

MAD WOMEN OF LITERATURE:
GENDER AND NARRATIVE IN MİNE SÖĞÜT'S WRITINGS



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ABSTRACT

MAD WOMEN OF LITERATURE: GENDER AND NARRATIVE IN MİNE SÖĞÜT'S WRITINGS

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Keywords: womanhood, madness, trauma, silence, literature, Mine Söğüt

This study aims to discuss the possible meanings produced by mad women characters in Mine Söğüt's literature, with keeping in mind the literature's exceptional position in narrating the experiences such as madness, trauma and womanhood which are located outside language and rendered unnarratable. In the stories and novels in which madness is elaborated on structural and thematic levels, the possibilities of narrating nonlinguistic experiences which are assumed to have no means of conveyance through literature will be questioned. In this regard, after a brief summary of the relation between madness and womanhood, literature's role in telling the stories of these experiences will be explored. When reading the perpetual repetitions and the nonlinguistic forms of communications adopted by Mine Söğüt's mad women as literary devices for narrating madness in literature; representation of womanhood through madness will be examined with regards to gender norms.

ÖZET

EDEBİYATIN DELİ KADINLARI:

MİNE SÖĞÜT YAZININDA TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET VE ANLATI

Betül Sarı

Kültürel Çalışmalar, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2016

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Sibel Irzık

Anahtar Kelimeler: kadınlık, delilik, travma, sessizlik, edebiyat, Mine Söğüt

Bu çalışmada edebiyatın delilik, travma ve kadınlık gibi dille ilişkisi sorunlu hale getirilmiş ve anlatılamaz kılınmış deneyimleri anlatmadaki rolü akılda tutularak, Mine Söğüt yazınında deli kadın karakterlerin kadınlığa ve deliliğe dair ürettiği anlamların tartışılması amaçlanmaktadır. Yapısal ve tematik düzeyde deliliğin inceliklerle işlendiği roman ve öykülerde, anlatım imkânı olmadığı varsayılan dil dışı deneyimlerin edebiyat ile aktarımına dair ihtimaller tartışmaya açılacaktır. Bu bağlamda, öncelikle delilik ve kadınlığın dille olan ilişkisi kısaca özetlendikten sonra, edebiyatın bu deneyimleri anlatmadaki rolü sorgulanacaktır. Mine Söğüt yazınındaki bitimsiz tekrarlar ve delirenlerin dil dışına çıkarak benimsedikleri farklı iletişim yöntemleri deliliğin edebi olarak aktarımına yönelik yöntemler olarak okunurken; bu metinlerde kadınlığın delilik ile anlatımının toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri açısından ne gibi anlamlar taşıyabileceği tartışılacaktır.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to discuss the literature's capacity in narrating what is deemed impossible to narrate by focusing on the cases of madness and womanhood. Reading the writings of Mine Söğüt, it will be argued that the plays of language in literature enable the text to convey madness and womanhood which are linguistically elusive because of their historical exclusion from the language of reason. Hence, the ways in which gender, a central theme and subject for Mine Söğüt, is narrated in her writings will be questioned. Additionally, keeping in mind the role of madness both as a theme and a narrative strategy in narrating gender, and the possibility to give voice to a silenced crowd through literature, this work will focus on how the lost voice and subjectivity, play significant parts in Söğüt's literature in terms of gender and madness.

Firstly, the main object of analysis will be the fictional writings of Mine Söğüt, who is a Turkish female author mostly focusing on the marginalized people and their experiences in her narratives. Although she is also a columnist and has several non-fiction writings, in the scope of this thesis, the sole focus will be on her fictional works.

Mine Söğüt's fictional works are comprised of four novels and a collection of short stories: *Five Sevim Apartment Building* (Beş Sevim Apartmanı, 2003), *The Red Time* (Kırmızı Zaman, 2004), *Şahbaz's Marvellous Year 1979* (Şahbaz'ın Harikülade Yılı 1979, 2007), *Madam Mr. Arthur and Everything in his Life* (Madam Arthur Bey ve Hayatındaki Her Şey, 2010), and *Mad Women Tales* (Deli Kadın Hikâyeleri, 2011).

