



Received: 7 July 2020
Accepted: 6 July 2021
Published: 23 September 2021

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How to cite this article:
Farahmandfar, Masoud, Shakeri,
Abdolrasoul (2021). Discourse of
Nationalism in Saeed Nafisi's *Dar
Nim-e Rāh-e Behesht* (Midway to
Paradise), *The International
Journal of Humanities* (2021)
Vol. 28 (4): (1-18).

<http://ejih.modares.ac.ir/article-27-44234-en.html>

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Discourse of Nationalism in Saeed Nafisi's *Dar Nim-e Rāh-e Behesht* (Midway to Paradise)

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Abstract: After the occupation of Iran by the Allies in 1941, the Shāh of Iran was forced to renounce the crown in favor of his young son, and from then until the CIA-backed Coup of August 1953, the Iranian society experienced a period of relative cultural freedom, and particularly the press enjoyed an unprecedented liberty. One fruitful outcome of such freedom was the publication of serial novels with sociopolitical themes. One remarkable example is *Dar Nim-e Rāh-e Behesht* (Midway to Paradise) by Saeed Nafisi, which was published, in forty installments, in one of the most influential periodicals of that time, *Kāviyan*. Since serialized novels are reader-centered and their publication depends on how the readers receive them, Laclau and Mouffe's qualitative method of discourse analysis has been used to analyze the political sphere of the time as well as the discursive sphere of the novel. Analysis of Nafisi's novel *Midway to Paradise* shows that amongst the four major sociopolitical discourses of the period between 1941 and 1953—namely, Marxism, nationalism, Islamism and monarchism—the aforementioned novel supports the discourse of nationalism, which is revealed and represented by the narrator. This discursive position is also articulated by a critique of the ruling political discourse and its 'Westoxified' agents. The novel also debunks the myth of Communism as defined by the Soviet Union and argues that the Communist paradise is nothing but a sham delusion.

Keywords: Persian Serial Novel; Nationalist Discourse; Saeed Nafisi; *Dar Nim-e Rāh-e Behesht* (Midway to Paradise).

Introduction

The Industrial Revolution in the West enlarged the material wealth of societies and thus allowed them to offer more and more educational programs to the mass of the people. With a widespread development in public education and its ensuing growth of literacy, publication of newspapers and magazines also increased (Law, 2000; Payne, 2005; Brake and Codell, 2005; Hughes and Lund, 2010). Little by little, however, the press became a sort of public social space which helped create ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson, 2006).¹ The press came under influence and even directed the sociopolitical opinion of the reading public. Such “print-capitalism ... quickly created large new reading publics and simultaneously mobilized them for politico-religious purposes” (Anderson, 2006). In order to attract more readers, newspapers and magazines turned to publishing serial fiction. Therefore, the novel and the newspaper

“provided the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation” (Anderson, 2006). The situation was belatedly the same in Iran.

Traditionally, high literature was unique to the elite, and its circulation rate was low among the general public, who had their own literature. In the recent century, with the development of printing and publishing industry in Iran, propagation of old texts and new writing has become far more easy than before. The popularity of the press in Iran also gradually expanded the publication of installment fictional narratives in the form of serial novels, which were mostly ideologically motivated.

Although Iranian acquaintance with modernity predates the Constitutional Era, the effects of such acquaintance became more and more visible in the Constitutional Movement. Afterwards, during the first Pahlavi period

¹ Benedict Anderson (1936-2015) in his now-classic book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2006) defines nation as an imagined political community: “It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their

communion” (6). According to Anderson, the expansion of the printing industry and, consequently, the increase of the literacy rate in the society and the creation of the middle class are of great importance in the formation of the concept of nationhood among the people of a particular country.

(1921-1941), modernization accelerated in Iran. After the arrival of the Allies in Iran on September 25, 1941, a situation emerged that allowed an open socio-political space between the years 1941 and 1953. The Iranian identity, which had been shaped by Islam and pre-Islamic heritage of ancient Iran, benefited from modernity. This is echoed in the literature of this era.

