

THE CONCEPT OF “MOTHERLAND” AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE
PATRIOTIC AND LYRIC WORKS OF SERGEI YESENIN, ALEXANDER
TVARDOVSKY, ALEXANDER BLOK, AND IN THE POETRY OF USMAN NOSIR
AND ERKIN VAKHIDOV

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Abstract. *This article is devoted to a comparative analysis of the concept of the “motherland” and the representation of national identity in twentieth-century Russian and Uzbek poetry. The focus is on the patriotic and lyrical traditions embodied in the works of Sergei Yesenin, Alexander Tvardovsky, Alexander Blok, as well as the Uzbek poets Usman Nosir and Erkin Vakhidov. The study examines poetic models of the motherland and the artistic means used to express love for native land, historical memory, and the cultural codes of the people.*

Particular attention is paid to lyrical subjectivity, images of nature, historical and philosophical subtexts, the role of traditional culture, and the evolution of patriotic lyricism during periods of historical upheaval. The article concludes that there is a profound spiritual affinity between the two national literary traditions, grounded in the idea of an enduring bond between the individual and the native land.

Keywords: *motherland, concept, national identity, patriotic lyricism, Yesenin, Tvardovsky, Blok, Usman Nosir, Erkin Vakhidov, comparative poetics, image of land, emotional-spiritual dimension, historical-philosophical code of the motherland, patriotic education.*

Introduction

The concept of the “motherland” is one of the fundamental categories of artistic consciousness and cultural identity among the peoples of the world. In twentieth-century Russian and Uzbek literature, the theme of the motherland becomes not only an aesthetic element but also a crucial philosophical and historical symbol. During periods of national transformation, wars, cultural reforms, and social upheavals, the image of the motherland shaped the deepest layers of spiritual experience and collective self-awareness.

In Russian poetry of this period, the concept is central to the works of Sergei Yesenin, Alexander Tvardovsky, and Alexander Blok. Their writings construct a comprehensive national image of Russian land, expressed through lyrical, patriotic, or mystical-symbolic modes.

In twentieth-century Uzbek literature, a comparable role is played by Usman Nosir and Erkin Vakhidov. Their poetry reflects national self-consciousness, love for the native land, the struggle for cultural identity, and the aspiration toward spiritual independence.

The aim of this article is to examine and compare how the concept of the motherland is represented in the poetic traditions of the two nations, to identify typological similarities and differences, and to determine the ways national identity is formed in lyric poetry. In twentieth-century Uzbek literature, a similar role is played by Usman Nosir and Erkin Vakhidov. Their творчество reflects national self-awareness, love for the native land, the struggle for cultural identity, and spiritual independence (Nosir, 1934).

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Yesenin: The Motherland as the Spiritual World of the Individual

The poetry of Sergei Yesenin is one of the most vivid examples of national lyricism in Russian art. For Yesenin, the motherland is прежде всего a natural and spiritual space inseparably connected with the poet's inner world:

“Krai ty moy zabroshennyy...” (Yesenin, 1922).

For Yesenin, the image of the Motherland is deeply intimate, emotionally charged, and associated with a profound sense of belonging to the land, the peasant world, and Russian nature.

In his texts, the motif of national identity appears not as a political or social phenomenon but as an organic feeling of unity with the native land, the world of childhood, and cultural tradition. In the poems “Goy ty, Rus’, moya rodnaya...,” “Letter to Mother,” and “I Do Not Regret, I Do Not Call, I Do Not Weep...,” the poet shapes the concept of the Motherland through natural imagery—birch groves, fields of grain, and vast blue expanses.

National identity is constructed through a sense of spiritual connection between the individual and the land, between ancestral origins and the cultural code of the people. Yesenin creates a model of the Motherland as a “living space,” filled with warmth, maternal care, and inner harmony. For him, the motherland is a field, a peasant hut, birch trees, a river, the silence of a village night. His patriotism is not political but existential—it is a feeling of organic belonging to the land, which the poet perceives as a living being.