Over the course of her career as an author, Söğüt has managed to establish a unique literary voice and style of her own. Söğüt's choice of themes for her novels and stories are unconventional and brave. Söğüt not only ably observes, but also dares to unfold even the cruelest scenes without any restraints. She does not abstain from writing on "sensitive"

subjects such as incest, rape, murder and torture with brutal honesty. Yet, even with these brutal portrayals of cruel occurrences, Söğüt never loses her almost poetic narrative style.

The characteristics of Mine Söğüt's writing is the abundance of mad characters and madness in narrative devices. All of Söğüt's fictional work delve into madness; more and more on her later works than the former ones. Mine Söğüt's inclination to relate madness and womanhood together plays a crucial role in her writings. Söğüt nearly always links traumatic experiences ending in madness with womanhood as if these experiences are inseparable or linked to each other through causal relationship. In Mine Söğüt's writings, women are raped, separated from their children, deprived of their freedom, faced with vicious traumatic encounters that threaten both themselves and their loved ones, always suffer from the gender roles prescribed for them. The result of these overwhelming encounters is nearly always madness for women. The portrayal of madness and women in Söğüt's narrative links the two inseparably with each other, opening up a ground to reflect on these concepts and, on the whole, on womanhood on the verge of madness. Madness is the ultimate expression of gender impositions in Söğüt's writings.

Therefore, this thesis will focus on the narrative and the deployment of literary tools by Mine Söğüt in order to discuss literature's ability to narrate madness, an experience deemed impossible to narrate within the hegemonic discourse by many thinkers. Furthermore, the relationship that madness bears with gender roles, will be analyzed through Mine Söğüt's portrayal of madness, especially the portrayal of mad women characters in her fictional works. This work will try to answer if Söğüt can really tell the stories of mad women without losing the reality of the experiences or turning them into clichés. If she can, how does she manage to do so? What are the narrative strategies she employs in order to narrate madness and womanhood despite the silence these experiences bear in their core? What is literature's role in narrating the unnarratable?

Bearing those questions in mind, in the first chapter, the social history of madness and its relation to gender and literature will be discussed. With the aim of opening up a discussion on socially constructedness of madness as a cultural, philosophical, historical category as well as a medical one; first thing to be discussed will be the social construction of madness since this construction is important in showing the biased and culturally dependent progress of the concept to the moral structure of the time.

Mad women characters which are abundant in literature are the product of a very long and complicated set of historical, social and linguistic relations. Since it is not possible to reflect upon the representation of madwoman in Mine Söğüt's writings without considering these long and complicated relationships constructed between women and madness throughout history, the social construction of womanhood will also be discussed with a closer look on its relationship to madness. Following will be a discussion on the function of literature in telling the marginalized and lost accounts of women in patriarchal order, and once again, the role of madness in these stories.

In Söğüt's writings there are many different kinds of "mad women": weird or eccentric women, haunted or saint women, witches or fortunetellers, and finally the women with mental disorders that can be analyzed in medical terms. Therefore, in this thesis the term madness both refers to the mental disturbance as a psychiatric category and as an ascription for people who are regarded as abnormal according to culturally determined norms of society. There is not just one but many forms of madness in the cultural context. Explanations about mental disorders based solely on physiological causes fall short in capturing the social and cultural dynamics affecting many aspects of psychiatry such as definition, categorization, diagnostic and treatment. Even though gender roles and norms played a significant role in the history of psychiatry, this fact has been easily overlooked by the discipline itself. Since this thesis is about the literary representation of female madness and the possible outcomes and meanings of this representation, present state of the psychiatry and its accuracy are not in the scope of the study; hence it will not be discussed. In relation to psychiatry, the reflection and contribution of the historical progress of it on the idea of female as the weaker and second sex will be discussed.