The relationship between literature and social changes is undeniable. This relation is nowhere more clearly reflected than in contemporary literature. Studies of high literature or more precisely, canonical literature of this period confirm the link between ideology and politics. The serial² novel has not been the subject of research for a variety of reasons, including its being popular. Our knowledge of this subject matter is very limited. Also, we do not yet have a comprehensive bibliography of this genre. This article, in addition to presenting a list of works produced in this genre, examines the main

sociopolitical discourses of the years between 1941 and 1953 in relation to the content and structure of a representative serial novel published in this period, namely, *Dar Nim-e Rāh-e Behesht* (Midway to Paradise) written by Saeed Nafisi (1895-1966) and published in *Kāviyān*, one of the most influential weekly magazines of Iran in that period. Each installment appeared on one page, in about 1300 words, in more than eighty issues, starting from Thursday, January 5, 1951. It was published regularly up until the issue 42. After a short hiatus in publication, which was due to the author's travel to Afghanistan, it continued again from January 10, 1952 until January 22, 1953, when the last installment was published and signed by the author.

Although many research papers are written on the subject of the sociopolitical discourse of Iran in general (such as “Political Culture: A Survey in the City of Tehran” published in *The International Journal of Humanities* [2018], written by Amir Maleki et al.),³ scant research

² For more information on this subject, see:

- Kamran Tallatof, *The Politics of Writing in Iran: A History of Modern Persian Literature*, Syracuse University Press, 2000, 66-108.

- Mohammad Shams-Langrudi, *An Analytical History of New Poetry*, 1st. vol. Nashr-e Markaz, 1999.

³ In this article, the authors attempt to investigate “political culture in the city of Tehran, focusing on three of its domains including typology of political culture,

has been conducted on Persian serialized novels to date which particularly examines the literary examples of this subgenre in their sociopolitical contexts. Although Parvin Rostami, Jahanbakhsh Savagheb, and RohAllah Bahrami (2018) have briefly touched on the aforementioned novel, their analysis mostly attends to the confrontation of Tradition and Modernity, disillusioned intellectuals, and corrupt bureaucracy, and thus leaves the nationalist discourse of the crucial years 1941 to 1953—which is politically one of the most important periods of Iranian contemporary history—unexamined.

The Serial Novel in Iran: Genre Review

Offering a detailed history of the serial novel in Iran is neither the subject of this research, nor is possible, unless the archives of Persian journals and newspapers are fully organized. The authors have tried to trace the emergence of the serial novel—which is surely a historical phenomenon, influenced by various internal and external factors—in order to show that the

origins of this type of novels are linked to modernity. The Iranians' acquaintance with modernity was through a serious and painful confrontation between Persia and the West in the nineteenth century; suffering heavy defeats from Russia and the pressure imposed by imperial countries awakened the Iranian society to the backwardness of their country (Talattof, 2006). To remedying such backwardness, the Iranians thought of spreading knowledge amongst the public. They imported printing press.

The first type-metal printing press in Iran was founded in Tabriz in 1811, and it reached Tehran in about 1825. Lithographic printing was installed in Tabriz in the years 1826 to 1845, and it was immediately welcomed by the Iranians because it preserved the style of Persian writing. Lead printing came to Tehran more than a decade later, but it was not until the 1870s that the reproduction of material in many numbers became necessary and with it came the need for printing houses (Balay & Cuypers, 1983).

classification and typology of political citizens, as well as examination of some variables affecting political culture in Iran" (Maleki et al., 2018: 61).

The first Persian newspaper in Iran was published in 1933 (Ghāsemi, 2015); the history of Iranian press started from this moment. The press in Iran has often been influenced by political developments. One of the most important periods in the history of the Iranian press was the time between 1941 and 1953, that is, from the occupation of Iran by the Allies during the Second World War and the fall of Rezā Shāh Pahlavi to the fall of Dr. Mohammad Mosaddegh's government in August 1932. With the growth of literacy and the spread of newspaper-readings, publishers gradually began to attract audiences by including serial fiction in newspapers and magazines.

