

R E V I E W

of doctoral (PhD) dissertation on

Dimensions of Loneliness in the Dramas of Jaime Salazar Sampaio

**for awarding a doctoral degree to Soni Agop Bohosyan,
doctoral student at the Department of Portuguese and Lusophone Studies**

**Supervisor: Professor Dr. Yana Elenkova Andreeva,
Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”**

Reviewer: Professor D. Litt. Dina Mantcheva

Higher Education Area 2.Humanities

Professional Field 2.1. Philology

Scientific specialty: Literature of the peoples of Europe, America, Africa,
Asia, and Australia

(Portuguese literature of the 20th -21st century)

Info about the doctoral candidate:

Soni Bohosyan received a Bachelor’s degree in Portuguese philology with excellent grades in 2018 and a Master’s degree from the Department of Bulgarian Studies in 2019, also with high scores. Her professional qualification is translator and editor in and from Portuguese and French.

As an undergraduate student, (February-July 2017), she spent 6-months at the Department of Portuguese Philology at the University of Porto, Portugal, under the Erasmus + Program.

Since 2020, Soni Bohosyan has been a full-time doctoral (PhD) student in Contemporary Portuguese literature at the Department of Portuguese and Lusophone Studies in the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philologies of Sofia University. Her supervisor is Professor Dr. Yana Andreeva.

From February 2022 to June 2022, Bohosian worked as adjunct assistant professor in Portuguese language at the Department of African Studies in the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philologies of Sofia University. In 2022, the doctoral candidate won a competition for a full-time position of assistant professor in Portuguese language, literature and theatrical translation at the Department of Portugal and Lusophone Studies. She has held this position up to the present.

Foreign language proficiency: Portuguese, French, English.

Info about the doctoral (PhD) program:

Soni Bohosyan started her program as a full-time doctoral student in Portuguese literature at the Department of Portuguese and Lusophone studies in 2020 under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Yana Andreeva; in 2022, after taking up the position of full-time assistant professor at the above-mentioned department, Soni Bohosian continued her studies as a part-time doctoral student.

The doctoral dissertation was reviewed and approved for public defense at a meeting of the Department of Portuguese and Lusophone Studies at the Faculty of Modern and Classical Philologies of Sofia University held on 26 June 2025.

As per a Rectoral Decree No 183/09.07.2025 entered in the Registry of Sofia University on appointing members of scientific committees and in accordance with Article 4 of the Law on Development of the Academic Faculty in the Republic of Bulgaria, a committee was appointed to take charge of the public defense of Soni Bohosyan's doctoral dissertation.

All legal requirements and procedures relating to the doctoral program have been properly fulfilled. Soni Bohosyan has successfully passed all requisite exams and has earned the necessary number of credits from courses offered by the Doctoral School at the Faculty of Classical and Modern Philologies. She has submitted 6 papers relevant to the dissertation topic and published in collections of papers from one international and four national scientific conferences as well as in a peer reviewed university literary journal.

Bohosyan meets the national requirements defined in Article 2B of the Law on development of academic faculty. In addition, more points can be added to the points she has indicated in the Table of the Ministry of Education through her participation in two national projects.

All materials relating to the public defense have been uploaded on the website of Sofia University within the official deadline.

Relevance of Theme, Aims and Objectives

The doctoral dissertation under review entitled *Dimensions of Loneliness in the Dramas of Jaime Salazar Sampaio* represents a serious typological and comparative study of the theatrical works of one of the most prominent contemporary Portuguese writers. The theme of loneliness has been extensively explored by the author, yet it has not been thoroughly studied in criticism, even less so in all of his works which exceed 70 dramas. It is a commonplace that

loneliness and its literary and aesthetic rendition is a hallmark of the Theatre of the Absurd. Its poetics has left a characteristic imprint on Sampaio's innovative style. All this confirms the validity of the theme Bohosyan has chosen for her doctoral dissertation.

The selection of the corpus of the study bespeaks an original approach. Soni Bohosyan has picked 13 of Sampaio's best-known works created between 1968 and 2004. What unites them and integrates the corpus is the recurrence of the characters. Thus the selected works bring into relief the specific treatment and development of the theme of loneliness in the separate stages of the writer's evolution.

The author of the dissertation has studied an extensive bibliography of 131 titles and 5 data bases in French, English, Portuguese, and Bulgarian covering a wide range of areas: theory of literature, comparative study of literature, Modernist theatre, Theatre of the Absurd, contemporary Portuguese literature, and Sampaio's dramas. The variety of theoretical studies demonstrate Bohosyan's efforts to acquaint herself with both the broad aspects of literary theory, methodology and criticism focusing on the specific characteristics of Sampaio's dramaturgy. Re methodology, the structural approach dominates the study, even though interest in interdisciplinary points of view bridging certain branches of the humanities and literature is also present, including sociological criticism.

No traces of plagiarism have been detected.

General characteristics and assessment of the doctoral dissertation

The dissertation comprises 210 pages, including 12 pages of bibliography, and consists of introduction, four chapters, conclusion, and bibliography.

The study has a neat structure whose logic derives from the selected theme and problems of study.

The first theoretical chapter elucidates the two fundamental concepts of *theme* and *loneliness*, treated by various critics and scholars representing different methodological trends, e.g. Boris Tomashevsky, Northrop Frye, H.S.Jauss, Cl.Brémont, K.Yanakiev, T.Todorov etc.

The second chapter presents the reception of Sampaio's dramas offering a review of the major critical studies on them and substantiating the selection of the corpus. The third and fourth chapters are devoted to a detailed analysis of loneliness in Sampaio's dramatic works. The conclusion sums up the main conclusions supporting the main thesis of the dissertation. The structure of the chapters contribute to the clarity and overall organization of the study. Each of them ends with a summary of the results of the analysis.

