
This book discusses love in the Ottoman Empire as both a literary subject and a cultural construct. The authors treat love as a human experience that brings people together but ground it in a specifically Ottoman context. They present the sixteenth century as unique for the degree to which young men were the focus of love and desire to the point that this became a cultural trait of Ottoman elite society. This characterization of the long sixteenth century intentionally challenges the more familiar political periodization of history. Love is also a springboard to discussing Ottoman culture of the early modern period in the context of Renaissance Europe. The authors' aim to invite scholars from a broad range of interests to look at the Ottomans from new perspectives is fulfilled. Both historians of the Ottoman Empire and early modern Europe (a prime target of the authors) should find the book original, refreshing, and shedding new light on this pre-modern Muslim culture.

Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpakli are experts in the field of Ottoman literature with numerous publications both individually and as co-authors. Andrews's translations of Ottoman and Turkish works into English have made this rich poetry and prose accessible to those who cannot read it in the original. In retirement, Andrews continues to work on his long-term project OTAP, the Ottoman Text Archive Project, which uses computer analysis to enrich our understanding of Ottoman texts. Kalpakli, his colleague in OTAP (and other projects) heads the History Department at Bilkent Üniversitesi, Ankara, where he also teaches in the Department of Turkish Literature.

The focus of *The Age of the Beloveds* is the boundaries of permissible love. On the basis of a wide range of literary and
legal sources, the authors ask whom it was legally and socially legitimate to love and desire and in what manner. These sources are the product of the Ottoman Empire’s political, social, and military elite’s culture. The authors examine how a cluster of emotions related to love was expressed in Ottoman literature and compare the emotions raised by young men with those raised by young women. Here we see the double task the authors set for themselves: literary analysis and the reconstruction of social and cultural phenomena.

I found chapter eight, “To Die For . . . ,” which deals with issues of love, sex, and power, especially interesting. Andrews and Kalpakli present soap opera/telenovela-like anecdotes of the (sometimes violent) quarrels between powerful and noble lovers and their young beloveds. (Such excerpts would provide lively readings for students in courses on early modern history. I certainly intend to use them in my courses on Ottoman society.) As the Ottoman elite wore weapons, the possibility of being wounded by daggers and swords ill-used by hot-blooded men was omnipresent.

The authors suggest that such relationships internalized issues of hierarchy and domination/submission and explore several variations on this theme including the possibility of reversal. Reversals occur when cruel beloveds take advantage of their power to attract and to bind noblemen and masters to them.

Love in many disguises is one layer of the book. A second layer is the attempt to make inferences about Ottoman society from its construction of love. The authors discuss Ottoman social structure, codes of behavior, cultural symbols, concepts of power and authority, and much more. Although Andrews and Kalpakli do not use the word themselves, their work is a study of Ottoman mentalités, that elusive French term that refers to mindsets, social attitudes, and the forms of their expression on the borders of history, psychology, and social science, at the juncture of the individual and the collective.

More broadly, Andrews and Kalpakli claim that the Ottoman focus on love in the sixteenth century was not an
Ottoman, Muslim, or Eastern phenomenon. Rather, the thrust of the book is that all late Renaissance Europe shared such a culture. Throughout, the authors discuss examples from England and Italy alongside their analysis of Ottoman sources. Their closing chapters try to explain how this similarity arose and what ended the age of the beloveds. They portray the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as a time when the breakdown of various social and economic structures brought an end to an era and the beginning of another, the modern, all the way from the British Isles to the Ottoman lands. Andrews and Kalpakli wish to divest the theme of "renaissance" from European particularism extending it to a more global cultural movement that included the Ottomans. Here the authors add to a growing literature which incorporates Ottoman history into other fields of history, here European. In this they have a double audience in mind: both scholars of Ottoman studies and their colleagues in related fields who recognize the importance of incorporating Ottoman history into the larger European narrative.

Andrews and Kalpakli weave a sophisticated story. They are very aware of what type of evidence their sources provide. As they explain in their methodological introduction, the sources are not easy to decipher. The subject is emotions, maybe the most private aspect of human life. Many of their references are to gossip and art, but art, like literature, is by definition a coded language of double meanings and innuendo. Furthermore, the Turkish language is androgynous and does not reveal gender. Hence the lover and his/her beloved can hide their true identities and be free from social and legal rules and expectations. They play games with each other and with us. They evade our direct gaze and are hard to pinpoint historically. Andrews and Kalpakli do succeed in bringing to life real people and their loves and hates. This is the most important contribution the book makes.

The Age of the Beloveds is hardly the first study of love in a
Muslim society. They appeared in the early twentieth century when the first critical editions and translations of medieval Arabic manuscripts on love were published. Most previous studies, however, have used sources in Arabic and perceived Muslim culture as basically Arabic-speaking. They dealt with language and textual analysis rather than the social and cultural semiotics of love. Their focus was the meaning and etymology of love in philological, literary, or mystical contexts rather than the actual expression, representation, and meaning of love as embedded in human experiences. Andrews and Kalpakli move away from the theory of love to social and cultural realities. For them, Ottoman literature is a springboard to reconstructing everyday experiences. Their integration throughout the book of translations from Ottoman Turkish sources little known to non-specialists throughout the book is yet another contribution to the scholarly community allowing us to familiarize ourselves with the Ottomans as they portrayed themselves.1

End Note
1. As I was preparing this review, two (!) more books on love in Ottoman and Turkish settings have just come out: the first anthology of Turkish love poetry in English: Talat S. Halman, ed. and trans., Nightingales and Pleasure Gardens: Turkish Love Poems (Syracuse UP, 2003), and a translation of an eighteenth-century philosophical romance, Şeyh Galip, Beauty and Love [HüsniüAşk], translated by Victoria Rowe Holbrook (MLA, 2005).

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110