Serial fiction was modern and entirely Western literary genre, and Iranian acquaintance with this type of literary writing has been through translation; however, the internal context of such an acquaintance should not be ignored. More importantly, in our discussion, we shall also pay attention to a rich Persian heritage of storytelling, which has many features in similar to the literary genre we are discussing, that is, the serial novel. In European sources—and especially the French

ones, since it was first in France that serial literature appeared and enjoyed wide public reception—several characteristics are enumerated for this type of fictional works:

1. Following a single story from start to finish; 2. Providing a resolution at the end of each installment so that the reader is encouraged to go through the sequels; 3. Using a clear and simple language so that the majority of literate people can read and understand the texts without difficulty; 4. Characterizing heroes and other characters in the novel as relatable ordinary people who are like us, not better than us (Elāhi, 1999: 331).

The idea behind listing these features is to show the similarity between this type of fiction and the classical Persian tradition of storytelling. *A Thousand and One Nights*, *Samak-e Ayyār*, *Hamza-Nāmeḥ*, and *Eskandar-Nāmeḥ* are examples of such a long and rich tradition. *Amir Arsalān Nāmdār* is a late example. Stories of the oral tradition were also devised in different installments, each ending with suspension. It is noteworthy that the Persian translation of *A Thousand and One Nights* is the first example of Persian serial

fiction, which was published in installments in *Jām-e Jahān Namā* newspaper (Calcutta, 1850).

The history of publishing serial novels in Iran precedes the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911). During this period, many French serial novels were translated into Persian and published in *Tarbiyat* newspaper (Elāhi, 1999: 720). The role of translation in the development of the Persian novel is so much that the theoretical foundation of the book *La genese de roman Persian moderne*, the most comprehensive work on the origins of the Persian novel, is based on the role of the translation of French novels, and especially the works of Alexander Dumas (Balay, 1998; Milāni, 1998).

Although serial writings existed in the pre-Constitutional era, and were following the Western pattern, their publication was not regular and their subjects were mainly scientific, social, educational and historical (Balay, 1998). Nonetheless, following the death of Nāser-al-Din Shāh, and during the reign of Muzaffar-al-din Shāh (1896-1907), few European serial novels were translated into Persian and published. Nevertheless, in the

hubbub of the Constitutional Revolution and its cultural and political activists' change of focus, interest in the serial novel dwindled (if not vanished). The first proper Persian serial novels were written and published in about 1920 and afterwards. *Tehrān-e Makhuf* (Horrible Tehran), by Morteżā Moshfeq Kāzemi (1904-1978), published in installments in *Setāreh* Newspaper in 1922, appears to be the first Persian serial novel published in Iran.

The significance of Nafisi's work is that it was written during Mossadegh's presidency and openly sought to debunk the myth of Communism and show that the paradise that the Soviet Union and its affiliated propagandists preach is an empty illusion, a mirage. At the same time, the characters in this serial novel who have sold themselves to the West (especially the US) are also the target of the narrator's attacks. The narrator calls the British a deceitful people and the British intelligence service the cause of misery in the region, including Iran. The narrator articulates a discourse of archaic nationalism, and the nodal point of this discourse is his countless references to the Pre-Islamic past of the nation.

Methodology: Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Analysis

Unlike some theories of discourse which merely focus on linguistic aspects of a text, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discourse analysis is a user-friendly approach that rests on a profound understanding of a text's social realities, structures and relationships.

Laclau and Mouffe formulated their theory and method by combining and modifying the theoretical tradition of Marxism and structuralism. In their theory, Marxism provides a starting point for the analysis of society, and structuralism, of meaning. These two traditions are merged into one poststructuralism-powered theory, according to which the "discourse constructs the social world in meaning" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). In other words, meaning is constructed socially. We always try to fix the meaning of signs by putting them in a special relationship with other signs. This is ultimately impossible, because every attempt at fixation of the meaning of the sign is itself contingent.