Bohosyan discusses loneliness in a broad context – *psychological, philosophical and physical* – and from different vantage points paying attention to the interrelations and verbal communication of the characters as well as their notion of the passage of time and the picture of space.

S. Bohosyan connects the psychological plane of loneliness with the characters' interrupted connection with the others, expressed in the process of communication. This explains her attention to the functioning of the two main verbal structures – dialogue and monologue. The philosophical plane leads to the characters' perception of the passage of time, in relation to their human existence. And the physical plane stands out through the picture of the specific space they occupy.

The plays under study are divided into three basic groups with their respective sub-groups according to recurring verbal patterns and spatio-temporal pictures.

Thus, the author arranges the works in three separate classifications and analyses each work from three different points of view. This working framework makes it easier to compare the plays both within their groups and among themselves. The differences in the treatment of loneliness but also some recurring similarities are thus brought into relief, including their dynamics in the entire corpus. The various manifestations of loneliness suggest the existence of distinct models of behaviour peculiar to the individual characters.

The analyses of the texts are perceptive and relevant to with the main theme. Special attention is allotted to the various types of mechanisms which disrupt communication and dialogue, e.g. absence of a common referent in conversation; discrepancy between questions and answers; elliptical cues; intermingling of different dialogues etc. Worth mention in this context are the monologues which often represent dialogues with a fictitious listener or a favourite object recalling the split personality in the Theatre of the Absurd.

The different ways in which the characters imagine time are also very well presented. Bohosyan aptly associates loneliness with time showing that the latter at once brings the characters together and strengthens their isolation from each other. Time is complex and has two dimensions - scenic and dramatic. The characters perceive time in their peculiar manner determined by the sense of loneliness and the past often in contrast with the present. The visual and auditory aspects of time are also analysed. Similarly to the Theatre of the Absurd, here too time it is often presented by the image of a clock which has stopped or is out of order; the loud ticking of a clock on the wall but invisible for the characters etc. The theme of loneliness is further emphasized by showing the characters' home, public space or some unnamed location similar to a solitary island. The spaces inhabited by the characters which are a source of

loneliness have also metaphoric meanings. Space is furthermore seen as consisting of scenically structured subspaces.

Loneliness in Sampaio's dramas is emphasized through oppositions: individual and society; space in a deserted place and space in a big city; home and public space; the desire to escape from loneliness and the fear of losing it. To make the analysis complete, Bohosyan also includes a gallery of different types of solitary people.

Relying on a comprehensive and comparative analysis, the author is able to outline Sampaio's evolution – from the Theatre of the Absurd to the introduction of certain socio-economic aspects yet preserving the initial stylistic characteristics.

Worth special commendation is Bohosyan's approach to offer different interpretations of individual plays, motifs and characters. Thus, following the poetics of the Theatre of the Absurd, she ultimately arrives at its main characteristics – ambiguity and polysemy.

Merits and significance of the study

The doctoral dissertation under review is a serious and original typological study on the relatively unexplored theme of loneliness pervading the dramas of the contemporary Portuguese writer Jaime Salazar Sampaio.

Using a self-selected corpus of texts, Soni Bohosyan has studied various verbal and spatio-temporal manifestations of loneliness in Sampaio's works and their role in character building.

The doctoral candidate has traced the evolution of Sampaio's theatrical style as well as the inner unity of his dramatic works.

Bohosyan shows the relationship between Sampaio's dramas and the Theatre of the Absurd, which appeared in France in 1950s, yet pointing out the specific differences between them.

The compiled corpus could be used for further research on Sampaio's works or the contemporary Portuguese theatre.

The proposed classification of Sampaio's plays based on predominant verbal and spatio-temporal motifs could be of use to other scholars in the field.

The doctoral dissertation is a successful attempt to introduce the Bulgarian readers to the works of one of the most prominent Portuguese dramatists, still relatively unknown in our country.

Abstract and publications

The abstract contains 60 standard pages and adequately presents the doctoral dissertation. It is written in English and Bulgarian, as the law requires.

The scientific publications are devoted to the theme of the dissertation and demonstrate the author's ability to engage in research work.

Bohosyan is part of a team working on two scientific projects funded by the Scientific Research Fund at Sofia University. They are devoted to education and teaching Portuguese and Lusophone literatures and cultures. The projects bear directly on Bohosyan's teaching activities.

With Bohosyan, teaching and translation go hand in hand. She has translated a number of texts, including a collection of poems and short stories. She has won several literary competitions for students, among which stands out the special Student of the Year Award for 2018 and 2019.

Soni Bohosyan has an impressive record of activities aimed at popularizing literature and literary scholarship. She has authored essays, travelogues, interviews, memoirs, a short story and has served as moderator of various literary and artistic events.

Soni has demonstrated interest in the arts, theater, and photography and has worked as curator at the Portuguese Cultural Center "Camoish" also showing her own photos at exhibitions.

The brief overview of Soni Bohosyan's diverse activities attests to her qualities, abilities and versatile interests that favourably complement her teaching activities.

Conclusion

The originality of Bohosyan's doctoral dissertation, the comprehensive analyses, convincing conclusions, the ability of the author to subordinate specific observations to her research objectives as well as her overall research and teaching activities provide ample grounds for me recommend to the honourable scientific committee to award the academic and scientific degree of "Doctor" to assistant professor Soni Agop Bohosyan.

25 September 2025

Professor D.Litt. Dina Mantcheva



