

## Literary Historiography in Contemporary Persian Novel: A Study of S. Rahimian's *Dr. Noon Loves His Wife More Than Mussadiq*

Serveh Hozhabri<sup>1</sup>

Candidate of GEMMA Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies,  
Department of Women's and Gender Studies, University of Oviedo, Asturias, Spain

MA in English Language and Literature

Department of English, University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj, Iran

DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.34785/J014.2020.606>

Article Type: Original Article

Page Numbers: 197-215

Received: 11 April 2020

Accepted: 25 September 2020

### Abstract

The present research seeks to investigate Shahram Rahimian's *Dr. Noon Loves His Wife More Than Mussadiq*\* based on the literary historiographical theory of Hayden White. The central argument of this analysis is to demonstrate how Rahimian represents the history of Iran's 1953 coup in his novel through mentioning an Iranian historical figure, Dr. Mussadiq, and his relationship with other members of the political party. The history of Iran's coup and especially that of Dr. Mussadiq have been an interesting subject for most of the historians and writers. Rahimian in his novel impressively addresses the historical facts of the period and endeavors to focus on the realities and at the same time to create a new version of the events by fictionalizing the way he presents his characters. He attempts to convey to the readers that it is possible to have different versions of the apparent historical facts. Rahimian's novel provides corresponding peculiarities with the postmodern approach of historiography that is presented by Hayden White particularly in his remarkable work, *Metahistory* (1973). White contends that there could be different versions of historical facts and it is the task of the historian and the writer of historical fiction to interpret the realities and to make his/her own version of the past. Employing White's significant concept of emplotment, the study explores the way Rahimian depicts the Iranian socio-political and cultural scene of the early 1950s in his novel from a historical perspective.

### Keywords

Emplotment; Historical Fiction; Literary Historiography; Hayden White; Modern Persian Novel.

### 1. Introduction:

In *Metahistory*, Hayden White declares that what the traditional historians see as an "event" in the past, the postmodern historians see as a "text" in the present (9). The historian works as a writer and arranges events in the chronicle order in

---

<sup>1</sup> srwa.hozhabri@gmail.com

\* All translations from Persian to English have been made by the present author.

a narrative form like a story-teller. Considering the issue of narrating and a text-form base in order to transform historical events, it is implied that in different areas of study over the centuries, history has been the subject of many authors to write about, and in all literary and historical writings, historical subjects are distinguishable. Historical novelists are those who are interested in history, and deal with historical facts in their works. Defining the two terms, literature and history, would provide the ground for a better realization about the relationship between the two concepts. Literature is defined as “written artistic works especially with a high and lasting artistic value”, and history as “the study of a record of past events considered together, especially events of a particular period, country, or subject” according to the Cambridge Dictionary. History is the study of the past, and literature is the study of written works about the past. Literature takes various forms, known as genres, such as novel, poetry, and drama. The writers of different forms of literature are poets, dramatists and novelists, and the writers of history are historians. Literature and history both require ‘creativity’ and ‘imagination’ in their forms.

The relationship between history and literature is certainly a complicated pattern. History is what happened in the past, and it foregrounds the literary works; for that reason, novelists can obtain a hint for their writings according to the events that have taken place, and history in this case could be a good source of motivation for novelists. In addition, the crucial relationship between them is that literature is used to signify and report history in different ways according to the level of the author’s creativity. Being aware of historical events, Shahram Rahimian in his novel *Dr. Noon Loves His Wife More Than Mussadiq* portrays a highly different perspective of narrating a familiar history. The 1953 coup and the downfall of Mussadiq is a special moment in the history of Iran. Rahimian employs this event as the base for his story, and instead of concentrating on this issue, the downfall, he aims to describe the lives of those who were close to Mussadiq like Dr. Noon, to demonstrate cultural scenes of the coup, and the events in which they were involved in. Paul Fussell asserts that “literature conveys forms of life while life conveys forms of literature” (xv). Therefore, it could be concluded that these “forms of life” are our pasts. The events that have taken place and have been experienced in the past, form our history, thus it can be argued that the two discourses are interconnected.

The present paper attempts to analyze Shahram Rahimian’s novel based on Hayden White’s theory of emplotment. An attempt is here made to explore how Rahimian employed a historical event to depict the Iranian socio-political and cultural scene of the early 1950s in his novel. The literature review section includes the close review of the studies of the novel under consideration. Then,

some short sections are presented which provide an overview of the major concepts such as: the relation between history and literature, historical fiction in the postmodern era, and literary historiography from a postmodernist viewpoint. White's theory of emplotment will be presented as the core section of the paper. After a close reading of Sahram Rahimian's novel in terms of White's concept of historical emplotment, the concluding section summarizes the common ground through which Rahimian has based his novel on the mentioned concept.