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (2014), Laclau and Mouffe draw attention to the relationship between materialism and

idealism, which is indeed the relationship between structure and agency. The main idea in this book is that all social phenomena find meaning in a particular discourse, and that this discourse is not fixed and unchangeable, since it is contingent upon external factors. Therefore, meaning does not reach full saturation, and there are always floating signifiers in the discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 112). Here the relative stability of discourse is achieved through limiting the scope of meanings a signifier may have in a discourse. According to Laclau and Mouffe, the relatively stable points in a discourse are called 'nodal' points or central signifiers, which are articulated based on the links discursive elements have with each other. If the concepts related to nodal points become dominant in a society, they become hegemonic, i.e. the nodal points are fixed and a new social order is constructed.

Another important issue discussed by Laclau and Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is the concomitant operation of the logic of difference and equivalence. The logic of difference causes diversity and heterogeneity; instead, the equivalence logic

eliminates the differences and sets up homogeneity. Indeed, with these two logics, we can say that people in every society, with every activity they do, are creating a difference and disparity and, at the same time, eliminating differences and creating homogeneity. This permanent process of differentiation and homogenization—to use Laclau and Mouffe’s terminology—is called ‘articulation’ and ‘disarticulation’. Articulation is “any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice” (Laclau & Mouffe 105), or simply, creating central signifiers or nodal points in order to fix meaning. Indeed, discourse is constructed through a relative fixation of meaning around a particular central signifier. Articulation produces a discursive structure. The stabilization of meaning in a discourse is done by removing other possible meanings of each sign: to limit the possibilities of signification or meaning-making, to prevent the slip of signifier from signified, and to create a unified semantic system, an impenetrable discursive domain (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014).

Overall, the purpose of discourse analysis is to map out the processes that not only establish

meaning and fixate a certain relationship between signifier and signified, but also attempt to do so in a way that appears natural. Among various literary theories, discursive approaches, influenced by post-structuralism, have more possibilities for explaining and describing temporary situations. Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse analysis, while explaining the structure of such temporal situations, provides a clear picture of dominant discourses of power within a society which temporarily fix meanings. That is how discursive articulation functions.

Discussion: The Nationalist Discourse (1941-1953)

During the sixteenth-year reign of Rezā Shāh (1925-1941), the press faced a severe repression and censorship, and as a result, the writing and publication of Persian serial fiction seriously decreased. With the Allied invasion of Iran during the Second World War and the abdication of Rezā Shāh, the situation in Iran completely transformed, and the nation experienced development in various dimensions. These changes affected the press as well. With a decrease in governmental

censorship, the press enjoyed relative freedom and managed to reflect public opinion more openly. Many journals of this period attracted their audience by raising contentious political issues and by writing controversial editorials. Political parties and camps also attracted their audience with the help of their ideologues. Thus, politics entered the general public parlance, and the audience of political publications increased.

Publishers welcomed the inclusion of serial novels in their publications because they were the readers' favorite pieces and thus sell well. For publishers, financial incentives were the most important reason for publishing this kind of literature, and for their writers and readers, the fact that they often include sociopolitical issues of the day. Also, the mutual relation of the author and the audience in the process of writing and publishing these novels allowed for an analysis of public opinion and the spirit of the times. Publication of such novels depended directly on the readers' reception of them. In addition to the role of the audience, the policies of the publishers and their reliance on the dominant social and political discourse of power affected the content of this kind of

literature. To examine such connections define one of the aims of the present article.

Studying a representative serial novel published between 1941 and 1953—such as Nafisi's *Midway to Paradise*—led us to discovering how the main sociopolitical discourses of the period were reflected in that novel. Also, the use of the concept of 'articulation' as a tool for more accurate analysis of the structure and especially the plot of this novel seemed to be very effective. It allowed us, for one, to go through the conflicts between differing discourses and their effects on characters' behaviors within the novel. We came to understand that the novel was in favor of the nationalist discourse and the nodal point for the articulation of this discourse was the narrator's recourse to archaic nationalism and his eulogy of the nation's glorious past. Also, when we analyze the verbal interactions between Nahid and other characters, we come to see the articulation of this nationalist discourse more and more.

We argued that according to Laclau and Mouffe (2014) all social phenomena find meaning in a particular discourse, and also that the meaning of a text is based on its

interrelationship with its discursive context. Accordingly, events, actions and even dialogues between characters in a text become meaningful “through their relationship to the order of discourse” (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 70).

