



by Çiğdem Akyol  
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Fiction

🏆 winner Literaturpreis  
Ruhr 2025

🏆 Shortlisted for Uwe  
Johnson Förderpreis 2025

🏆 Shortlisted for HOTLIST  
2025

🏆 Shortlisted for Mara  
Cassens Prize 2025

## Beloved Mother – Canım Annem *Geliebte Mutter*

### review

‘Beloved Mother’ is a moving and quietly powerful debut novel by journalist and political writer Çiğdem Akyol, which will have a strong appeal for readers of Elif Shafak.

Drawing on autobiographical details, this literary work traces a complex mother-daughter relationship shaped by migration, tradition, trauma, and resilience. The tale extends from the 1970s to the 2010s, moving between Türkiye and Germany and capturing both the intimate emotional terrain of family and the broader cultural shifts across generations of immigrants.

The story is told through dual perspectives. A third-person narrative recounts the life of Aynur, who is married off to the less educated Alvin from a more traditional Sunni background. Aynur relocates to Germany to join Alvin, who is working there as part of the ‘Gastarbeiter’ (guest worker) programme. Chapters narrated in the first person follow Aynur’s daughter Meryem, born and raised in Germany, who struggles with her mother’s rigid discipline and her father’s oppressive authority. While both parents want to secure a better future for their children, their violent, authoritarian parenting leaves deep psychological scars.

The adult Meryem, now a journalist, looks back on her upbringing with ambivalence and pain. Following a severe mental health crisis she seeks therapy, and this leads to an emotionally charged

confrontation with her mother. Meryem asks why her mother never protected her and her brother, only to be met with resignation from Aynur: 'Allah has chosen this fate for me.' The novel is not afraid to leave such moments unresolved, bringing an ambiguity and emotional honesty to the text.

The narrative begins with Aynur's declaration that she wishes her husband were dead, then winds back through memory and trauma, ultimately arriving at Alvin's funeral. In the end, both women have mellowed, and Meryem is providing her aging mother with care and companionship. Her brother, however, remains estranged. The novel reflects on the ways in which time and distance reshape relationships, exploring the generational legacies of migration and patriarchy, and the emotional costs of survival within rigid cultural frameworks.

'Beloved Mother' is a nuanced and deeply relevant portrait of family, guilt, forgiveness, and the push-pull of cultural inheritance. Çiğdem Akyol's first foray into literary fiction is a heartfelt and timely contribution to migrant literature in Germany.

Find out more:

<https://steidl.de/Buecher/Geliebte-Mutter-Canim-Annem-0911133141.html?SID=9VurVasca180>

## press quotes

*A moving and relevant novel.*

Westart

*It is these profoundly honest, deeply real, and strikingly human moments that give the novel its power (...)*

*Rarely has the history of the Gastarbeiter generation been rendered in such an evocative literary form.*

Qantara.de

*'Beloved Mother' is a powerful story told from the perspective of the women in a family, centring on the complex question of forgiveness and reconciliation*

Buchkultur (Austria)

## about the author



(c) Heiko Fischer

Çiğdem Akyol was born in 1978 in Herne, and studied Eastern European history and international law in Cologne, spending time in Russia. After attending the Berlin School of Journalism, she worked as an editor at taz in Berlin and later as a correspondent for the Austrian news agency APA in Istanbul, where she covered the attempted coup in 2016. Her reporting has appeared in Zeit Online, FAZ, NZZ, and ntv.de. Among her publications are *Erdoğan. Die Biografie* (Erdoğan: a biography) (Herder, 2016) and *Die gespaltene Republik. Die Türkei von Atatürk bis Erdoğan* (The divided republic. Turkey from Atatürk to Erdoğan, S. Fischer, 2023). She is currently an international reporter for a weekly newspaper in Zurich. Her books and articles have been

nominated for the Austrian Science Prize, the NDR Non-Fiction Prize, and the German Reporting Prize. 'Beloved Mother – Can?m Annem' is her first novel.

**Previous works:** *Erdo?an. Die Biografie*, Herder (2016); *Die gespaltene Republik. Die Türkei von Atatürk bis Erdo?an*, S. Fischer (2023)

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