, asks him to pass his message to party members: "Shafaq asks, he asked me to come and tell you that he's been arrested. He said that Shafaq was a tall man with a thick mustache... I'm sure he needs your help. You should do something, so he can get out of there" (Mahmud 38). This is the starting point of his political activity but he continues by delivering newspapers and declarations to people. Step by step through his communication and political activities he becomes a loyal member of the party. His subjugation to the rules of the Political Party and the influence of political party members on him, particularly Pendar and Shafaq, make him cease his sexual intercourse with Bolour Khanon.

Police is an institution which conspired to the structuring of Khaled's unconscious. Police arrests Khaled while he is distributing declarations. He is sent to jail where he experiences fear and torture under the dominance of "Ali the Devil", one of the jail's extremely cruel police

officers. Torture, hunger, devilish behavior of officers and horrible condition of the prison subjugate some and leave some others rebellious.

The rebellious group, cannot accept dominant power's rules. They are brave and united prisoners, like Naser and Ghazi, who take part in hunger strikes. The prisoners strike to force the officers to deliver their letter to the boss. Their letter describes the intolerable situation of the prison and the prisoners. The other group of prisoners are hypocrite and coward characters who are secretly in contact with the head of the organization.

Amid torture and violence the entrance of a beautiful kind Black-Eyed girl opens a turning point in Khaled's life. He tries to be hopeful: "That way at least I could still hope I'd see Black-Eyed after I get out of here. No! I will search every corner of the world until I find her. I can't live without my Black-Eyed even for a moment. I need to gaze into her eyes. I need to hear her laughter" (Mahmud 339). Politics is a defining factor in structuring the unconscious of individuals in the way that it can be claimed human *subjectivity* is tied with dominant politics.

## 5. Conclusion

Although Mahmud's and Salinger's novels happen in two different political- cultural contexts, once they are analyzed from Althusserian perspective, it is revealed that in both settings people in essence are controlled through ideology by complex hidden power relations without even being aware of it. In both novels the protagonists are interpellated as concrete subjects subjugated to the dominant ideology. From psychological point of view, power relations specially and mentally alienate individuals from families. Holden lives in a hostel. Khaled's father works in another country and Khaled spends time in prison as the consequence of which he loses his love. The two protagonists have become rebellious, partly due to the alienation and the *lack* they experience during adulthood. Holden escapes from school, travels alone, has sex and forms eccentric wishes. Khaled, likewise, leaves home to work and opens illegal relations with a woman. Both characters experience a life far from family, make friends with people older than them, try to imitate others' behaviors, find fake shelter and finally after devastation find the real shelter. That is their rebellion ends once they are united with their families.

Most readings of the two novels have related the root problems of the protagonists to the common internal conflicts caused by adulthood (Chen 2009; Nayeypour 2014; Pinto 2012; Scott 2007; Thacker 2015; Toker 2012), particularly because the two characters experience sexual attraction to young women, make friends with and act like people older than them, go through cycles of loneliness and similar problems common for adulthood transition period. However, a comparative study of the two novels from Althusserian perspective relates the protagonists' problems to the unconscious subjugation of individuals to dominant ideology. It is ideology and its means which make individuals act and react in the same way, though in quite different settings. In essence, loneliness, rebellion, escape, un-matrimonial relations and a host of other problems are due to the fact that under dominant ideology, individuals are constructed as subject-objects, subjects in relation to objects. Individuals are unconsciously subjugated to the dominant power relations which works through ideology.



Power demands cohesion, hence, through ideology constructs homogeneous social subjects. The Althusserian social subject, radically alienated “in the symbolic process without subject, is in fact a non-subject more or less completely reducible to a mere effect of ideology” (Choi 2). In this regard, ideology naturalizes and rationalizes the existing problems.

J.D. Salinger and Ahmad Mahmud are adult’s authors, they focus on adults’ lives and challenges. Their method is close to Althusser’s point of view in *ideology*. Under the study it is flourished that the state is controlling Holden and Khaled as ideological victims. This paper was an attempt to reveal the hidden working of ideology and prove that Khaled’s and Holden’s conflicts have external causes rather than internal reasons. Ideological State Institutions such as school, family, political parties, religion and host of other institutions subjugate individuals. The protagonists of the novels make mistakes, leave school, leave families and make false friendship. However, finally they find psychological shelter by rejoining their family and coming to love a lost female character; sister, mother or a beloved. As the result, the novels are implicitly implying the point that to guarantee the stability and the status quo of the dominant power, the family is the first institution to be controlled and to be turned into an ideological state apparatus.

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