There were four main political discourses in Iran from September 1943 to August 1955: arbitrary monarchy, Marxism, Islamism, and nationalism. The latter, in the form of the National Front, founded and led by Mohammad Mossadegh (1882-1967), sought to limit the king’s powers within the Constitutional laws. The most important representation of nationalism in this period was the struggles against the British rule in Iran and specifically the nationalization of Iranian oil industry. The Marxist discourse was represented by The Tudeh Party which, taking advantage of the disastrous economic situation of most people in Iran, tried to propagate Marxist doctrines amongst the intellectuals, workers and the lower classes. And the Islamic discourse was represented by Ayatollāh Kāshāni (1882-1962) as a cleric who favored direct involvement of religion in politics. He took advantage of the clashes between the

British and Iranian oil companies, and openly declared his opposition to the British government and his alliance with the National Front. Therefore, Kāshāni managed to spread his Islamic discourse amongst the general public and traditionalists. He was so clever as to spot the religious capacities and tendencies of the majority of people and thus built his discourse on them. Benefited already from the radical political clashes within the society, from the early 1952 onwards he parted ways with the nationalist discourse of the National Front and started supporting the discourse of monarchy. He thus rearticulated the Islamic discourse. The central signifier or the nodal point of this discourse was the idea of political Islam and the opposition to modern judicial system, religious violence and the presence of women in society.

In addition to the three discourses mentioned above, the discourse of arbitrary monarchy sought to gradually formulate itself as the only solution to the problems of the country and become the dominant discourse. It was supported by the royalists from within and England and the US from without. This discourse had the following ‘moments’, or

“differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse”: total dependence on the Western world, a policed society, support for non-political or pro-monarchist Islam, opposition to Mossadegh, emphasis on modernization and opposition to the Tudeh Party (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). Nafisi’s serial novel *Dar Nim-e Rāh-e Behesht* (Midway to Paradise) was written to further the cause of royalist discourse.

Findings

In the analysis of discourse, each expression is a kind of articulation and by examining the manner of expression, the manner of discursive articulation can be examined. In the first step, the central signifiers of a discourse should be defined, and it should be determined which signs have a major articulatory role, and how they are defined in relation to other signs.

Instability is the most salient feature of the political atmosphere of this period, when a central, unifying power was missing in the political atmosphere of Iran. Iran's occupation in 1941 and Rezā Shāh’s forced renunciation of the throne in favor of his son Mohammadrāza, conflicts between high-ranking members of

aristocracy in the government and the parliament, Iran-England clash over oil benefits in southern Iran, the Soviet Union’s claim for the northern oil, and the Soviet support not only for the separatist groups in Kurdistan and Azerbaijan (two Iranian provinces) but also the massive activities of the Tudeh Party (a Marxist-communist party) challenged the sociopolitical stability and territorial integrity of Iran (Balay, 1998; Talattof, 2000).

In the very first pages of the first installment, the narrator specifies the ‘paradise’ the female protagonist (Nāhid) has in mind. Sick and tired of the limits of marital life in Iran, Nāhid imagined her future and the many pleasures she would enjoy: “[...] The road to heaven is still open to people of the earth; the airplanes that come from London, Paris and New York bring those who have touched higher skies” (Nafisi, 1953: 8 -7). She recalls a United Nations event which was as an excuse to travel to the US and then narrates her first travel to America.

Nafisi has divided his work into nine chapters. The first chapter in eight pages and the second chapter in the twenty six pages

describe a female party in “newly-built house at Rezā Shāh Street,” a house which particularly illuminates new rulers’ lack of taste (Nafisi, 1953). The party’s host is Nāhid Dowlatdust, whose telephone conversation with her friend Mehri Borunparvar over the latter’s delay for the party, opens the novel. The author refers to the host as the “pivot of politics in Tehran” (Nafisi, 1953). The event was organized to discuss the formation of a charity fund for the needy; twenty-three women were invited. Let's look at the narrator's description of the intentions of the participants:

They came to show off their jewelry, ornaments, clothes and shoes in one go, and also to show off their care for the poor, and have their pictures on magazines and their names in newspapers (Nafisi, 1953: 14).

