


the centers of literary production, with the communist focus on oral low Persianate forms such as folktales, ballads, lullabies, and devotional poetry sung in marketplaces and tea-houses. However, he meticulously deconstructs these binaries through extensive examples, detailed analysis, and strikingly close readings, such as when in Chapter 2 he elucidates the tensions in the Persianate canon-making projects of the Stalinist period. On one hand, great classical poets were excluded from the Persianate canon, and attention was paid to folkloristics and oral literature; on the other hand, the classics (like Firdawsi, Nizami, and Nava'i) were celebrated in Soviet-led international jubilees. Whereas the first strategy was adopted by Soviet proletarian critics to distinguish themselves from Western classical-oriented proponents of world literature, the latter was placed in the service of the Stalinist cult of personality and aimed at consolidating the role of the poet in giving voice to a folk-oriented authoritarian politics.

By the same token, in Chapter 4, which is dedicated to the translational dynamics of communist Persianate world literature mainly during the Khrushchev thaw and after, Hodgkin provides fascinating examples of Russians translating writers of Eastern internationalism, in which the translation process was conceptualized through metaphors of love, friendship, and intimacy, rather than the more commonly used metaphors of invasion and conquest in translation modeling. The book opens new vistas on the ideological implications of the domesticating, foreignizing, and non-translation strategies adopted by Russian translators while providing examples of the occasional violation of this friendship by their overdomesticating approaches to the “minor” poets and writers whom they translated. The author’s analysis of the Eastern internationalist translation methodologies will undoubtedly be widely cited in scholarship on world literature and translation studies. Hodgkin further complicates the antinomy between Western Orientalist and Eastern internationalist projects by elaborating on instances of complicity between the two despite conflicting political interests. *Persianate Verse* addresses a long-standing need in world literature studies for alternative models of “worlding” literature and is a timely reminder of the enduring power of poetry to bridge divides and create a sense of shared humanity across borders and ideologies.

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Writing in Red: Literature and Revolution across Turkey and the Soviet Union

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Nergis Ertürk’s *Writing in Red: Literature and Revolution across Turkey and the Soviet Union* is a compelling exploration of Turkish Marxist-communist literary production and its transnational entanglements with Soviet literary networks. The book is divided into two main parts, “Genres of Entangled Revolutions” and “Marxian Form in the Periphery: Modernist Socialist Realisms.” Within this structure, it delves into the lives and selected works of both lesser-



known and prominent Turkish writers, highlighting their interactions with Marxist-Soviet literary culture. This approach offers a fresh and challenging perspective on the transnational dimensions of socialist realism, Marxist literature, and even the complexities of global modernism.

Throughout the book, Ertürk convincingly argues her major thesis: studying Turkish communist translation and exchange deepens our understanding of the Moscow-centered transnational literary space. *Writing in Red* identifies and categorizes three key periods (the 1930s–1940s, 1950s, and 1960s) of heightened communist literary activity in Turkey, providing a solid framework for its thesis. The detailed exploration of the late 1920s and early 1930s, focusing on figures like Nizamettin Nazif, Nazim Hikmet, and Vala Nureddin, highlights the significant literary production related to both the Anatolian revolution and the October Revolution in Russia. Similarly, the analysis of Suat Derviş, Abidin Dino, and other Turkish Communist Party (TKP) colleagues in the late 1930s and 1940s, and the post-World War II era, underscores the enduring impact of these ideological and literary exchanges. Each chapter also addresses the 1960s as an endpoint, showcasing these writers as participants in Soviet, Turkish, and Afro-Asian literary alliances of the Cold War era.

The originality of *Writing in Red* lies in its examination of often-overlooked figures like Nizamettin Nazif and Abidin Dino, the newly canonized Suat Derviş in Turkey's literary field, and the globally recognized Nazim Hikmet, all within the context of “entangled revolutions.” Ertürk highlights their varying roles and positions in transnational literary exchanges and their production of so-called Marxist aesthetics in their unique contexts. By employing a theoretical framework that critically blends Marxist-Leninist literary theory with postcolonial perspectives and concepts, Ertürk effectively illustrates the complex dynamics of literary production and exchange within what she terms the Soviet republic of letters, a concept commonly used in Slavic studies. The book proposes a “comparative methodology that accounts for the ‘dual birth’ of the universal and the particular in the languages of West Asia” (p. 2). With its meticulous research, extensive archival work in both Turkish and Russian, and rich use of secondary sources, this innovative approach sheds light on the contributions of Turkish writers to the broader Soviet literary field, showcasing a wide variety of genres, from comic and erotic novels to theater, creative deviations from the proletarian novel, and various idiosyncratic cases. *Writing in Red* in this way makes a significant contribution to comparative literature, Marxist studies, and Turkish (literary) history.

