

## Representation of Self and Other in Persian Novels: Tangsir, Savushun and The Neighbors<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This study has been conducted to analyze how Self (Iranian) and the Other (non-Iranian) have been represented in the Persian novels written between 1961 and 1978. The main question of the present research is how Iranians and non-Iranians are represented in the novels of two different periods of fiction writing in Iran?. By answering this question, it would be possible to show whether there is an overlap between the Self/the Other confrontation and culture/nonculture in these Persian novels or not, in other words, if Self has been represented as culture and the Other as non-culture or not. The study of this overlap is important because some nations construe themselves as nature and chaos while others as culture, “Peter the Great and other Russians trying to modernize Russia held this . . . view . . .” (Sonsson, 2000, p. 540). In order to achieve the aims of the research, three novels of the greatest ones written in the era called ‘the era of resistance’ have been selected and studied, including Tangsir by S. Chubak (1963), Savushun by S. Daneshvar (1969) and The Neighbors by A. Mahmoud (1973). Cultural semiotics and Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) have developed the framework of this paper. Cultural semiotics which has been used since Ernst Cassirer (1923-29) suggested describing certain kinds of sign systems as symbolic forms and claimed that the symbolic forms of a society constitute its culture, offers no method for analyzing data and that is why it’s integrated into DHA, in this research. DHA accentuates historicity in discourse production and comprehension and attempts to incorporate various levels of historical analysis in the contextualization and explication of linguistic analysis (KhosraviNik, 2015: 107). The DHA is three-dimensional: after (1) having

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identified the specific contents or topics of a specific discourse, (2) discursive strategies are investigated; then (3), linguistic means (as types) and the specific, context-dependent linguistic realizations (as tokens) are examined (Reisigl and Vodak, 2009: 93). The DHA focuses on the following main research agenda: Referential Strategies, Predicational Strategies, Argumentation Strategies, Perspectivization and Intensification, mitigation. Referral strategies are tools for naming and categorizing actors, objects, processes, etc., and include referenced names, specific names, metaphor, and verbs and nouns which are used to refer to the process and actions. Predicational strategies determine the discursive quality of actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes, and actions by means of stereotypical evaluative descriptions of negative or positive attributes in the form of attributes, appositions, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, infinitive clauses, collocations, similes, metaphors, metonymies, exaggerations, euphemisms, allusions, implications and so on. Argumentative Strategies justify or raise doubt about the beliefs through Topoi. The results of this research show that in *Tangsir*, *Savushun* and the *Neighbors*, the Other (Non-Iranian), through referential strategies and by naming based on his nationality, is distinguished from the Self (Iranian). Also there is no reference to represent the Other as nonculture. Even when he is called alien and foreigner, it is only his foreignness which is topicalized, and there is no sign of regarding him as nonculture. In these novels, the most important linguistic strategy to distinguish the Self from the Other is the predicational strategy through which the Other is described by similes and metaphors and represented negatively. This study showed that the Other had such a prominent position in the semiosphere of Iran in 1961-1978, that it has led to an opposition between people and the establishment. One of the most important features of *Tangsir*, *Savushun* and the *Neighbors* is representing the contradictions between Iranians themselves and the confrontation between people and the establishment is the most important. This opposition is one of the most important aspects of the representations of Self in the selected novels. From the peoples' perspective the Other is an enemy who is constructed, for instance, as colonial power and pirate but from the perspective of the establishment the Other is represented as a power which the Self's economy is heavily dependent on. It should be mentioned that the Self does not consider the Other to be totally culture or nonculture, the Self sometimes goes to the Other's land to gain culture, but when the Other invades Self's country, he is a colonist and infidel, maybe nonculture, and he should be expelled from the country. Believing in the Other, the fear of the Other and obedience to the Other form the topoi of government, while nationalism and the struggling form the topoi of people. Although people – as well as government - believe in the Other's land "not in an invader Other" they look for culture there. Finally, based on the results of this study, in the selected novels, Self is represented through negative predications, especially by perspectivization and expressing what the Other thinks about the Self, therefore there is no overlap between the two mentioned oppositions, Self/Other and culture/non-culture, and Self is not represented as culture and vice versa.

**Keywords:** Persian Novel, the Self/the Other, Culture/Nonculture, Cultural Semiotics, Discourse Historical Approach