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15 Aug. 2022

Dear Adjudication Committee Members:

Please accept my application for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Scholar Award for 2022–2023, as offered by the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute of Iranian Studies at the University of Toronto. As a tenure-track assistant professor of modern Persian literature and culture in the Department of Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia, I am currently about seventy-five percent through my first research monograph titled *Fictional Masculinities: Men and Manhood in Modern Iranian Literature, Culture, and Cinema* (full manuscript to be submitted to Syracuse University Press).

I am applying for this Award to secure a financial pledge towards 1) offsetting the publishing costs of *Fictional Masculinities* (the publisher has asked me to identify any confirmed resources for complementary funds. Once I submit the full manuscript to the publisher, they will provide me with particular amounts. At that point, and upon your request, I will be happy to submit tables and figures with clearly labelled amounts); and 2) designing a companion website for the book that archives images of early Iranian women's writing with Persian translation and brief contextualization paragraphs that connect them to the book discussions. I would also hope to use the Tavakoli Archive to complete parts of my monograph which require the use of the archival materials. Needless to say, any and all such contributions will be officially and publicly acknowledged in all resulting publications, in print and/or online.

I currently reside in Toronto, ON, and I will be on full course release from my own institution during Jan 1st–Aug 31st, 2023. In the event that my application is accepted, I would appreciate being appointed during the above six-month period. During this period, as per the Award's prerequisite, I will be able to be in residence at the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute at the University of Toronto.

I hold a PhD in Comparative Literature and an MA and a BA in English Literature. As a literary and cultural studies critic and historian, with a passion for modern Iranian and Persianate literatures and cultures (roughly from the mid-19th century onward) within my broader interests in comparative and world literature, I have a diverse range of teaching and research interests and am especially interested in rereading texts and periods through critical and literary theory, particularly focusing on the following topics in critical diversity and social justice studies: marginalization; gender and sexuality; and critical masculinities studies. Prior to joining UBC, I held a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship (2017–2018 [awarded for the duration of 2017–2019]) in the Department of NMC at the University of Toronto, where under Dr. Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi's advisorship I developed two research monograph projects and a co-edited volume: 1. *Fictional Masculinities: Men and Manhood in Modern Iranian Literature, Culture and Cinema*; 2. *Self-Deprecating Modernity: Humour, Affect, and Nationalism in Iran*; and 3. *Persian Literature as World Literature (PLWL)*. In line with my research interests, I currently serve on the Editorial and/or Advisory Boards of four peer-reviewed journals, including *Iran Namag* (U of Toronto) and *The Journal of Men's Studies* (Sage).

Persian Literature as World Literature was published by Bloomsbury in Sept. 2021. The full manuscript of *Fictional Masculinities* is about 4-6 months of full-time work away from completion, and expected by Syracuse UP for publication in their "Contemporary Issues in the Middle East" series. Finally, my core argument for the ongoing monograph *Self-Deprecating Modernity* recently appeared as an article in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*

(2021). These projects mainly evolved from several other articles and book chapters on Persian literature; Iranian cinema; and the Iranian folk and popular culture. Of these, many have appeared in peer-reviewed journals, including in *Asian Cinema*; *The British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*; *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*; *Iran Nameh: A Quarterly of Iranian Studies*; *de genre: Journal of Literary, Postcolonial, and Gender Studies*; and *Social Semiotics*. Showcasing my diverse research interests, my book reviews are also published/forthcoming in varied journals, including *The American Historical Review*; *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*; *Storytelling, Self, Society*; *FLAR: Forum for Inter-American Research*; *The European Journal of Humour Research*; *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*; *Iranian Studies*; *Journal of Men's Studies*; and *Cultural Sociology*. I feel humbled and heartened that, as evidenced by Google Scholar Citations, my work is also garnering some international and multidisciplinary scholarly attention.

The *Fictional Masculinities* monograph project (enclosed please find also a “chapters summary”) presents contextualized discussions and close readings of select autobiographical, fictional, cinematic, folklore, and popular culture texts and narratives from modern Iran, since the late Qajar era (1789–1925). I explore these texts to identify some major defining elements of modern “Iranian hegemonic masculinity,” particularly focusing on the multifaceted notion of *gheirat* (“masculinist zeal”) both as a “male privilege” and a “trap.” In doing so, I stress the harms inflicted on male subjects through aspiring to, and becoming complicit with, the hegemonic masculinity. I will also highlight *marginalized* and *subordinated* masculinities, as enacted by, for instance, the *disabled* and the *queer* subjects, as modes of gender performativity that can promise of possibilities for redress. Ending on a hopeful note, the book closes by discussing several Iranian cinematic and literary portrayals, over the past decade, of promising “positive” and “mindful” masculinities. Previously published versions of the chapters in this monograph project explored the interplay of gender and bodily non-normativity; infertility and masculinity; and gender relations within the heterosexual marriage, respectively in the works of Sadeq Hedayat (1903–1951); Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923–1969); and Asghar Farhadi (b. 1972). While still developing this monograph in 2018, I co-edited the first collection of articles as a special issue on “Iranian Masculinities” in *Iran Namag*.

The *Fictional Masculinities* manuscript is currently about seventy-five percent completed. Should my application be accepted for the Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Scholar Award for 2022–2023, I propose to finish the full manuscript by Aug. 31st, 2023. It would indeed be a pleasure and privilege to receive this Award to support the dissemination of my research, through the book and its companion website, as well as the advancement of my tenure-track career.

Enclosed please find my curriculum vitae and a chapters summary for *Fictional Masculinities*. My esteemed colleagues Dr. Manijeh Mannani, Dr. Niki Akhavan, and Dr. Hessam Dehghani have kindly agreed to send along their letters of recommendation in support of this application. I would be glad to forward any other materials you may require.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

M. Abedinifard

Mostafa Abedinifard, PhD ([he, him, his](#))

Assistant Professor of Modern Persian Literature and Culture | Asian Studies, UBC

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