However, despite its many strengths, the book has some shortcomings. The excessive focus on Soviet literary culture in the book and the argumentation in this direction sometimes lead to overly broad generalizations and, to some extent, reveal an arbitrary selection of works. For instance, Ertürk argues that Nizamettin Nazif's neglected *Kara Davud* (1927–30) is “the earliest Marxist-Leninist literary representation of the Anatolian Revolution as overthrowing an ‘Asiatic despot’” (p. 42). This claim raises questions about other significant figures like Sabahattin Ali, a communist writer murdered by the state in 1948 due to his ideological stance, and his novel *Kuyucaklı Yusuf* or his earlier works. Similarly, in Chapter 3, Ertürk contends that Derviş's novel *Phosphorescent Cevriye* (Fosforlu Cevriye, 1948) “can be read as an innovative modernist feminist rewriting of the socialist-realist ‘master plot’” and a great “contribution to Marxist feminism in its imagination of a new communist ethics of the act” (p. 23). Ertürk also places considerable emphasis on Dino's plays *Baldy* (Kel) and *The Inheritors* (Verese), which draw on his set design work at Lenfilm (a prominent film studio located in Saint Petersburg) in the Soviet Union between 1942 and 1945. This emphasis, however, overlooks the sociopolitical and cultural context of Turkey, such as the Village Institutions (*Köy Enstitüleri*) and People's Houses (*Halkevleri*), which influenced, and were influenced by, literature and theater for the sake of the nation's education. The book concludes with an analysis of Nazim Hikmet's contribution to socialist-realist

aesthetics and Marxian form, examining his masterpiece *Human Landscapes from My Country* (Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları, 1966) and his autobiographical novel, *Life's Good, Brother* (Yaşamak Güzel Şey Be Kardeşim! 1964) as generative texts in Marxist aesthetics.

At times, *Writing in Red* overextends the connections between the Turkish authors and Soviet literary culture. The discourse of anti-imperialism associated with the Turkish War of Independence in the 1920s, later nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s, and even the national(ist) left in the 1960s, although not strictly Leninist, is prevalent in other literary works and Turkey's cultural-intellectual field. Categorizing the works of Nizamettin Nazim and Nazim Hikmet as exemplifying Leninist anti-imperialism may not be incorrect, but it appears overly simplistic and one-sided. Although these writers were undoubtedly influenced by Soviet ideology and Marxist discourse, their works also reflect unique Turkish contexts and personal motivations, which are not fully captured by this broad categorization. Therefore, it is essential to examine these writers' works more specifically to discuss and argue to what extent and how they are genuinely Leninist anti-imperialist in content, discourse, or form.

Many concepts addressed in the book, such as socialist realism, Marxist aesthetics, Leninist anti-imperialism, and Marxist form, would benefit from a more precise delineation of their nuances in the Turkish context, involving the reception of these concepts and understandings. The phrases “entangled revolutions,” “Literary International,” and “the Soviet republic of letters” are commonly employed to indicate that the mediators of the common literary culture between Turkey and Russia were not solely institutions and official state actors; these terms rather encapsulate “a liminal literary space formed by writers” and their responses to “the diverse aesthetic and political demands of institutions,” straddling the Turkish and Soviet border, including the TKP, the Comintern, domestic and international literary institutions in the Soviet Union, and the Turkish government (p. 31). On the other hand, the division between social realism and so-called modernist social realism is not completely clear or persuasive. The argument, as in Derviş's case, is based on the idea that her novel “recognizes and respects the historical categories by which communist authors of the period crafted their work” (p. 140). This raises yet another question: what specific literary experimentation qualifies the novel as modernist in this context and differentiates Derviş from other female authors? This identification, in my view, is not only controversial, but biased, and based on circular reasoning.