After this brief discussion, Söğüt's writings will be analyzed for their capacity to reflect madness and gender impositions in text through literature's unique narrative strategies. Demonstrating how literature can function in a way to shed light on the oppressed and overlooked female experience through madness, Söğüt's writings offer a fresh approach about madness and woman. Always relying on traumatic and maddening aspects of gender norms on women when portraying a cruel world, Söğüt suggests a systematic and structural relation between madness and womanhood.

Additionally, the author of this text does not believe in the binary gender system

which excludes everyone other than heterosexual male and females with reproductive genitalia. Besides women, patriarchal societies founded on the binary gender system oppressed and marginalized homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals, transgenders, intersexes and all non-binary and non-normative people. However, because this thesis is focused on the representation of mad women and madness in the literary text of Mine Söğüt, it will only have a chance to talk about women who are oppressed and maddened by the binary gender system portrayed in Söğüt's writings.

Also, the author of this text is well aware of the fact that there is not just one, monolithic and homogenous "women" that we can talk about. Even though it is not possible to talk about womanhood as if it is one homogeneous block and there are many different "womanhoods"; we can say that one of the things that is common in all women's lives who live within patriarchal systems is their secondary and unjust position in society. Some more than others face these inequalities based on the differences such as class, race, education, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation. Yet, the inferiority and the trauma surpasses all the differences, creating a common ground. As Showalter (1999) once wrote: "Women have generally been regarded as "sociological chameleons," taking on the class, lifestyle, and culture of their male relatives. It can, however, be argued that women themselves have constituted a subculture within the framework of a larger society, and have been unified by values, conventions, experiences and behaviors impinging on each individual." (p. 11) Hence, the words "women" and "womanhood" will not be used to denote a vague and uniform category, but as a blanket term in the hope of encompassing all of the different aspects of a wide web of experiences.

This thesis examines the representation of madwoman characters and madness in Mine Söğüt's novels and stories to facilitate further thinking on the relation between women and madness. While illustrating the prevalence of trauma induced madness and its structural deployment with narrative tools in the literary work of Söğüt, the aim is to open up an argument about the significance of literature in telling the silenced female experience and gender impositions in patriarchal order.



CHAPTER I

*Much Madness is divinest Sense -
To a discerning Eye -
Much Sense - the starkest Madness -
'Tis the Majority
In this, as all, prevail -
Assent - and you are sane -
Demur - you're straightway dangerous -
And handled with a Chain -
(Emily Dickinson)*

Considering that this thesis will explore the representation of madness in literature and its possible interpretations and outcomes, it is best to start by working toward a definition of madness and describing how it is contextualized in the scope of this thesis. According to the online Merriam-Webster dictionary, the simple definition of madness is:

“1. a state of severe mental illness 2. behavior or thinking that is very foolish or dangerous.” (2016, Merriam-Webster) In daily language, madness is used as a term which denotes both people with mental disorders and people seen as abnormal in relation to the societal norms of their culture. In all societies, some people are called mad simply because they are different or deviant from the rest of the community. (Porter, 2002, p. 62)

Even though there seems to be a divide between the scientific and everyday usage of the word, it would be wrong to assume a definite distinction between those meanings. As it will be discussed below, the psychiatric meaning of madness is not exempt from the cultural imposition of madness as a “foolish or dangerous” way of being. Madness is not only a medical condition that belongs to the scientific and strict realm of psychiatry but also a category fully loaded with societal judgement on what is and what is not acceptable.

1.1. Madness: Historical Review of Social Construction

Before discussing how madness is actually a socially constructed phenomenon rather than a scientific fact, we should first trace the historical progress of the notion itself.

When leprosy started to disappear in Europe by the early fourteenth century -with a different pace in different European countries-, there were already well established rituals and values attached to this illness that had been part of the society for hundreds of years. Since the frightening image of lepers was powerfully associated with exclusion and confinement, even after the image vanished from the social sphere, the social structure built around the notion remained intact only to be filled by different actors such as the poor, the criminal and finally the insane. (Foucault, 2006, p. 5-6) Although mad people were always part of societies, the meaning surrounding them changed towards the end of the Middle Ages for Western civilizations. Madness was condemned in accordance with the moral order. Madman “was no longer familiar and ridiculous, but exterior to the action”. (Foucault, 2006, p. 12-13)

