

## Acknowledgements

The transregional expanse and cultural reach of the Persianate world may not be what it once was, but networks of camaraderie, scholarship and exchange have remained available to a Persianist exploring its historical features, whether at Berkeley or inside the Beltway, across libraries and archives, during springtime in Washington, DC or winter in Prague. The route from Isfahan to Delhi – or any other of the myriad routes frequently traversed by Persian poets and littérateurs of a bygone era – it was not, but one of discovery, wandering, enrichment and distraction nonetheless.

At the University of California, Berkeley, I was fortunate to have a series of mentors and friends who inspired me to pursue this project from its earliest days and helped shape its completion: Wali Ahmadi, whose ways of problematising the categories of literary history and rethinking the boundaries of Persian literary belonging drew me to Berkeley in the first place; Hamid Algar, who taught me that one's scholarly sensibilities are defined as much by the accumulation of knowledge as by the ability and willingness to effectively share it; and Munis Faruqui, who reminded me that addressing complex historiographical questions is only worthwhile if one can do so in a practical and clear manner.

During the course of completing this project, I benefited from several sources of institutional support. My year as a Social Science Research Council Transregional Fellow, spent in residence at Roshan Institute for Persian Studies at the University of Maryland, provided me with the opportunity to connect and converse with like-minded colleagues studying the Persianate world. Many thanks to Ahmet Karamustafa, Fatemeh Keshavarz, Matt Miller and the participants of my workshop, 'Wide World of Persian: Connections and Contestations, 1500–Today', for the many wonderful conversations and

enriching insights. To Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, I am grateful for your mentorship during that year and all the guidance that has followed since.

The Library of Congress in Washington, DC, as will be clear from the opening pages of the Introduction, is about as dear to me as any place could be. I am grateful to the entire staff of the African and Middle East Division, led by the grace and guidance of Mary-Jane Deeb, who provided me with an unending amount of research assistance over the years. My thanks to Hirad Dinavari, who, in addition to supporting my research in every possible way, always welcomed me to the library like I was coming home. For a wonderful year at the Kluge Center as a Research Fellow, my thanks to Travis Hensley, Mary Lou Reker, Ted Widmer and my fellow cohort for providing such an enjoyable and active scholarly environment amid chaotic times.

New colleagues at the Oriental Institute of the Czech Academy Sciences welcomed me to Prague with open arms. Ondřej Beránek and Jan Zouplna helped make the transition across the Atlantic an easy one and remain great advocates of my research. Stefano Taglia, since the first days of my arrival, has offered indispensable advice and, just as importantly, ensured that I've grasped the finer points of Italian coffee-making. Táňa Dluhošová and Lenka Starkova went to great lengths to teach me about digital mapping and to help me visualise my research in new and exciting ways. For all your patience, especially when my data sets were a mess and I had no idea what I wanted to achieve, I am grateful.

A cast of colleagues and interlocutors have provided critical insights, commentary and encouragement at crucial moments over the years, without which this project would not have come to fruition. Aria Fani has been a valuable voice in pushing me to explore new directions in my work while keeping me moored to my truest beliefs. Samad Alavi, since the beginning, has been a constant presence to critique, advise and listen in the most understanding of ways. Mana Kia has served as a crucial interlocutor for many discussions about the Persianate world in ways of which I've lost count. Arthur Dudney has been my most adept guide through the wild world of South Asia literary culture, Persian or otherwise. Sunil Sharma always seems to be close at hand, ready to listen, enlighten and encourage. I have learned from a great many colleagues along the way, especially Faiz Ahmed, Sergio Alivernini, Hannah Archambault, Hunter Bandy, David Boyk, Dominic Brookshaw, Robert

Crews, Purnima Dhavan, Michael Hill, Sam Hodgkin, Domenico Ingenito, Nile Green, Walt Hakala, Daniel Majchrowicz, Alexander Jabbari, Houshang Jeirani, Prashant Keshavmurthy, Rajeev Kinra, Justine Landau, Ira Lapidus, Frank Lewis, Paul Losensky, Margaret Larkin, Afshin Marashi, Stefano Pellò, Jaleh Pirnazar, Nasrin Rahimieh, Simon Rettig, Giedrė Šabasevičiūtė, Elizabeth Saylor, Daniel Sheffield, Matthew Smith, Nathan Tabor, Kamran Talattof, Amin Tarzi, Mandy Terc, Ernie Tucker and Ahmed Zildzic.

Portions of this book have been presented in various conferences, colloquia and workshops. I would like to thank the many organisers, participants and audience members for inviting me to share my work and provide thoughtful feedback. Some portions of this book originally appeared elsewhere. An earlier version of Chapter 4 was originally published in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* under the title 'The Curious Case of Carnatic: The Last Nawab of Arcot (d. 1855) and Persian Literary Culture'. Certain portions of Chapter 2 first appeared in the *Journal of Persianate Studies* under the title 'The Local Lives of a Transregional Poet: 'Abd al-Qader Bidel and the Writing of Persianate Literary History'. My sincere thanks to Sage Publishing and Brill, respectively, for the permission to reprint here. Many thanks to the entire editorial team at Edinburgh University Press, especially Nicola Ramsey, Kirsty Woods, Rebecca Mackenzie, Michael Ayton and Eddie Clark, and to Stephanie Cronin as editor of the series *Edinburgh Historical Studies of Iran and the Persianate World*.

Friends and family, from the Midwest to the Southwest and beyond, have held me close and kept me honest. I will always be the better for it. I am grateful for the lightheartedness and encouragement provided by Polly Dement, Karen Feldman, Simon Galed, Julie Goshorn, Ciara Knudsen, Ken and Terra Kuhne, Jason Ladnier, Janet Lewis, Larry Malm, John Mayer, Ahsiya and Omar Mencin, Gary Milante, Nadia Motraghi, Yaser Nosrati, Dari and Jon Pogach, Debby Rager, Gobind and Ravneet Sethi, Todd Shaw and Frank Sweet. To my DC collective, Dan Mahanty, Josh Volz and Patrick Worman – your friendship is as unvarnished as it is unwavering. There is simply no place like Salon 2110. To my family, Elizabeth, Joe and Abby Cason, Brian Harris, Everett Harris, Jessica Rocher, Andrew Schwartz, Erin Schwartz and Kersti Yllo, I am indebted to your unyielding affection. Special thanks to my father-in-law David Potter, who has been both a fierce advocate

of the book and a fierce editor. You never shy away from a single piece of my writing, no matter how underdeveloped, and always find the best in it, and me. To my parents, my most formative teachers in all matters personal and professional, I am forever grateful for your undying support and timely guidance.

Without the unflinching love and enduring companionship of my wife, Holly, the completion of this work simply would not have been possible. I owe you my deepest thanks for your support in this endeavour and all else. Finally, to Sage and Ansel, you continue to exceed my expectations. May you always strive to exceed your own. I dedicate this work to you.

*Prague, Czech Republic*  
*August 2019*