## 2. Literature Review

Shahram Rahimian's novel *Dr. Noon Loves His Wife More Than Mussadiq* (2001) is a contemporary short novel. Many critics called his work a political novel and others a postmodernist one. This work has been the subject of any research studies. Since Rahimian's work mostly reflects the psychological issues; accordingly, this feature of his novel is the subject of much of the literature review that has been carried out. Shirzad Tayefi, and Haniyeh Hajitabar in their essay, "The Psychoanalytic Critique of the Novel *Dr. Noon Loves His Wife More Than Mussadiq*: Based on Freud's Defense Mechanisms" (2019), investigate that this novel is a political novel in which addresses the 'nostalgia' that the 'intellectuals of the time' encountered regarding the event of Iran's coup in 1953. They also note that the psychoanalytic critique views the text as the "symptoms of author's illness" (294). They believe that a literary text works as a dream for the writer, and "it satisfies a hidden desire" for him/her (294). According to them, Rahimian tries to depict Dr. Noon's "mental complexity" due to the events in which he encounters, and illustrates "his inner struggle" by using "defensive mechanisms" (294).

Zakarya Bezdoode and Cyrus Amiri, in a paper titled "*Dr. Noon Loves His Wife More Than Mussadiq*: A Rememory of Politics and Paternity in Iran in the 1960s" (2016), address the downfall of Mussadiq as a "dreadful historical event for the intellectuals of the country", and also make use of Lacan's "theory of individuation". They call the novel a "postmodernist" work, and argue that what Dr. Noon experienced in his life after the downfall of Mussadiq could be implied as "an ideal state which is comparable to Lacan's imaginary order and the unity with the body of the mother" (1). They assert that:

The relationship between Dr. Noon and his wife is understandable in terms of the rules of the symbolic. He resents and tortures her for twenty years while he claims that he loves her. A few months after Dr. Noon's release from prison, Mussadiq's phantom appears to him and turns into a barrier between him and his wife for the rest of their lives. The presence of Mussadiq corrupts the couple's relationship. (2)

They have investigated the question from a “psychoanalytic and aesthetic viewpoint”. They argue that like a child who has been separated from his/her mother, Dr. Noon has been “separated” from his wife. “The Representation of Polyphony in *Dr. Noon Loves His Wife More than Mussadiq*” (2018) is the title of an essay by Nooshin Ostadmuhammadi, Husain Faghihi, and Husain Hajari in which the main argument is how Rahimian deals with the issue of narration in his work. They analyze the novel based on Bakhtin’s theory of polyphony in literature. According to them, Dr. Noon’s character has many voices while he is narrating the story. They assert that when he is the third person narrator the readers can see him from the outside world, and when he changes the narration into the first person, the readers can see his inner feelings. They note that each character represents a different voice and discourse according to his/her social status and the conflicts that she/he has.

### **3. Critical Approach and Concepts**

#### **3.1. History and Literature, Historians and Novelists**

History and historical events have been always the subject of many writings in different areas of study. The use of historical subjects in creative, and imaginative writings is eminently presented in all literary and historical writings. Historical novelists deal with historical events in their writings. For them, writing a historical novel is to investigate many documents, develop the context, and study the case so that they can have a suitable ground for telling their story. Hence, one can imply that history throughout the centuries is being represented in literature. In fact, history leads context for literature and literary reports; therefore, there is a close relationship between them.

In order to write a historical narrative, the historian mostly starts to gather information about the most important events, and then he/she narrates them in the order of their priority. On the other hand, a novelist also, for narrating a historical event, attempts to find out important and suitable information to narrate his/her story. Here, they both (the historian, and the novelist), choose among events, and the action of choosing is a personal and individual act. What Alun Munslow examined is in line with White’s theory of history. In one of her works, she defines the action of writing about history as a ‘poetic’ act and defines history as “the embedding of the real past within the fictive” (156).

Writers of historical fiction depict their stories about important events, and the important historical figures could be the subject of their writings. Historical fiction is considered as a popular literary form. However, it depends on the novelist and the way she/he chooses to provide his/her story. Sometimes from a historical event, novelists make a fictionalized work, sometimes through their narrative they attempt to change everything and make a new story of the past.

Over the centuries, history has been a great subject for the writers to consider it as a context in literature. Accordingly, in different areas, from traditional literary forms like traditional epics which have been used legendary figures, to great Greek tragedies, later to Shakespeare's works, and finally to the present, writers have used historical events, moments and figures to narrate different situations. As Cowart asserts, it was in the seventeenth century that historical issues and materials used in the form of the novel and got a prose narrative form (52). It was also believed that at that time writers reflected whatever happened in the society in their works. Georg Lukács maintains that a historical novel presents a "total picture of the society" (27); therefore, they (the historical novels) acted like a true mirror.

Sharp changes concerning literature/history relations occurred in the beginning of the twentieth century. Firstly, historical novels were not dominant anymore. History was considered as an extra component to achieve the inner truth of human knowledge. Secondly, the inner feelings and experiences of the characters were vital in the process of writing for the novelists, since they focused on the human subjectivity. Brian McHale maintains that modernists used "admissible historical signifieds" or the real world objects and characters (84). However, these real characters and objects would have never been in opposition to the real historical issues.