National identity in his poetry is expressed through dialect vocabulary, folkloric rhythm, images of peasant Russia, and the motif of “returning home.” This “return” is not merely spatial but spiritual and ontological, forming in Yesenin a unique perception of the Motherland as the inner world of the individual. Poems such as “Goy ty, Rus’...,” “The Feather Grass Sleeps. The Dear Plain...,” and “The Hewn Sleighs Began to Sing...” demonstrate how the poet constructs a distinctive national model through details of rural life: the scent of haymaking, the creak of a cart, the play of light on the river. These small images strengthen the bond between the individual and ancestral soil.

Here, the Motherland is not a state or ideological construct, but a “place of the soul,” a space in which a person experiences their authenticity.

Tvardovsky: The Motherland as Moral Support and Military Duty

In the poetry of Alexander Tvardovsky, the image of the motherland is closely connected with wartime themes and the fate of the people. In the long poem Vasily Tyorkin, the motherland is that which the soldier defends:

“For what does the soldier fight?

For the motherland” (Tvardovsky, 1942).

For Tvardovsky, the Motherland is not an abstract concept but a concrete reality composed of people, land, homes, roads, and ancestral memory. It is embodied in the everyday details of frontline life: a soldier's porridge, the wet collar of a military overcoat, the battlefield, the voices of comrades. Through such details, the poet creates the image of a “people's Motherland,” as seen by an ordinary soldier.

The main feature of Tvardovsky's patriotic feeling is its democratic and popular character. His hero, Vasily Tyorkin, is “one of us,” a common soldier from the people.

He represents a collective image of the defender for whom the Motherland means, above all, the people standing beside him:

“A vast country, a native land —
It knows millions like Tyorkin.”

Here national identity is formed through the collective nature of patriotism: the Motherland is a shared destiny, a shared struggle, shared pain, and shared victory. This fundamentally distinguishes Tvardovsky from Yesenin. If for Yesenin the Motherland is primarily a spiritual space, for Tvardovsky it is a space of action, moral responsibility, and duty.

Tvardovsky constructs the image of a collective motherland in which ordinary people become heroes. The concept of the Motherland is expressed through soldierly duty, moral resilience, and the common suffering of the people.

Blok: The Mystical Motherland and the Fate of Russia

Alexander Blok creates a more complex image of the motherland — as a mystical entity.

In the poems *The Scythians* and *On the Field of Kulikovo*, Russia appears as a barbaric, sacred, and tragic force:

“O, my Rus! My wife! Through pain
Our long road is clear to us...” (Blok, 1912).

For Blok, the Motherland is not only land, nature, or people. It is history, the destiny of the nation, Russia’s mission, and a spiritual path of suffering and renewal. His Russia is eternal, mysterious, and irrational, uniting East and West, humility and rebellion, maternal tenderness and stern strength.

In the cycle *On the Field of Kulikovo*, Blok creates a metaphysical vision of national history: Rus’ is an organism that undergoes a series of trials yet inevitably revives. Natural images become signs of historical memory: fog symbolizes uncertainty of fate, wind heralds change, and the Don River represents spiritual heroism.

In *The Scythians*, Russia is conceived as a vast civilizational force capable of reshaping the world order. Blok intensifies the image of the Motherland through hyperbole, contrast, and symbolic tension. In his poetry, the Motherland is the mystical body of the people, in which past, present, and future coexist simultaneously.

This approach differs from Yesenin’s lyric intimacy and Tvardovsky’s civic patriotism, as national identity here rises to a philosophical and even cosmic level of generalization. For Blok, the Motherland is the “eternal woman,” an elemental force, a “cup of sorrows,” and a “road of destiny.”

Usman Nosir: The Motherland as a Living Mother

Usman Nosir is a poet of romantic pathos and profound lyricism. For him, the Motherland is embodied in the image of a mother — the warmth of her hands, the breath of the earth:

“Vatan — onam, bag‘rim senda
Topar roz, topar kuch” (Nosir, 1934).
Motherland — my mother, in your embrace
I find peace,
I find strength.

National identity in his poetry is expressed through an Eastern system of imagery, the symbolism of gardens, sun, and steppe, the motif of sacrifice, and a luminous inner melody.

