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THE IMAGE OF MOTHER IN TURKISH POETRY AND ITS POETIC EVOLUTION

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Abstract. This research study comprehensively examines the artistic-philosophical interpretations and poetic evolution of the mother figure in 20th–21st century Turkish poetry. Works of prominent Turkish literary figures such as Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Nazim Hikmet, Cahit Külebi, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, and Ümit Yaşar Oğuzcan served as the primary objects of analysis. The study reveals the connection of the mother image with national and universal values, its intersection with the Anatolian mindset and the concept of Homeland, as well as forms of poetic expression across various literary movements.

Keywords: Turkish poetry, image of mother, poetic analysis, lyrical hero, Anatolian spirit, metaphor, national identity, elegy.

Introduction. Addressing the image of a mother in literature means delving into the deepest, unalterable, and most sacred layers of the human psyche. In the history of Turkish literature, particularly in pre-Islamic Orkhon-Yenisey inscriptions and the epic of “Dede Korkut”, the mother appears as a pillar of the family and tribe, a powerful figure deserving of deep respect. Having traversed a long path from classical Divan poetry to the modern era, this image acquired a new poetic content and social-psychological dimension in the 20th century. Political and social transformations in Turkish society, the War of Independence (Milli Mücadele), and literary shifts during the Republican period directly influenced the poetics of motherhood. The mother was no longer viewed merely as a biological or familial bond, but became a spiritual sanctuary, a symbol of the Homeland, and an emblem of national resilience. The multifaceted nature of the mother image created by Turkish poets can be categorized into several main analytical directions:

The image of the Anatolian and hardworking mother (Social-realistic direction). In the works of poets such as Cahit Külebi, Orhan Veli Kanık, and Cahit Zarifoğlu, the image of the mother is depicted realistically and simply, free from pompous attributes. In his poetry cycles such as “On the Roads of Sivas” and “Elegy”, Cahit Külebi authentically portrays the mother-figure hardened by the arduous life of Anatolia, raising children in mud huts. The mother in his poems is an artistic generalization of Anatolia’s strength, patience, and silent fortitude. She appears as a steadfast figure whose clothes carry the smell of earth and straw, yet whose love is boundless.

The Homeland, national identity, and the concept of Mother. In the works of Mehmet Akif Ersoy and Nazim Hikmet, great representatives of national poetics, the concepts of mother and Homeland merge into a single image. In Mehmet Akif’s “To the Martyrs of Gallipoli” and “Safahat”, the mother is the pillar of national spirit and faith, praying for her son going to war so that “no malicious enemy sets foot on our soil”. In Nazim Hikmet’s epic “Forces of the Nation” (Kuvayı Milliye), the image of the mother is approached from a socio-historical perspective. In the poet's “My Mother's First Sock” and other lyrical works, love for the mother blends with human sincerity, exile, and the pain of separation. Here, the mother represents the highest expression of the past, roots, and longing.

Spiritual sanctuary and existential agony (Lyrical-philosophical interpretation). Psychological and metaphysical approaches predominate in the poetry of Necip Fazıl Kısakürek and Ümit Yaşar Oğuzcan. In Necip Fazıl’s poem “My Dear Mother”, the lyrical hero, helpless before life's trials and psychological

distress, sees his mother's embrace as the sole refuge. For the poet, a mother's embrace and her prayer are a divine sanctuary beyond time and space. In Ümit Yaşar Oğuzcan's poetry, the mother is the spiritual savior of the lyrical hero drifting in a sea of suffering. In the cycle "Sea of Sorrows", the mother's presence is portrayed as the final bond connecting man to life.

Artistic expression devices and poetic characteristics. To enhance the impact of the mother image in Turkish poetry, the following poetic methods and devices play a key role: Metaphors and symbols: The mother figure is frequently conveyed through metaphors such as a "broad-shadowed plane tree", an "unextinguished hearth", a "shining light", and "sacred soil". Use of folklore: Turkish poets effectively utilized the poetics of traditional lullabies (ninni) and elegies (ağıt) to convey the inner world of the mother. The rhythmic structure is dominated by the sincerity and melodiousness of folk songs. Contrast and psychological parallelism: The contrast between the unfaithful, harsh nature of the world and the mother's selfless love intensifies the dramatic resonance of lyrical works.

Conclusion. In 20th–21st century Turkish poetry, the image of the mother evolved beyond being a mere object of lyrical experience into a multi-layered artistic concept reflecting the national and cultural values of the Turkish people. Through this image, Turkish poets expressed personal psychological anguish and longing on the one hand, and shaped the resilience of the Anatolian people, patriotism, and the eternal principles of the national spirit on the other. In modern Turkish poetics, the mother figure retains its exalted position as a symbol of human purity and spiritual perfection.

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