### **3.2. The Historical Novel and the Postmodern Ideas**

For better understanding of the changes that happened in historical novels, one can study first postmodernism, which is defined by cultural changes taking place after World War II and especially after the 1960s, and later as a methodology it moved into the field of literature too. One of the critics who has presented different definitions of the postmodern historical novels is Brian McHale. He contends that in practicing postmodernism to literature and literary criticism, one must remember that the term 'postmodernism' is only a "discursive artifact" that was invented by the readers, writers and historians as a 'conceptual explanation' for the variety of techniques found in contemporary fiction (4).

The leading postmodern idea about the history is that it is "textual". One could observe history as a kind of fiction and due to the choice of the historian about the historical events, like what the author does, the result is subjective. By such an observation in respect of the 'textuality' of the past, postmodernist authors have reconstructed the idea of historical writing. According to them, each historical novelist can interpret historical issues in his/her own way in order to create a new report of the past. One could thus claim that there would not be any edge between what is fact and what is written about the facts, since both fact and fiction are "textually based" (Henry 27).

Linda Hutcheon provides an inclusive definition for postmodern historical fiction. In her highly significant book, *The Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, she defines this type of novel as “historiographic metafiction”. This is because these novels hold the new view of the contemporary literary historiography and make the differentiation between reality (fact) and fiction. According to her, this kind of novel is “self-conscious novel” (113) which brings “a mixture of the paradox of self-reflexivity and historical reality” (110). She argues that the postmodern historical novel highlights the “return of plot and questioning of reference” where both concepts of reference and plot are rejected because the aim of the author is to “explore realistic narrative conventions” (xii).

The postmodern literary critics and historians assume that historical texts are not reliable, for they may only include a possible truth of the past or an interpretation of it. In this respect, Hutcheon asserts that contemporary historical texts due to the “demand of the readers” are intentionally unreliable (ix-x). Therefore, in postmodernist era, historical texts get a new form since the focus is on “textuality”. Postmodern historical texts reflect the postmodern theory of history which assumes that multiple histories are possible (Kirca 16). By the existence of different and multiple histories each novelist and historian might be able to write the history in any mode they prefer, that is why for Hutcheon and others postmodern historical texts lose their reliability.

### **3.3. Literary Historiography from a Postmodernist Viewpoint**

As the word demonstrates, historiography generally means the process of writing history. This process requires analyzing, studying and searching through several materials. The idea of using historical materials as a subject for literary writing has a long-standing usage in literary historiography, since these materials were united with literary techniques and themes. A large number of historical novelists exercise the past figures, themes and materials in their literary writings. Due to the changes that have recently happened in the field of postmodern historiography, most people hold the idea of conformity of history, historical knowledge, and historical artifact in the postmodern period. In the postmodern era apart from the idea of “textuality” of the history, ‘imagination’ also plays an important role in the process of writing history. Consistently, history has been considered as linear; however, this linear cause is imposed by postmodern historians. For them, the way of “representation” is important (Joel 19-21). There is a dominant question for postmodern historians and that is: how is the history being produced and represented? What was done before by the historians was that: they searched among historical materials and aimed to write a true account of history. Yet, this idea was not existing any more in postmodern historiography. The true material and source do not play a vital role here.

Postmodern historiographers are interested in the idea that how historians are going to use and represent historical sources. It is interesting to note that, after choosing materials, historians would choose a narrative form for presenting historical events. This would be the final product of the process of writing history. Therefore, they would be involved in a narrative text. The only way that makes it easy for them to narrate a text is through “language”. Accordingly, the importance of the language and the narrative form of historical texts are two dominant features of postmodern literary historiography. Joes maintains that reality can be given by narrative, and narrative is an indirect manner of representation of reality. Then, for postmodernists reality is kept to the “textual representation of narrative” (19). According to what has been discussed regarding the relationship between history and literature, one could claim that, this link between them is very complex as well as vital, since history provides materials for literature, and literature shares its techniques and themes in the process of writing history. Historical events are also inspiring writers in the domain of literature.

Not only the way of presenting history, but also the validity of the sources of historical writing is also a challenging issue in the postmodern period. Kirca asserts that “history invents stories about the past events and it foregrounds certain events while suppressing some others for ideological reasons” (17). One could conclude that a historian is the one who chooses among historical materials in order to write the history; therefore, the act of writing is subjective. The same happens in literature when the author starts to have a frame for the story that he/she is going to write. Likewise, as Kirca mentions, “history invents stories”, each historian can ask about the validity of the historical. This idea is well given by Hutcheon. She discussed that each historian is like a reader of a work of fiction and, what they do, is to search among documents and study them as sources of their historical writings. Therefore, they attempt to have different versions and interpretations of the past, meanwhile, they are making a subjective version of history (87).