For Nosir, the Motherland is not merely a physical territory but an emotional and spiritual experience that forms a person's bond with culture, history, and the moral values of the people.

As in Yesenin's poetry, natural imagery becomes the foundation for expressing love of the native land, yet in Nosir it is infused with Eastern symbolism. The steppe, blooming gardens, the sun, and the sound of rivers are perceived as extensions of the human soul — its "breath" and inner rhythm. In his poems, love for the homeland organically intertwines with the idea of self-sacrifice for its sake and the preservation of cultural memory.

His patriotism has a lyrical-romantic character: the Motherland is perceived as a mother, a spiritual support, and at the same time as a space that requires care and devotion. In this respect, he is close to Sergei Yesenin, whose nature imagery symbolizes the organic bond between human beings and their homeland. However, Nosir's poetry also carries a historical-philosophical depth characteristic of Eastern tradition: the Motherland is both a personal and collective value, an expression of the national spirit and historical memory.

Erkin Vakhidov: Historical Memory and the Spiritual Motherland

Erkin Vakhidov, a representative of the Uzbek cultural "renaissance" of the twentieth century, creates a multilayered image of the Motherland as a cultural and historical space:

"Vatan, senga bag'rimda — Nurli bir qasida bor" (Vakhidov, 1968).

For Vakhidov, the Motherland is not only land but also the spiritual core of the people — their culture, language, and religious-philosophical tradition. The poet combines elements of Sufi philosophy, historical epic, and collective memory, reflecting the pain of a nation that endured the tragedies of the twentieth century while affirming the revival of spiritual strength in both the individual and society. Vakhidov portrays the Motherland as home, mosque, people, language, and culture. He views national identity as the result of historical and cultural memory, spiritual continuity with ancestors, and responsibility before future generations. His image of the Motherland is multidimensional: personal (the poet's inner world), collective (the historical destiny of the people), and philosophical (the spiritual mission of the nation).

The Motherland in Times of War

In the poetry of Alexander Tvardovsky, Erkin Vakhidov, and Usman Nosir, the motif of defending the Motherland is revealed through different national and historical perspectives, yet it is united by the idea of struggle as the highest expression of love for one's native land.

In Tvardovsky's work, the Motherland appears as a mother whom the soldier is duty-bound to defend. In the poem Vasily Tyorkin, love for the Motherland is expressed through the everyday realities of фронтная life. The hero defends not an abstract ideal, but concrete land, home, family, and the people's memory. His patriotism is active and practical—it is manifested in actions, resilience, and loyalty to a soldier's duty.

For Vakhidov, the Motherland is understood as a space of historical memory and spiritual steadfastness. His poetry conveys the pain of a people who endured the tragedies of the twentieth century yet preserved their culture, language, and traditions. Patriotism here takes on an inner, moral character: it is not only a struggle against an external enemy, but also resistance to the spiritual erosion of national identity.

In Nosir's poetry, the image of the Motherland is marked by romantic pathos. For him, the Motherland is mother, nature, steppes, sun, and mountains. Readiness for sacrifice is expressed through lyrical and symbolic imagery rather than direct war scenes. His patriotism is emotional and elevated, grounded in a deep personal attachment to his native land.

Thus, while Tvardovsky emphasizes active, frontline patriotism, Vakhidov highlights spiritual and moral devotion, and Nosir presents a romantic and sacrificial vision, all three are united by their understanding of struggle as a form of love for the Motherland.

National Identity: Points of Intersection

One of the most important ways national identity is expressed in poetry is through an appeal to folklore. Through folk motifs, poets transmit cultural memory and create an emotionally rich image of the Motherland.

In the poetry of Sergei Yesenin, these include images of the Russian village, folk songs, and *chastushki* (short folk rhymes). Folklore strengthens the sense of belonging to native land, peasant life, and national tradition. His patriotism is intimate and lyrical: the Motherland is nature and the close human community.

In Nosir's works, elements such as *bait* (traditional verse), *doira* (a frame drum), and Eastern metrics are present. Uzbek folk tradition becomes the musical and rhythmic foundation of his poetry, creating emotional resonance and emphasizing harmony between the individual, nature, and the Motherland.

