

**Marjan Mohammadi**

**The Crisis of Sovereignty and the Return of Melancholy  
in Post-WWII American and Persian Fiction**

This paper investigates the relationship between melancholy and the development of American and Iranian literary discourses as responses to the crisis of postwar sovereignty. While situating itself against the complicated backdrop of US/Iran relations since the Second World War, it explores the impact of religion on the formation of political sovereignty and on representations of the self in Post-WWII Persian and American fiction. Working at the intersection of political theory, psychoanalysis, and literature, it begins with the “Tehran Conference” in 1943. The Conference, which took place at the Soviet Union embassy behind closed doors, was the first Allied meeting with Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin in attendance. However, the new Iranian sovereign, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, appointed after the Allied invasion and occupation of Iran (1941-1946), remained unaware and excluded from it. What took place in this room during the meeting was crucial not only for the trajectory of the postwar world but also for its setting, Iran, located at the frontier of empires and one of the major oil-producing states. The interdisciplinary approach of this paper offers an alternative perspective on this scene from the Second World War history. In juxtaposing these south-north narrative worlds, this paper makes lines of connection and comparison across the boundaries of American and Iranian cultures that have existed on two sides of a political divide ever since the 1979 Islamic Revolution and its aftermath. Although these literary discourses are different and the products of two very different traditions, this paper shows how they are involved in an inverse yet complementary relationship. It identifies a dialectical power relationship between the two forms of political sovereignty that shape these aesthetic works across this divide.

**Bio:**

Marjan Mohammadi is Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature in the Program of Cultures, Civilizations, and Ideas at Bilkent University in Turkey. She received her PhD through a dual doctoral program between Northwestern University and Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3 in 2020. Her teaching and research focus on Global South, Middle Eastern literature and culture, Comparative Modernisms, psychoanalysis, sovereignty and colonialism, peripheries of empire, and World Literature in translation. She is currently working on her book manuscript, *Mourning Histories: Postwar Persian and American Narratives of Redemption*, which situates itself against the complicated backdrop of US-Iran relations since WWII. Her project investigates the relationship between melancholy and the development of American and Iranian literary discourses as responses to the crisis of post-WWII sovereignty.