The narrator then turns to describing these women’s immoral private lives and mentions Nāhid’s affairs with Hushang Sarjueezade. Throughout the novel, the narrator portrays a tarnished picture of these women; they are reduced to their bras: “Twenty-three bras and corsets were sitting on the four sides of the dining room” (Nafisi, 1953: 30). The narrator also describes these women’s husbands as

hypocrites: “They tried to show themselves as patriots and most-devoted servants of the country, while in reality they were most traitorous vampires and beasts” (Nafisi, 1953). The narrator says the reason women were allowed to act in political scenes was for immoral exploitation and corruption.

In a nationalist manner, the narrator eulogizes the glories of the past of the nation and relates it to Zoroastrianism which is considered “more liberal and more courageous” than other religions, because in this religion white color is valued and clerics were white clothes. He then points our attention to Iran of the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sasanian times, when people were the most loyal and courageous men in the world, and were always wearing white even in mourning. With these descriptions, he refers to the Muslim conquest of Persia and the Abbasid period when the spirit of prowess abandoned Iranians and left in black clothes of mourning afterwards.

The narrator then vilifies the British intelligence system and English freemasons for their subversive interference in the fate and future of the Middle East countries, especially

Iran “one hundred and fifty years ago” (Nafisi, 1953). The narrator continues voicing his stricture on “almost all those who have important positions in the parliament and the government”, revealing his take on the sociopolitical discursive antagonism of the time. He narrates and interprets the events from a nationalistic viewpoint; from his eulogistic remarks on pre-Islamic Iran, we find out that he supports archaic nationalism. Based on his statements about the Abbasids, as well as other Islamic regimes, we understand that he does not have any tendency to articulate religion in his discourse. In this nationalist discourse, the ‘other’ is the British government, which operates against Iran through spreading Freemasonry and sending their agents to Iran.

It is worth noting that the narrator believes “almost all” major politicians of Iran over the past 150 years have been influenced by Britain. He thus interprets the Constitutional Revolution from this viewpoint: “Everybody knows that this Constitutional movement came out of the British embassy 46 years ago [...]” (Nafisi, 1953: 15). The narrator’s discourse is anti-Western. He also scathes the Marxist discourse as the primary enemy of

social development, which is the aim of his favorite discourse of archaic nationalism. He disapproves the role of British freemasons in Iran and implicitly condemns the political activities of the Shah in this period.

The structure of this novel is such that fictional narration is sometimes victimized by the author/narrator’s excessively detailed explanations and his will to expose the past of some characters. However, he remains true to his original plan: revealing the relations of power in Iran at that particular era. The third and fourth chapters have fully addressed Iranian politicians and, also, the Freemasonry and its agents. In the third chapter, the name of Mr. Sheikh Hādi Tayyebi is mentioned as the most important Iranian Freemason; all the political plots and collusions in the country revolve around this person and his actions. Apparently, all the political characters of this serial novel are real, only with slight changes in their names. It is not hard to guess the identity of real people from their fictional names; for example, Dr. Adbār (meaning ‘ill fortune’) instead of Dr. Iqbāl, whose surname in Persian means ‘good fortune’; Bātangān instead of Bāzargān; Roshan Sepidbakht instead of

Nayyereh Saeedi; Khasil Alaki instead of Khalil Maleki; Sheikh Hādi Tayyebi instead of Dr. Mohammad Tāheri Yazdi; and Mr. Delbān instead of Mr. Ahmad Dehghān.⁴

The novel insists that all politicians are selected by the British government. The narrator spots discursive clash between Western ideology, represented by England, and the communist ideology of the Soviet Union. Somewhere in the novel, when Aliakbar Diplomacy (fictitious name for Aliakbar Siāssi, politician and chancellor of University of Tehran) resorts to Dr. Tāheri to get the position of the Ministry of Culture in the Cabinet of Mohammad Sā'ed Marāghe'i, he is told: "Why on earth did you go to Cultural Relations Association? Why did you attend the events held there? Wasn't there anywhere else you could go?" (Nafisi, 1953: 90). And finally he is told that this time the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been considered for him; you should ask the reason from the British. Then the question of oil is raised, the most important

issue for the government of those years. The topic of discussion was the granting of oil royalties in northern Iran to the Soviet Union.