My primary concern centers on the criteria used to select authors and their works for their inclusion or exclusion in the book. Specifically, what criteria justified the inclusion of authors identifying as Marxist-communist and/or pro-Soviet, while excluding others who also fall within these categories? Although the selected writers might have been in the Soviet Union and aware of, and even embraced, Marxist-Soviet literary culture through translation or reading in Russian, there remains a bold question—requiring a clear explanation—whether, and if so how, they influenced Soviet-Marxist literature. Moreover, these writers did not write in Russian; only a few of their works, except for Nazim Hikmet's books, were translated into Russian. Is their transnational literary network based on unidirectional influence and creative rewritings of these influences, such as modernist social realism? Furthermore, assuming that these writers intended to be at the center of the Soviet republic of letters overlooks the changing nature of their ideologies and literary expressions over time.

Although I acknowledge the limitations of word count and book length, *Writing in Red* could have been more inclusive. The exclusion of significant figures—such as Fahri Erdinç, a prominent editor and novelist in the development of Turkish-Marxist-Soviet literature in Cold War Bulgaria; Kemal Tahir, Nazim Hikmet's protégé in prison who became an influential Marxist author; or notable authors and poets like Sabahattin Ali, Atilla İlhan, and even

Ataol Behramoğlu—raises questions about the criteria for selection. Their inclusion, even indirectly, in the chapter discussions would have enriched the book's scope, cases, and arguments, providing a more comprehensive view of the Turkish-Soviet literary landscape. This selective focus sometimes undermines the book's objective balance, as it overlooks other influential voices in Turkish Marxist-communist literature, potentially highlighting certain authors and their works by giving them more credit with new labels.

Despite these questions, *Writing in Red* is generally coherent and clear, with a well-structured division into two parts that focus mainly on three different historical periods. Each chapter logically progresses, guiding the reader through the complex history of Turkish-Soviet literary interactions. In this respect, the book remarkably describes and argues that the writings of Abidin Dino, Suat Derviş, and Nazim Hikmet are another origin of Marxist aesthetics, not late supplements. A major strength of the book is Ertürk's thorough and well-documented scholarship, drawing on a wide range of archival materials in both Turkish and Russian. The comprehensive examination of the works and lives of Turkish communist writers like Hikmet, Derviş, and Dino within this context further strengthens the assertions. Indeed, Ertürk makes excellent use of archival materials and literary works to build a compelling framework and robust arguments.

Writing in Red thus makes a significant and original scholarly contribution to debates in comparative literature, world literature, and Marxist studies. By challenging traditional Eurocentric perspectives on peripheral realism, Lukács-based socialist realism, and (translational) modernist studies, the book highlights the role of Turkish literature in the broader context of socialist and peripheral realism as a well-examined Eurasian and non-Russian case of the Soviet republic of letters. The book's emphasis on transnational literary exchanges, particularly the Soviet influence on Turkish writers and how they uniquely articulate this influence in their works, offers a fresh perspective. However, the sometimes-overreaching connections to Soviet literary culture, although aiming to underscore the particular originalities of these works, can detract from the unique contributions of these authors in the Turkish or transnational context, independent of association with Marxist or Soviet-communist literature and networks. Nevertheless, *Writing in Red's* detailed analysis and extensive use of primary sources make it a valuable resource, particularly for scholars and students of comparative literature, Marxist studies, world literature, and Turkish literature. Additionally, the inclusion of visuals, such as documents and maps, enhances the reader's understanding of the historical and geographical context.

Another striking and ambitious feature of the book is its establishment of the importance of modern Turkish literature to area studies scholarship. The book opens new directions in Turkish, Slavic, and comparative literary studies, utilizing various Turkish and Russian archival materials. This effort to expand the literary geography of revolution by looking beyond the Soviet Union and positioning such Turkish writers and their literary works within the Soviet republic of letters challenges the theories of world literature, which are mainly based on Anglo-American perspectives. Ertürk's proposal is a pioneering and valuable guide for future studies, especially for those that should pay more attention to Communist transnational literary networks in the Cold War Balkans, Caucasia, and beyond. Overall, *Writing in Red* remarkably broadens the scope of comparative literary studies by integrating Turkish (Marxist-communist) literature into the broader transnational socialist literary networks and opens a new path for scrutinizing the Eurasian and non-Russian part of the Soviet republic of letters as well as the transnational networks and exchanges of Turkish authors beyond Europe.