### **3.4. Hayden White and the Notion of Historical Emplotment**

Hayden White is most well-known for his book titled *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973), which is a significant and influential work of historiographical and literary theory. He has contended that historiography has “literary implications” and the only possible form of presenting history is through a “narrative” form (9). According to his theory, there exists an equivalence between “history” and “literature”. He examines the relationship between literary and historical discourse and asserts that this connection “provides a microcosm of modern Western thoughts effort to relate

imagination ... and common sense" (White ix). For him, the issue of language for the representation of history is very significant. In his idea, one could approach history through language, and its "discourse" must be written before one can call it history. He assumes that "this process and its discourse can take many different forms, and shows a certain relationship to the past mediated by a certain discourse about it" (1). Regarding the importance of 'imagination' in the process of writing history, he contends that:

In my view, history as a discipline is in bad shape today because it has lost sight of its origins in the literary imagination. In the interest of appearing scientific and objective, it has repressed and denied to itself its own greatest source of strength and renewal. By drawing historiography back once more to an intimate connection with its literary basis, we should not only be putting ourselves on guard against merely ideological distortions; we should be by way of arriving at that "theory" of history without which it cannot pass for a "discipline" at all. (*The Content of the Form* 99)

The word "objective" in the above quotation according to White, means that historical truth and facts cannot be portrayed objectively since this is the choice of the historians to select how they want to represent them. Thus, historical facts are dependent upon historians. On the other hand, this idea is in opposition with traditional ways of representing history. Susana Onega believes that history traditionally was considered as a "scientific discipline" and it was "an empirical search for external truths corresponding to what was considered to be absolute reality of the past events" (12). This is the case that has been challenged by many postmodern historians like White. In *Metahistory* (1973) he develops the idea that history takes a narrative form. He expresses that historical accounts are literary and poetic in nature following literary techniques. As he states in *Figural Realism* (1999), "historical discourses typically produce narrative interpretations of their subject matters" (2). These historical narratives will not present new information for the readers, but enrich them with new interpretations of the "same facts" and truths (3).

Both literary and historical writings have a lot in common since they are both having a narrative form of presentation. White asserts that "historiography is an especially good ground on which to consider the nature of the narration and narrativity because it is here that our desire for the imaginary, the possible, must contest with the imperatives of the real, the actual" (4). For him, the nature of history is its 'narrative' form. Another common issue that historical writing and literary works have in common is the concept of "imagination." White also concentrates on the imaginative form of historiography and asserts that:

Histories, then, are not only about events but also about possible sets of relationship that those events can be demonstrated to figure. These sets of relationships are not,

however, immanent in the events themselves; they exist only in the mind of the historian reflecting upon them. (*Tropics of Discourse* 94)

White perceives the historian's mind as a significant factor in illustrating historical events. Accordingly, he notes that "every historical narrative" is to be regarded as "allegorical", which is "as saying one thing and meaning another" (45). He perceives history as "a linguistic and poetic act" (71). It is a "literary artifact" and "the past exists for us only as it is written by the historians" (33). According to him, one could have many interpretations of the past. The idea of existing several interpretations of the past for him, is that it would be impossible for the historians to stand in the real contexts of the historical events. They might study the documents and narrate them, but they cannot be in the context and the time of these historical facts. For this reason, they have to create and invent new contexts for those historical facts. He claims that "historical narratives are verbal fictions, the content of which are much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences" (82). As he claims in the above quotation, the act of narrating history is not an objective and scientific issue, but rather a subjective and a literary one.

Sadjadi and Ghorbani in "From Counter History to Narration of Identity" (2016) state that:

Interpreting a historical document or a historical event is, likewise, a "literary act" in which one can construct or invents a meaning for a phenomenon which lays itself to different, even contradictory, interpretations. Viewing history as a linguistic practice that is textually structured in the form of a narrative problematizes the classical transparently defined boundaries between literature and history. (24)

There is no historical event that conveys meaning in itself. That is why in different texts, the historian or the writer of historical fiction may hold different interpretations of the same historical incident. In order to make it clearer, White brought the example of an atomic bomb while it was dropping as a historical event. There are two groups which participated in that event: Americans and Japanese. That event could be interpreted by both sides in a different manner and mode of emplotment. From the Japanese's viewpoint it might be a tragic event and from the viewpoint of Americans a comedy. Therefore, each historian can take a different mode of emplotment for describing any historical incident. At the same time while reading the text, the readers will also have different interpretations of that especial mode of emplotment in which the historian choose for the event. He asserts that "no historical event is intrinsically tragic ... for in history what is tragic from one point is comic from another" (84). In an essay titled "Historical Text as Literary Artifact" White clearly asserts that

writing history or historiography is like creating different modes of emplotment in that one needs to use the elements of fiction for creating a story out of any historical event since the records are turning into narratives in this process. He explains that “the events are made into a story by ... characterization, motific repetition, variation of tone, and point of view... in short all of the techniques we would normally expect to find in the emplotment of a novel or a play” (84). Here, he asserts that how historians and, not just novelists, can use literary elements for describing historical events. That is why for him historiography is an “artifact”.

White maintains that there are four different “plot structures” or “emplotments” that historians can use in order to give meaning to any historical event. He defines this type of emplotment as “simply the encodation of the facts contained in the chronicles as components of specific kinds of plot structure” (83). He considers these plot structures as four different kinds: tragedy, comedy, romance and satire (8). White explains that in a tragic mode there is a hero whom finally defeats by “faith”. There will be always a failure or death in this type of emplotment. In a comic manner “movement is imagined from obstruction to reconstruction” and here the hope of the historian is that the hero will defeat the evils finally through “the process of reconciliation” (9). In comparison to the tragic mode, in the romantic mode the hero will finally succeed by passing a quest and he will achieve victory. Finally, the protagonist in a satiric mode is the one who is “inferior” to others, has many follies and will be easily defeated. In conclusion, one could notice that, according to White, it is possible to investigate these modes of emplotments in any written texts by historians or historical novelists’ works. Consequently, each work may have a different perspective and interpretation since the historian or the author are free to choose the mode and the historical event to be interpreted in any plot structure that White examines in *Metahistory*.