The fifth chapter takes us again to Nāhid's party and the discussion of political affairs and ways to gain more and more financial benefits. Meanwhile, Nāhid is also considering traveling to the United States to buy a fashionable coat! The sixth chapter deals with corrupt political relations between individuals and groups, and plotting for winning the next parliament election. All the plans are devised by Dr. Tāheri, who follows order from the British. The seventh chapter is also a marginal discussion about a person named Abbās Kachal who sells ice cream in the neighborhood of Dr. Tāheri's house in Sarcheshmeh; he is being jailed only for seeing accidentally those who come and go to Dr. Tāheri's house. The narrator takes advantage of this scene to talk about the miserable life of the lower class. The eighth chapter also describes

⁴ Mohammadali Sepānlu in *Leading Writers in Iran: From the Constitutional Era to 1971* has explained in details the purpose of Saeed Nafisi in using such technique. For more information on Dr. Mohammad Tāheri Yazdi, who was a Member of the Parliament and

a staunch Anglophile, see: Hādi Hakimiyyān, "Qavām's Government and Yazd Fifteenth Election," *Payām-e Bahārestān*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Summer 2009): 301-312.

the moral corruption of the nouveau riche families.

As the novel opened with a female party at Nāhid's mansion, it also ends with a party at Ali Farāzjoui's house who has just been elected the representative of Sāveh in parliament, though the narrator believes it was an ordination, not election. Again, the narrator's attention rests on the role of England in the domestic politics of Iran, only that this time he adds the name of the United States to his list of Iran's political intruders.

It is in this last party that the narrator tells us "a group of Iranian politicians" departed for the United States, their plane crashed midway to the US. When the guests, who were also politicians, hear news of the plane crash, midway to the New York airport, they try to conceal their happiness behind their fake tears, and one of them says: "Alas! They died, yearning to see the paradise" (Nafisi, 1953: 289). The next day, Kayhān Newspaper announces the death of these famous politicians "midway to paradise."

Concluding Remarks: Discursive Antagonism

Despite the prevalence of popular literature, the serial novel as a literary genre has never been considered a serious research subject in Iran. Many a diverse research paper has attended to the matter of history in Persian novel (Haag-Higuchi, 2000; Ghāsemi, 2015), but no significant research has been conducted on Persian serialized novels to date which particularly examines the literary examples of this subgenre in their sociopolitical contexts. One of the stages of the development and spread of this kind of literature was the years 1941 to 1953, which is politically one of the most important periods of Iranian contemporary history. Since politics was widely publicized at this period, the present article examined a serial novel which was written during that aforementioned period in order to reveal the convergence of fictional narrative with political discourses.

The authors have already mentioned that the narrator of the novel describes, interprets, and in a way articulates the events from the discursive position of an archaic nationalist. Nafisi's serialized novel can be considered a

critique of the ruling political discourse and their 'Westoxified' agents. The narrator's accounts of their moral and fiscal corruption can be analyzed from this perspective that, in totalitarian states, proximity to power leads to turpitude.

In the nationalist discourse of the narrator, heavy dependence of the royalists and ruling elite on foreign powers is condemned; and the most notable discursive clash in the novel is between the nationalist discourse of the narrator and the Westoxified discourse of the monarchy, which falls back on Britain and the United States. This antagonism is not however limited to the narrator's descriptions, since he passes judgments and interprets the events from his own discursive vista. He is principally opposed to Iranian version of modernity and one of its representations in the Constitutional movement. It is from this perspective that he scorns the socio-politically active women and equals their social participation with corruption. The narrator's negative attitude towards concepts such as Constitutionalism, democracy, freedom, women, politics and political parties have roots in his retrospective, archaic discourse, which stands in opposition

not only to the discourse modernity but also to other Marxist, Islamist and Royalist discourses.

