Walter G. Andrews (1939-2020)

Submitted by Selim S. Kuru on June 1, 2020 - 8:40pm

Selim S. Kuru--

Walter G. Andrews, Research Professor Emeritus of Turkish and Ottoman Studies, died on May 31, 2020 at the age of 81. He was one of the founding faculty members of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization (NELC) at the University of Washington, an original and engaging scholar, translator of Ottoman and Turkish poetry, innovative educator and mentor, who has been a pillar for not only our Department, but also a wide network of colleagues, students, and friends.

Walter received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in Near Eastern Studies (1970). At this time, he started his position as the first Turkish and Ottoman Studies professor of the UW's newly established NELC department, having been invited to this position by the founder of the department, Prof. Farhat Ziadeh, on Professor Jere Bacharach's recommendation. He moved to Seattle with his wife Melinda and their two daughters, Pam (Sheffield) and Lisa (Stillwell) to become a significant member of the Seattle community.

With his first two monographs, *An Introduction to Ottoman Poetry* (1976) and *Poetry’s Voice, Society’s Song: Ottoman Lyric Poetry* (1985), and many articles in major journals, Walter reintroduced Ottoman Turkish poetry into the larger fields of literature and history. These works were the first major English language commentaries on Ottoman literary tradition published in more than 60 years.

His collaborations with Prof. Mehmet Kalpakli (Bilkent University, Turkey) culminated in an original anthology, *Ottoman Lyric Poetry: An Anthology* (with Najaat Black, 1995, 2006) and a major investigation on literary discourses and their role in gender system and sex, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (2005). Drawing on major philological work in Ottoman Studies, Walter expanded the horizons of several generations of students in Ottoman Studies by engaging with theoretical approaches to literature. He took part in a series of conferences on emotions, and his most recent article involved neuroscientific approaches to literature. His inquisitive mind didn't recognize any boundaries for his object, Ottoman Turkish Literature, in which he discovered many hidden treasures and promises for future work.

From the late 1980s onward, Walter contributed to the nascent field of Digital Humanities. As a matter of fact, I had written a letter to him volunteering to participate in an Ottoman Divans Project that he was running at the University of Washington and which was
announced in the American Research Institute in Turkey newsletter in 1993. This project later evolved into Ottoman Textual Archive Project (OTAP) in collaboration with Dr. Stacy Waters, which later evolved into Newbook Digital Texts with Dr. Sarah Ketchley and Dr. Mary Childs. Recently, Walter was working on the Svoboda Diaries Project with Dr. Annie T. Chen. In 2017, he launched Many Poems of Baki Project with a conference organized at the University of Washington in collaboration with many scholars in the field of Ottoman Studies, including Dr. Sarah Ketchley and Dr. Gulsah Taskin (Boğaziçi University, Turkey). Walter developed new digital methodologies for collaborative projects that involve faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, addressing issues of textual data production, sustainability, management and user experience. He supervised and trained more than 200 undergraduates through these DH projects.

Walter was a true educator. Apart from his work with undergraduates, he mentored many graduate students at the University of Washington and elsewhere. He supported many junior faculty members through collaborative work, such as Dr. Ozgen Felek (Yale University) and Dr. Ayse Dalyan (American University in Northern Cyprus). His mentorship was awarded a Middle Eastern Studies Association Mentoring Award in 2008, he received an Undergraduate Research Mentor Award at the University of Washington in 2018. He also received an Order of Merit of the Republic of Turkey in 2016, and a Long Time Service Award from the Turkish American Cultural Association (TACAWA) in the same year for his services in promotion of Turkish and Ottoman culture and literature.

Walter’s love for Turkey and Ottoman literary cultures was deep and all-encompassing, and his enthusiasm for his work was contagious. He was a meticulous researcher with high standards and a deep understanding, and an empathetic, dedicated and encouraging teacher. He is already sorely missed.

People Involved: Walter Andrews

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Related Fields: Literature, Near Eastern Studies, Ottoman Turkish, Poetry and Poetics

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Department of Near Eastern Languages & Civilization
University of Washington
Denny Hall 220-D
Box 353120
Seattle, WA 98195-3120

Phone: (206) 543-6033
Fax: (206) 685-7936
neareast@uw.edu