#### **4. Reading *Dr. Noon Loves His Wife More Than Mussadiq*:**

##### **A Literary Historiographical Perspective**

The present section seeks to investigate Shahram Rahimian’s *Dr. Noon* based on Hayden White’s philosophy of history and literary historiography. White asserts that a historian uses his/her imagination to ‘represent’ things that once happened in the past. Historians are using “constructive imagination” (*Metahistory* 88). According to him, one can claim that a writer of historical novels does the same, since they choose a historical event, or some, and then through their imagination they create the past again. The argument made in this article is that what White proposes by his theory of ‘plot structure’ is in close association with what

Rahimian has represented by the language of literature and “constructive imagination”.

*Dr. Noon* (2001) is a Persian contemporary historical novel. It addresses the historical event of the coup of 1953 in Iran. Moreover, the novel not only deals with a historical turning point, but also mentions historical figures as well, Dr. Mussadiq as a national figure, and other fictionalized characters like Dr. Noon, Dr. Amini, and Dr. Fatemi as members of Dr. Mussadiq’s cabinet. The history of the coup, the events and issues related to that historical moment in Iran have been the subject of many studies; however, what is new about Rahimian’s work is that, instead of focusing on a historical figure like Dr. Mussadiq, he attempts to depict the life of those who were close to him.

The story revolves around the life of Dr. Mohsen Noon, the protagonist, who was a person with a high political position. When Dr. Mussadiq became the prime minister, Dr. Noon due to his great services became Dr. Mussadiq’s close assistant. Dr. Noon had a very especial respect for Dr. Mussadiq, and he was not only his assistant, but also his relative. One can notice that the title of the novel has a highly significant meaning, since the two words: ‘Love’, and ‘Mussadiq’, later throughout the novel make a great dilemma for Dr. Noon. What the readers are encountering in this novel are the concepts of love, betrayal, and loyalty. After the downfall of Dr. Mussadiq, Dr. Fatemi, and Dr. Noon were imprisoned. Dr. Fatemi remained faithful to Dr. Mussadiq, and after being tortured, he was killed in prison. But Dr. Noon’s case was different, since he thought his wife was also in the same jail, and she was being tortured there. For this reason, in order to make her free, he agreed to have an interview and spoke against Mussadiq’s policy and ideas. Here, the concept of ‘Love’ makes Dr. Noon to betray Dr. Mussadiq. Although he was so respectful to him, and after so many tortures, still he was continuing to reject the interview. “I won’t do it, even if you kill me” (39). However, when he thought that his wife was in prison, and he heard that, someone shouted “take out her clothes” (47), he decided to make the interview:

I went to the door, and I started to kick it and I begged: “I will do whatever you want, make my wife free!” I sat down on the ground on my knees and I covered my face with my hands and I shouted, “I will do anything you want, make my wife free, make my wife free!” (48)

According to Hayden White, any chain of historical events is not certainly comic, tragic or farcical and it depends on the author to impose his/her narrative structure of a certain genre on such incidents in order to make them comic, farcical or tragic (83). In the above description, the reason that Dr. Noon is convinced to have the interview and to act against Dr. Mussadiq is described by Rahimian in a tragic manner. Trying not to reveal any point about Mussadiq’s

group in an interview, Dr. Noon was told that the life of his wife would be in danger if he would not disclose any secrets; consequently, under the pressure of such a psychological warfare, he betrayed Dr. Mussadiq. After his release, he turned back home. But he noticed that his wife has never been in prison and that they lied to him while he was in prison in order to convince him to have the interview. After that event, he started blaming himself that if he did not betray Mussadiq, nothing bad would happen to him. What is eminent about this novel is how Dr. Noon changes within the story. He remembered that once Dr. Mussadiq had told both, Dr. Fatemi and him, that "I know that you are the most honorable people of the age; however, promise me that you would be loyal to me" (44). After the interview, Dr. Noon kept telling himself that Dr. Fatemi never betrayed Dr. Mussadiq. Dr. Fatemi died, but Dr. Noon betrayed him and ruined everything. From then on he hated himself for what he had done to Dr. Mussadiq, and he started to punish himself.