We have so far explained the antagonism between four major sociopolitical discourses in Iran from 1941 to 1953, and have examined its reflection in a popular serial novel published during that period. It is time to say a few words about the discursive position of the press at that time. After going through the most important journals of the time, we identified in them a tendency towards the discourse of monarchy. As mentioned earlier, the Shāh's influence on the publications of this period and the relationship between the court and publishers are clear. Some of them also had the support of British and American envoys in Iran, such as Laurence Paul Elwell-Sutton (1912-1984). They supervised over the content of the press. Therefore, most of the periodicals and newspapers of the time propagated the ideology of the ruling elite, except for *Kāviyān Weekly* that published Saeed Nafisi's *Midway to Paradise*. Although in its first issues it published essays in favor of the Shāh, it remained nationalist through and through, promoted the cause of Mosaddegh, and disparaged the activities of the Tudeh Party.

And it should be mentioned that although the dependence of these publications and its owners on the Shāh and his court is obvious, this connection is simply not applicable to all the writers of the serial novels. Many of the intellectual writers of the period followed the

nationalist discourse led by Dr. Mossadegh who succeeded in nationalizing Iranian oil. Nationalist writers such as Nafisi empowered their discursive position by combining contemporary national issues with pre-Islamic glories in an archaic national discourse.

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تاریخ دریافت: ۱۳۹۹/۴/۱۷

تاریخ پذیرش: ۱۴۰۰/۴/۱۵

تاریخ انتشار: ۱۴۰۰/۷/۱

گفتمان ملیت‌گرا در رمان پاورقی در نیمه راه بهشت، نوشته سعید نفیسی

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چکیده: پس از اشغال ایران از سوی متفقین در شهریور ۱۳۲۰، رضا شاه از حکومت خلع شد و بیگانگان پسرش را به جای او بر تخت سلطنت نشاندند. از شهریور ۱۳۲۰ تا کودتای ۲۸ مرداد ۱۳۳۲ که با حمایت آمریکا انجام شد، دوره‌ای است که در آن تقریباً یک فضای باز سیاسی و فرهنگی، البته به طور نسبی، ایجاد شد و جراید و مطبوعات از آزادی عمل بیشتری نسبت به قبل برخوردار شدند. یک پیامد این تغییر مهم، گسترش انتشار رمان‌های پاورقی و سریالی با موضوعات سیاسی و اجتماعی بود. یک نمونه درخور توجه از این رمان‌های پاورقی در نیمه راه بهشت بود که سعید نفیسی آن را در چهل بخش در نشریه «کاویان» منتشر کرد، نشریه‌ای که در آن زمانه بسیار تأثیرگذار بود. از آنجا که رمان‌های پاورقی مخاطب‌محور هستند و تداوم انتشار آن‌ها به اقبال و پذیرش خوانندگان بستگی دارد، می‌توان با بررسی موشکافانه آن‌ها به گفتمان اجتماعی و سیاسی آن دوره خاص پی برد. مقاله حاضر برای این مهم از روش کیفی لاکلاو و موفه در تحلیل گفتمان بهره برده است تا بتواند گفتمان غالب سیاسی و اجتماعی آن دوره را بهتر واکاوی کند. در آن دوره (یعنی از شهریور ۱۳۲۰ تا ۲۸ مرداد ۱۳۳۲) چهار گفتمان اصلی وجود داشت: اسلامی، مارکسیستی، ملیت‌گرا، و سلطنت‌طلب. رمان در نیمه راه بهشت از سعید نفیسی نمودار گفتمان ملیت‌گراست، که راوی در رفتار و گفتار خویش آن را بازنمایی می‌کند. نفیسی در این رمان پاورقی گفتمان سیاسی حاکم و عوامل غرب‌زده‌اش را نقد می‌کند. این رمان همچنین اسطوره کمونیسم شوروی را در هم می‌شکند و می‌گوید بهشتی که کمونیسم تبلیغ‌اش را می‌کند توهمی فریبکارانه و سرابی‌کشنده است.

واژه‌های کلیدی: رمان پاورقی؛ گفتمان ملیت‌گرا؛ سعید نفیسی؛ در نیمه راه بهشت؛ تحلیل گفتمان.