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Ilhami Emin - Life, Works, and Literary Personality

by Ozlem Kurt,

Divan Yayincilik, October 2023

Book Review by:
Mumin Ali

Ozlem Kurt's book, *Ilhami Emin - Life, Works, and Literary Personality*, comprehensively explores the author's life, works, and literary significance, shedding light on his place in Macedonian Turkish literature. The book serves as a valuable resource for those seeking to gain insight into Ilhami Emin, as well as the Turkish cultural and identity struggles in the Balkans. Ilhami Emin is a prominent figure in Turkish literature in North Macedonia. He is a writer, poet, and cultural figure who has played a crucial role in preserving the Turkish identity and language in the Balkans. He has made significant contributions to Macedonian literature through his works in both Turkish and Macedonian.

Born in 1931 in Radovich, North Macedonia, Ilhami Emin has created a bilingual literary world with his poems, plays, and novels written in both

Macedonian and Turkish. The book details his bilingual literary identity and reveals the dynamics behind the struggle to maintain the existence of the Turkish language and culture in Macedonia. Emin's life is presented in three main periods: the post-Ottoman period, the Yugoslav period, and the period after the independence of North Macedonia. This framework also provides the reader with the historical background to understand the author's cultural and literary identity. The book's first chapter discusses İlhami Emin's biography in detail. It covers his family roots, education, the historical background of his education, his interest in poetry, and the beginning of his writing career. The sections about the author's life also reflect the social changes experienced in Macedonia at the time. Emin's poems, which he started writing in Macedonia during the Yugoslav period in the 1940s, show his search for something meaningful. His deep love for the mosaic structure of Macedonia and his own culture is a cornerstone of his life philosophy, reflected in his poetry. In the chapter of the book, İlhami Emin's works are examined in detail. Emin's poems are classified structurally and thematically; these poems are shaped around individual and social themes. Individual feelings such as love, longing, loneliness, and search, as well as social themes such as belonging, migration, national identity, and freedom, are important. Folk elements, which are particularly prominent in Emin's works, provide a cross-section of the people's mentality and are discussed in detail. Especially in the works Emin wrote during the Yugoslavia period, the effects of the changes brought by the socialist regime on society left deep marks on his literary personality.

The last chapter of the book focuses on İlhami Emin's literary identity. Emin's contributions to Turkish and Macedonian literature show how he established a balance in a bilingual and bicultural world. This section emphasizes İlhami Emin's role as not only a writer but also as a protector and transmitter of the mosaic culture in Macedonia. The author's literary heritage serves as a cultural memory for the Macedonian Turks and acts as a bridge between the Turkish and Macedonian peoples.

In conclusion, this study titled *İlhami Emin - Life, Works, and Literary Personality* is not only a portrait of a literary figure, but also a guide to understanding the cultural resistance, identity search, and existence of communities in the Balkans.