Therefore, one can observe that Rahimian's novel seems to have combined a tragic view point with a romantic tone. White defines emplotment as "the encodation of facts contained in the chronicles as components of specific kinds of plot structure" (83). Rahimian in his novel creates a new narrative of the past by choosing a tragic plot structure for showing the life of Dr. Noon as the protagonist of his novel. Rahimian employs tragical scenes and descriptions through his imagination for connecting history with literature and picturing the miserable life of Dr. Noon after the coup and his interview. In fact, the first and foremost issue in the novel is how Dr. Noon's life and personality change within the story. One of the tragic scenes in the novel is when Dr. Noon is imprisoned by the state:

Dr. Noon got up, kissed Dr. Mussadiq's face and got out of the hideaway. Near his house, close to the bakery, some soldiers captured him, and whatever he begged that "let me inform my wife", no one paid attention. ....a tall officer said: "took him to that numeric bath... and tell them to take out all his clothes. Hurry up, don't forget what I ordered". (38)

Here, Dr. Mussadiq, Dr. Noon and some other ministers, were hiding in a safe place, since the coup happened. Dr. Noon explained to them that he needs to go back home in order to tell his wife what has happened. Although most of the group did not accept this idea, Dr. Mussadiq confirmed his departure. Therefore, on the way back home he was captured by the police and was sent to prison. The officers in the prison tried to convince him to do an interview, and to testify against Dr. Mussadiq, but he did not accept. They tortured him for a while, and then they sent him to a private cell where it only had a shower.

Day and night could be distinguished from the sky through the broken glass in the ceiling. From the hole of that broken glass, there were six little stars at night and the blue sky during the day. Dr. Noon, naked, was so beaten up that he was happy in his early days that no one is coming into the bath to beat him. Every morning, a clumsy-hairy hand from the bottom of the iron door, gave him a little cheese and bread while throwing them on the cold mosaics and then for the next twenty-four hours no incident happened in that cell. Just after seven days, solitude became a monster; and tolerating this monster was much harder than the pain of being beaten. No sound was heard. (41)

This part is one of the tragic moments in the novel that Dr. Noon encountered. Tragic in a sense that, Dr. Noon, who had an important position in the society and was considered an intellectual, the one who defended Dr. Mussadiq and wrote many articles in the newspapers about his ideas, now is in prison. Accepting this moment for an important person like him is very hard, while he kept silent not to tell anything against Dr. Mussadiq until the moment that he thought his wife was imprisoned, and he attended the interview. Here, the readers are revealed the secret that Dr. Noon betrayed Dr. Mussadiq for the sake of saving his wife's life. Accordingly, One can divide his life (Dr. Noon's life) into two parts: before the coup and after that. This point has been pointed out by Bezdoode and Amiri as well; elaborating on Rahimian's *Dr. Noon*, they assert:

Dr. Noon's life before the coup is a paradise in which he is in complete unity with the world around him. He is admired by the whole society. He is now married to and loved by the love of his childhood days and their love is stronger than ever. (2)

According to the above quotation, Dr. Noon's life before the coup was like a "paradise" for him. He had everyone's respect, and his marital situation was also in a good state. However, after the coup and his interview his life changed completely, and he was like in hell every day, and it was when the tragedy of his life began, since he considered himself guilty, and he could not forgive himself for what he has done. As already mentioned, before the coup he had a good relation with his wife:

He remembered that night; after that the guests had gone, Malektaj and him turned all the lights on and in the garden near the pool, they danced until the dawn [...] Mohsen, the salespeople don't take any money from me for the things that I buy. They say that we owe to your husband. Behind the name of Dr. Mussadiq, they bring your name, and they say that you are the proud of Azizabad street. (24-25)

One can clearly observe how a happy life they had before the coup and how people respected. It was an ideal stage in his political and intellectual life. But after the coup people considered him as a traitor to Dr. Mussadiq and to the whole society. This scene best proves this claim:

It was the first time after being released from the prison that I put my feet outside the house. [...] suddenly I saw a man who jumped out from the darkness and said: "Do you know Dr. Fatemi?"

I was so shocked to see him. I answered in panic: "Yes"

Other men from the darkness came out too, and they made a circle around me. "So, you know Dr. Fatemi, and you know the difference between him and yourself! Do you know for how many nights we've been waiting for you? [...] I said: "No, I don't know" [...] The man said, "You understand well, we want to beat you in a way that you won't be able even to breath". (66-67)

This description by Rahimian demonstrates the miserable and tragic life of Dr. Noon after the coup. Every day, he drowned more in his solitude at home. Subsequently, he realized that no one liked him and respected him anymore. After releasing from prison, he felt lonely and alienated. In this scene we can understand how angry people were with him, even wishing his death. Before the coup, he was deadly in love with his wife, and he wrote many letters for her while he was studying in Paris, but after the coup, he did many things to make her escape from that house and escape from him. Once Malektaj said: "Mohsen, why do you annoy me so much? Why are you molesting me? Why?" (16). He made a horrible life not only for himself by remembering that event (the interview), but he also annoyed Malektaj so much by everything he did since he had no aim to live more. She kept saying, "Mohsen, why the love, which everybody felt jealous of, suddenly finished?" (25). He started to drink alcohol more and more in order to punish himself.

