



English
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

August 10, 2022

Letter of Reference for Mahdiah Vali-Zadeh

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing in support of Mahdiah Vali-Zadeh's application for an Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Dissertation Completion Fellowship for 2022-23.

A comparatist by training (my PhD is in Comparative Literature) with expertise in British Romanticism and the literatures, cultures, and religions of the early British Empire in India, I was excited to be invited to serve on Ms. Vali-Zadeh's supervisory committee in January 2020. Her original dissertation proposal focused on Rumi, Coleridge, and the sublime, but following extensive exchanges with her committee members, she settled on a different approach: after a treatment of what she sees as a unique form of active subjectivity in Rumi's first-person lyric personae, she would turn to the role played by Rumi in particular and Sufism in general within British Romantic orientalist poetry and scholarship; the dissertation would conclude by addressing the afterlife of the British Romantic reception of Persian mysticism in the nationalist writings of late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Iranian thinkers.

To date, Mahdiah has submitted two substantial chapters, totaling 104 pp. She received extensive feedback on the first chapter, and her subsequent revision was largely successful, although some work remains to be done. I recently received a revised draft of the second chapter, which I very much look forward to reading in advance of an upcoming committee meeting. I have been very impressed by the manner in which Mahdiah has engaged with her committee's suggestions. I was quite involved in the process of helping her reshape her initial ideas into a viable plan, and as a Romanticist, I expect to work closely with her as she drafts and revises her third chapter.

A Dissertation Completion Fellowship for 2022-23 would be invaluable to Mahdiah! With its support, I am confident that she would be able to write her third chapter and conclusion before revising the whole in the coming year.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at daniel.white@utoronto.ca.

Sincerely,

Daniel E. White

Professor and Director of Graduate Studies

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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