On a wet and windy morning in the West Midlands in September 1998, a young and hopeful scholar of Ottoman history made his way into the University of Birmingham’s Arts Building for the first time. Entering the lift, he pressed “4” and the lift shakily reached the top floor. He heard the sound of the doors open but could not understand: the doors facing him were still closed. He stood in the lift staring at the closed doors for a fair few seconds, before he finally realised that the lift doors on the fourth floor opened on the other side, behind him. He made his way to reception, which was (and still is) behind a window with a sliding glass, and asked Gaye Bye if he could see Rhoads Murphey. “Sure, he’s in room 426, just along the corridor—he’s expecting you” she replied. Approaching the room, he noticed Walt Whitman’s “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer” pinned to the notice board. He knocked, and at the sound of “hello” entered and met for the first time a man who would have a profound impact on his development as a scholar and a teacher in the next six years and beyond. Buried in piles of papers, books, maps, journals and student assignments, Rhoads Murphey, all snow-white head and blue eyes smiled and welcomed him to the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies at Birmingham, and into the wide and wonderful world of Ottoman studies. To this day, I still don’t know how Rhoads finds anything in his office, and some of his hand-written comments still require advanced palaeography skills to decipher. Sixteen years later, I still find myself in these corridors, meeting with Rhoads regularly to discuss things, his teaching, my research, and to seek his help with what to me looks like an indecipherable manuscript (and to him is a doddle). And yes, the same Walt Whitman poem is pinned to the board. Rhoads Murphey has been an anchor to me and to his other students. He is not only a point of reference but also a source of knowledge that in itself serves as a work of reference. “Rhoads would know” I often find myself thinking, before I pick up the phone, or take the three-minute walk to his office, whose door is always ajar. Rhoads has always been welcoming and most supportive of his students, and there were many times when I just knocked on his door to say hello, only to be there after 45 minutes, discussing rebellion, military developments in the sixteenth century, or nationalist historiography. After a career which brought him into contact with some of the greatest greats of Ottoman history such as Halil İnalcık, Victor Menage and Tibor Halasi-Kun, and took him from Chicago to New York and London via the Middle East and Turkey,
Rhoads arrived to Birmingham in 1992 to work at the Centre for Byzantine, Ottoman and Modern Greek Studies. He taught subjects on Ottoman, Turkish and Mediterranean history, and supervised postgraduate students who researched a wide variety of topics, some of which are reflected in this volume. At Birmingham Rhoads joined a group of scholars within what was—and still is—a unique platform for discussion, exchange and scholarship. The presence of Byzantinists, Ottomanists and Modern-ists who all studied the same geographical, economic and social space and often shared research interests, helped create a vibrant and fruitful ground for research. Rhoads found in Anthony Bryer, John Haldon and Ruth Macrides, among others, colleagues and friends in a fertile environment of mutual support.1 It was here where Rhoads’ seminal work on Ottoman Warfare (1999) was created, a piece of work which is rightly considered a reference point for Ottoman history scholars. Rhoads has published numerous articles, demonstrating deep scholarship and offering keystone-like rigour and analytical quality upon which others could rely. He studied Ottoman court culture and Ottoman historiography extensively. His monograph on Ottoman sovereignty (2008) offers a deep insight into court traditions and culture, as well as their evolution through the Ottoman times. His monograph on Ottoman Historians and Historiography (2009) demonstrates deep understanding of the Ottoman historian’s craft, the context in which he operated and the traditions which informed their work. Rhoads’ own work becomes once again a solid foundation upon which others build. In 2013 Rhoads was honoured by the Turkish Historical Society (Türk Tarih Kurumu) with an honorary membership as recognition of his contribution to the field.

Rhoads settled in Birmingham with his wife Margo, who is herself a highly accomplished medical doctor and a constant source of stability and support for Rhoads in his career. Their two children, Oliver and William, are a credit to their parents and are currently on their own career and life paths as emerging scholars and historians.

Rhoads’ trajectory from 1992 to his retirement in 2014 means that he has lived through radical change in UK higher education, change which has greatly affected the work of academics. The increasing corporatisation of universities, the introduction and increase in tuition fees, and the creation of administrative and management structures which have mimicked the corporate world are often at odds with the tradition Rhoads and his peers came from. Theirs was a world where thinking time, depth and quality of research, and the teaching of

1 Two people who offered Rhoads great support and friendship over the years, Gaye Bye and Sylvia Campbell, are included in the frontispiece image at Rhoads’ request as a gesture of gratitude.