After a few months of his release, and after Dr. Mussadiq's death, the phantom of Dr. Mussadiq started appearing to him and never left him alone again. Here, Dr. Noon confessed how the coup and the downfall of Dr. Mussadiq made his life tragic. Dr. Noon said to the phantom of Dr. Mussadiq, "but the coup destroyed everything. It made you destitute, and me, miserable" (37). From then on, the phantom of Dr. Mussadiq took control of his life, since the moment he entered his imagination Dr. Noon saw him everywhere, so little by little a gap appeared between Dr. Noon and his wife. In fact, the phantom became an obstacle between them. Since Dr. Mussadiq told him, in front of me, you cannot love her. The phantom of Dr. Mussadiq kept telling him, "you have to pay the price for the interview that you had" (65). It is certainly obvious that having the interview has had profound impacts on Dr. Noon's personal life. He remembered that how he promised not to let Dr. Mussadiq down, but now he considers himself a traitor. Later, when Malektaj aimed to help him to forget the interview and the bad consequences that it had on their life, Dr. Noon kept telling her "I loved Dr. Mussadiq so much that I was sure I would be loyal to him, even if I had been lied down, and I was sure I would never take part in any interview to testify against him" (43). This dialogue between them proves that he regrets

what he has done against the prime minister; therefore, he does not have any aim to live. In fact, he is always afraid of forgetting the interview; in order to punish himself, he always remembers the scene as it was, and he keeps staying alone without having any contact with the outside world.

White claims that history and historical narrative can be interpreted by different people in different manners (*The Content of the Form* 85). In this novel as one can see clearly the interpretation that Rahimian made through his imagination for creating a different version is a tragedy. One of the most tragic descriptions in the story is when Dr. Noon's wife is dead and still he could not believe that she died. It was just some minutes before that Malektaj went out for shopping and a man knocked the door and said that a motorbike hit her while she was on the way to hospital. When Dr. Noon arrived in hospital, doctors told him that his wife is dead, "sorry, but you might believe, unfortunately your wife had died on the way to the hospital.... Please, leave her hand" (30). When Dr. Noon hears that, he narrates:

I went down on my knees and I said: "Doctor, I love my wife so much. All the letters I sent to her from Paris could prove it easily. They are still in the drawer of my wife's desk. You can take some time, come to our house and read them. She put the letters in the order of the dates with a red ribbon around them, and put red petals between them. Please, do something to make her alive again and then I can go to her every night and kiss her forehead. Our marriage has been done in heaven. We must die in the same day. Malektaj and I cannot stand being away from each other. I beg you don't let her die." (31)

Dr. Noon, here, is like a hero whose downfall is completed by the death of his wife. These lines indicate how miserable he sees himself with the death of his wife. White (1973) for the definition of "tragedy" asserts that it could be a form of drama that the protagonist "suffers" and then this suffering leads to "human catharsis". The end of a "tragic employment" is death or failure (9). The only weak-point that Dr. Noon had in his personality was his love for his wife. And whatever he did, was just to save her. However, after the coup, he saw himself as a traitor, and if Malektaj was not in that house with him, he could easily finish his life by committing suicide since he considered himself guilty. In the hospital, he could not believe her death, for that reason he paid some men to take her body outside the hospital and bring it home. Now, on page 104, he is at home, in her room, glancing at her body:

I stood up in front of Malektaj's makeup table... I opened the blanket that it was around Malektaj... what a frail body, [...] her hair was all white [...] she was just like sleeping, and she could wake up any minute, and she would start blaming me: "Mohsen, didn't I ask you not to come to my room? I was watching her closed eyes for a while... I said to her: I did not break those branches and flowers, Dr. Mussadiq did all. I apologize for Dr. Mussadiq, for all he did, and for all he said." (104)

Dr. Noon's love toward Malektaj is represented in a highly aesthetic way. As it is mentioned in the above extract from the novel, he always loved her, and he could not believe that she is dead. He wants to go back to the beautiful and magical time of the past, and he likes to repeat all the things that they did together before the coup. Now, near her bed, he wants her to make herself pretty again like before, in order to start loving each other again. But it is too late for him now. She is dead. He not only tortured himself, but also annoyed and tortured his wife for more than 23 years. Today is the first time that Dr. Noon stands against the phantom of Dr. Mussadiq and asks him to go outside the room, "Mr. Mussadiq, please go out of this room. Today my wife is dead, I want to be alone with her" (103), and then he (the phantom) goes out of the room. Dr. Noon now remembers all their beautiful time together, and their memories, one after the other, are passing through his mind. He sees the phantom of Malektaj who is standing in the garden near the trees:

She was so happy and satisfied. Just like those days that the coup did not happen, and we had happiness; and we had so many desires and aims, and we did not lose our hope for the future; and Dr. Mussadiq was not following me just like a shadow. And I haven't had the interview yet. I went back to her bed. (108)

It is obvious that this is the end to Dr. Noon's life. After the interview, for so many times he wanted to forget that day, and wanted to be happy again and to be with his wife, but the phantom of Dr. Mussadiq never let him free, he was with him everywhere, and he gave orders to him. He broke Malektaj's heart many times just because Dr. Mussadiq kept repeating, you cannot love her in front of me, since Dr. Noon took the interview for rescuing his wife, which it was not even true, and she has never been in prison. Therefore, his life is a complete tragedy: he once lost all the trust of Dr. Mussadiq, and he broke his promise, and after that he lost the love of his life by annoying her so much; however, she never left him, and she remained faithful to their love. The dialogue between them on page 83 proves her faithful love:

You want to torture yourself to ease your conscience, right? But I love you more than just to leave you and go. Take this idea out of your mind that one day I will leave you, I will never let go, I would stay that much until I die and then my body will be taken away from here.

