REVIEW
OF THE DISSERTATION BY SEMRA AHMED
"INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUES IN THE PROSE OF CONTEMPORARY TURKISH WOMEN WRITERS"
by Assoc. Prof. Yordanka Bibina, PhD

The dissertation by Semra Ahmed, who I have had the pleasure to supervise, is based on the ambitious and complex task of tracing multicultural dialogism not only within Turkish literature as a whole, but more specifically, in the works of leading Turkish women writers. At the same time, the dissertation also encompasses the works of many others who have significantly contributed to the high standing of contemporary Turkish literature. To achieve this, the doctoral candidate has engaged with an extensive volume of material found in these literary works (i.e., primary sources), as well as a multitude of academic studies—monographs, articles, and dissertations—in several languages: Bulgarian, Turkish, Russian, and English. The comprehensive bibliography of over 40 primary literary sources, 160 Turkish academic references, and a similar number in other languages, along with numerous scholarly publications from the internet, convincingly demonstrates the thorough research efforts and the complex path that Semra Ahmed has taken to complete this comprehensive study.

Since the issues under investigation are not limited to literary criticism or purely literary analysis ,but extend to the sociocultural dynamics that have evolved rapidly over the past century in the Republic of Turkey, the cultural traditions and models, and their clashes or dialogues with modern phenomena, the dissertation also acquires a clearly interdisciplinary character. The research tasks addressed are highly complex and demand in-depth analysis of vast material, while also requiring careful selection of the most relevant sources in relation to the chosen topic. This topic is not only timely and appropriate for a dissertation but also exceptionally original, as such a study has not been undertaken before—neither in Bulgarian nor in international academic scholarship. As the doctoral candidate herself notes, the dissertation is a unique contribution that focuses on the works of the most prominent contemporary Turkish women writers—not in a general sense, but within a specific chronological and event-based framework. It traces cultural dialogism in Turkish society and Turkish prose in depth, through detailed analyses of the issues

presented in the selected authors' works, set in the context of the profound societal changes that have shaken modern Turkey.

The chronological-problematic approach chosen by the doctoral candidate allows for a detailed tracing of the evolution of complex sociocultural phenomena in Turkish society and their reflection in literature—from the foundational works of Halide Edib Adıvar, who focus on the long-standing East–West dichotomy dating back to the Tanzimat period, through the realism and social criticism of the writers from the so called "Village Institutes," to tensions arising from the experience of Turkish guest workers ("gurbet") in Western countries and the associated dilemmas of identity, as well as the new folkloric-mythological lens introduced by magical realist authors like Nazlı Eray and Latife Tekin.

Another particularly significant contribution of this dissertation is its introduction, for the first time in Bulgarian historiography, of the literary works of women writers educated in the "Village Institutes," such as Pakize Türkoğlu, Huriye Saraç, Naciye Makal, Nedime Köşgeroğlu, and Bahar Dadaloğlu. These authors reflect diverse cultural dialogues within Turkish society, shaped by rural underdevelopment, illiteracy, outdated moral dogmas concerning women, and many other social and cultural issues in modern Turkey.

Moreover, the dissertation presents for the first time the work of women writers from the opposite ideological pole—those with a conservative-religious orientation, such as Samiha Ayverdi. Semra Ahmed carefully examines the opposition between Halide Edib, who focused on East–West interaction, and Samiha Ayverdi, considered a representative of traditionalist and conservative thought, exploring the different dimensions of their apparent opposition in both literary and worldview terms. This area has not previously been at the center of scholarly attention but very effectively illustrates multicultural dialogues within Turkish literature.

Semra Ahmed has successfully fulfilled the main research goal she set for herself, along with the specific objectives related to it. There are numerous examples of this, including her analysis of the general question of whether the work of Turkish women writers can be

considered feminist. On this point, the doctoral candidate expresses a clear, well-argued, and firm position.

Also noteworthy is the exploration of the identity crisis of the Turk who feels "at home abroad and a stranger in their homeland"—a theme strongly present in the works of authors like Füruzan and Oya Baydar.

Semra Ahmed also addresses the persistent cultural divide between rural and urban settings, and between tradition and modernity, resulting from internal migration. This is illustrated through the works of Suat Derviş and Pınar Kür, who highlight the continuing inequality faced by Turkish women, trapped between the psychological constraints of traditional and modern mindsets—not only in rural peripheries but even in the heart of the metropolis, Istanbul. More broadly, the dissertation examines the intercultural dialogues present in Turkish society and reflected in the novels of Turkish women writers after 1950—dialogues shaped by ideological clashes, military coups, and their impact on the intelligentsia and society.

Semra Ahmed also carefully examines the introspection and search for identity characteristic of the protagonists and themes in women's writing after 1980. This and many other key aspects are analyzed in detail, as evidenced by the rich bibliography, which reflects her deep familiarity with the research field on which the dissertation is based. The analysis is supported by numerous textual examples, often translated by the doctoral candidate herself, who is also recognized as one of the leading Bulgarian translators of Turkish literature, with more than ten published translations.

A notable contribution of the dissertation is the study of a fascinating current in contemporary Turkish literature—magical realism—especially as developed in the works of women writers. On the one hand, Semra Ahmed examines it in the context of the folklore–literature dialogue, or the folkloric-mythological foundation in the work of Nazlı Eray and Latife Tekin; on the other hand, she traces its development, connections, and interactions with global authors representing the magical realist tradition.

Last but not least, I would like to highlight her ability to structure the dissertation clearly and persuasively, which effectively presents the complex issues related to cultural dialogism in Turkish literature and the diverse voices of contemporary Turkish women writers over decades of continuous literary development. This focused structure avoids the typical "scatter" of first academic works, where too many side issues are often explored. The rich content remains tightly centered on the main topics of analysis, leading to serious, precise, well-considered, and well-argued conclusions. These conclusions are reached independently by the doctoral candidate and, therefore, are not only original but also reflect a deep analytical and intellectual engagement with the topic.

The context of achievements and the contributions outlined by the author are fully aligned with the content of the dissertation and objectively reflect what has been accomplished. The candidate has presented 8 publications on the subject and has participated in 8 national and international conferences, further illuminating specific aspects of the dissertation research.

...The candidate has particpated in 8 national and international conferences at which she presented 8 publications, further...

I would add that with her dissertation, Semra Ahmed joins the small group of experts in Turkey-related literary studies in Bulgaria, following names such as Riza Mollov, Ibrahim Tatarlı, and myself. Although Turkish literature is taught at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and Shumen University "Konstantin Preslavski," there is a lack of published studies—especially from cultural-historical and cultural studies perspectives. Therefore, the doctoral candidate's work stands out as a rare and valuable contribution of exceptional quality. I hope it will be published in the near future as an academic monograph.

In conclusion, I firmly believe that the qualities of Semra Ahmed's dissertation clearly demonstrate that she possesses in-depth theoretical knowledge not only in Turkish literature and culture but also in related fields such as literary theory and the history of Turkish literature. Her capacity for independent academic research is beyond question, as shown in the dissertation text itself and her numerous scholarly publications and conference presentations. The abstract accurately reflects the content, structure, conclusions, and contributions of the dissertation.

Given the positive evaluation of the dissertation *"Intercultural Dialogues in the Prose of Contemporary Turkish Women Writers"* and the candidate's academic contributions, I recommend that the esteemed committee award Semra Ahmed the educational and scientific degree of **DOCTOR**.

ASSCO. PROF.

DR. YORDANKA BIBINA:

7/8/2025