Tvardovsky employs soldiers' songs, frontline jokes, and simple colloquial speech. Here folklore serves a unifying function: song brings soldiers together, shaping a collective image of the Motherland as a people defending their homes and values.

Vakhidov turns to folk history, epic narratives, and legends. The Motherland appears as a spiritual space that preserves the memory of generations and shapes national self-awareness.

In the works of Alexander Blok, folklore motifs acquire a philosophical and symbolic meaning. In the poems *The Scythians* and *On the Field of Kulikovo*, folk legends and historical imagery help reveal Russia's destiny as a mystical and historical mission.

Overall, folklore functions as a cultural code in the works of all these poets. It fulfills emotional, social, and historical roles, linking the personal and the collective, the past and the present. The difference lies in emphasis: in Russian poetry, folklore is more often connected with historical destiny and lyrical reflection, while in Uzbek poetry it is closely tied to Eastern musical-rhythmic tradition and epic heritage.

Thus, folkloric elements become a bridge between individual experience and collective memory, shaping a distinctive image of the Motherland in Russian and Uzbek poetry.

Conclusion

The concept of the "Motherland" as a universal cultural category is manifested in Russian and Uzbek poetry through a multitude of images—from a quiet village to a mystical space of destiny, from a soldier's song to the philosophy of the Sufi heart. It unites personal experience, collective memory, and the spiritual reflection on history.

In the poetry of Sergei Yesenin, Alexander Tvardovsky, and Alexander Blok, the Motherland appears in different dimensions: Yesenin presents it as a spiritual world filled with natural beauty, intimate images of village life, and harmony between humans and nature. His patriotism is personal, existential, rooted in an organic belonging to the land.

Tvardovsky views the Motherland through the lens of duty and the resilience of the people. In Vasily Tyorkin, the Motherland is the land a soldier defends, the people whose lives are interconnected through shared history, and the collective responsibility expressed through popular courage and strength.

Blok constructs a historical and philosophical model of the Motherland, mystical and almost mythological. For him, Russia is destiny, mission, and spiritual trial, reflecting both the tragedy and greatness of the people, as well as the philosophical depth of national history.

In Uzbek poetry, the concept of the Motherland acquires distinct cultural and historical features:

- Usman Nosir sees the Motherland as a living mother, a symbol of care, warmth, emotional and spiritual strength, and readiness for sacrifice for the land and the people. Natural imagery, Eastern symbols, and the musical rhythm of the bait create a harmonious, lyrical, and patriotic perception of the Motherland.

- Erkin Vakhidov interprets the Motherland as the memory of the people, language, and spiritual continuity. His depiction is multilayered: home, mosque, culture, historical events, folk traditions, and epic narratives form an integrated spiritual space where the individual develops and recognizes their connection to history and the nation.

Comparative analysis reveals a profound spiritual similarity between the literatures of both peoples:

In both cases, poetry centers around love for the land and native nature—whether it is the birches and fields of Russia or the steppes and mountains of Uzbekistan. Poets in both traditions use folkloric and popular elements—chastushki, soldiers' songs, bait, epic, and legends—to convey collective memory and national identity. Both literary traditions emphasize the spiritual continuity of generations, linking past, present, and future through the image of the Motherland.

In both cases, the Motherland is not only a physical territory but also a moral, spiritual, and cultural category that defines life's meaning, human values, and worldview.

Thus, poetry serves as a crucial instrument for shaping national identity, fostering patriotism, and preserving spiritual and cultural heritage. Through images of the Motherland, literature unites the personal and collective, the earthly and spiritual, the historical and philosophical, creating a solid foundation for understanding national consciousness and cultural identity.

Looking forward, such a study underscores that the poetic perception of the Motherland is a universal cultural phenomenon capable of connecting peoples, their history, traditions, and spiritual values, even if languages, metrics, and imagery systems differ. It demonstrates that love for the Motherland and national identity in literature is simultaneously a personal feeling, historical responsibility, and spiritual guide.

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