Dr. Noon always loved his wife, but after the appearance of the phantom of Dr. Mussadiq, he obliged to take another room; however, every night he went to her room, he kissed her forehead, and he left the place. He did not want to do any of those things that happened, but he could not be released from Dr. Mussadiq's phantom. Little by little Mussadiq ruined his life by his presence and brought about the tragedy of his life. Moreover, Dr. Noon by drinking alcohol

wanted to forget the interview and also brought about his death. In fact, Dr. Noon could be more faithful than any other characters in the novel, though considering himself a traitor, he could not be able to show his love again toward his wife. He was faithful to Dr. Mussadiq until the last moment, but the memory of the interview and the situation of the downfall of Dr. Mussadiq never left him alone, and the result was the tragedy that happened in his life. Dr. Noon experienced traumatic moments and it came to be tenuous by the death of Malektaj that he never believed. He lost everything, once his great friend, Dr. Mussadiq, and now his lovely wife.

### **5. Conclusion**

The present study closely examined Shahram Rahimian's *Dr. Noon Loves His Wife More Than Mussadiq* based on Hayden White's theory of literary historiography. The major argument of this research is to illustrate how Rahimian portrays the tragic life of Dr. Noon through "constructive imagination" which is in close association with White's theory. Moreover, it seeks to examine how the destruction brought by love and loyalty has affected individual's everyday life. As it was argued, Rahimian created a new view of the history of Iran's 1953 coup. A remarkable point about his novel is that he used a real historical event as the basis for his work. Then, instead of focusing on a historical figure like Dr. Mussadiq, he rewrote history and shaped his own narrative of this historical event. He paid attention to the life of someone who was close to Dr. Mussadiq, and portrayed his tragic life for the readers. White asserts that the emplotment into which a historian chooses to represent historical facts includes four types. It can be comic, tragic, romantic, or satire (*Metahistory* 8). Therefore, one can clearly observe that the plot structure into which Rahimian chooses for his work seems to have combined a tragic emplotment with a romantic tone. It could be argued that, this story is not just about Dr. Noon, but he might stand out as a symbol for all of those who were in contact with Dr. Mussadiq. In short, it was observed that Rahimian depicts the Iranian socio-political and cultural scene of the early 1950s in his novel from a historical perspective.

## References

- Bezdoode, Zakarya and Cyrus Amiri, "Dr. Noon Loves His Wife More Than *Mussadiq*: A Rememory of Politics and Paternity in Iran in the 1960s." *Studies in Literature and Language*. Vol. 12, No. 1, 2016, pp. 1-4.
- Cowart, David. *History and the contemporary Novel*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989.
- Fussel, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. United States: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Henry, Matthew. *A. Postmodern Historical Fiction: Aspects in Three Writers*. diss. The College at Brockport, 1992.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 1988.
- Joes, S. "History as Narrative." [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/5592/7/07\\_chapter%2002.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/5592/7/07_chapter%2002.pdf), 2012.
- Kirca, Mustafa. *Postmodern Historical Novels: Jeanette Winterson's and Salman Rushdie's Novels as Historiographic Metafiction*. diss., Middle East Technical University, 2009.
- Lukács, György. *The Historical Novel*. Trans. Hannah Mitchell and Stanley Mitchell. Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1983.
- McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. London and New York: Routledge, 1987.
- Munslow, Alun. *Deconstructing History*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Onega, Susana. "The British Historiographic Metafiction in the 1980s." *American Literature: A History*, eds. Theo D'haen, and Hans Bertens, 1995, pp. 47-61.
- Ostadmohamadi, Nooshin, Hossein Faghihi, and Hossein Hajari. "The Representation of Polyphony in Dr. Noon Loves His Wife More Than *Mussadiq*." *Half Yearly Persian Language and Literature*, Vol. 25, No. 83, 2018. pp. 23-42: <http://jpllkhu.ac.ir/article-1-3083-en.html>. Accessed 14<sup>th</sup> March 2020.
- Rahimian, Shahram. *Doctor Noon Zanash Ra Bishtar Az Mosadigh Doost Darad*, [*Dr. Noon Loves His Wife More Than Mussadiq*]. Tehran: Niloofer, 2001.

- Sadjadi, Bakhtiar, and Somayeh Ghorbani. "From Counter History to Narration of Identity: A Postmodernist Reading of Ishmael Reed's Flight to Canada." *Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2016, pp. 23-30.
- Tayefi, Shirzad, and Haniyeh Hajitabar. "The psychoanalytic critique of the novel *Doctor Noone loves his wife more than Mossadegh* based on Freud's defense mechanisms." *Universidad y Sociedad*, Vol. 11, No. 5, 2019, pp. 294-300.
- White, Hayden. *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.
- . *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.
- . *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 1986.
- . *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1978, pp. 81-100.
- . *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in the Nineteenth Century Europe*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1973.