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, mad people were confined and chained in madhouses. Before this confinement, mad people who were under the

responsibility of their families were usually kept at home or sometimes left to wander alone. (Porter, 2002, p. 89-90) With the new and more formal segregation of madness from homes and streets to asylums, the image of the mad took the form of pathology. The rising prominence and importance of reason in Western philosophy and culture during the Enlightenment contributed the exclusion of madness from social life as well. (Porter, 1987, p. 13-14)

With the beginning of the Humanitarian era in psychiatric practices, the conditions for the insane started to improve; humane approaches achieved pre-eminence. Doctors like Philippe Pinel, Vincenzo Chiarugi and William Tuke pioneered the introduction of humane methods to mental health care institutions in Europe. By the nineteenth century, madness was just like any other physical illness, ready to be categorized, diagnosed and cured (Porter, 1987, p. 18-19). With the first psychiatric revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, an ideological shift in the perception of the madman took place and mad people started to be seen as “sick human beings” who can be cured rather than being perceived as “ferocious animals that needed to be kept in check with chains” as they had been before this time (Showalter, 1987, p. 8).

The social and philosophical progress of Europe from the Renaissance to the Age of Enlightenment is consistent with the historical progress of madness explained so far. The necessities and developments of modernity and its premises required, hence created, strict forms of social order and control. (Artvinli, 2013, p. 16-17) Confinement of mad people to madhouses throughout Europe during the seventeenth century and the definition of madness as a strictly medical category opposing reason were simultaneous.

With the slowly changing meaning and significance of madness in cultural representations and imagery through art and literature, by the beginning of the Renaissance, all the different meanings and reflections of madness had already been channeled into one specific aspect of it: the sort of knowledge placed opposite reason. (Foucault, 2006, p. 19, 27, 28) As Michel Foucault (2006) explained:

Madness was no longer a dark power that threatened to undo the world, revealing fantastical seductions, and no longer showed, in the twilight of Time, the violence of bestiality, or the great struggle between Knowledge and Interdiction. It is caught up instead in the indefinite cycle that attaches it

to reason; they deny and affirm each other. Madness is robbed of its absolute existence in the night of the world, and now only exists in relation to reason [...] (p. 32)

Psychiatry, the medical study of mental disorders, was the product of Western philosophical thinking of the time. As Porter (2002) suggests: “The asylum was not instituted for the practice of psychiatry; psychiatry rather was the practice developed to manage its inmates.” One of the main purposes of psychiatry is to diagnose and treat people with mental health problems. This purpose entails a classification issue; since it deploys the scientific language and either/or reasoning. Psychiatry is a scientific institution created and generalized on the basis of discriminative logic and language. Accordingly, in the course of its history it played a significant part in shaping common consciousness (Porter, 1987, p. 4).

Foucault argues that psychiatrists are one of the key figures in the “political configurations that involve domination” (1984, p. 247). Psychiatry created its own web of power relations among all of its subjects including patients and doctors: “a patient in a mental institution is placed within a field of fairly complicated power relations.” (Foucault, 1984, p. 247) In discussing psychiatry’s role in modern configurations of power Foucault (1984) further argues that for a long time the sovereign exercised power with the act of killing. This type of power involved the right to seize people’s time, bodies and lives. However, with a radical transformation in these power mechanisms, power over life became a positive force; now the aim was “administer, optimize and multiply [life], subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations.” (p. 259) Power that once functioned through oppression and the right to kill took the form of sustaining life by controlling and regulating it. The bipolar diagram of power over life, proposed by Foucault to illustrate how such power works, operates through two branches. One is to maximize and integrate bodies in the social system and the other is to control the mechanisms of life through biopolitics (Rabinow and Rose, 2006, p. 196). It is crucial for this system to control its subjects in order to turn them into efficient wheels for the well-oiled machine that is the society. Since mad people cannot function in the desired rationality and productivity that the modern thinking necessitates they should either be cured or kept in confinement.

It can be concluded from its historical development that the concept of madness as we know it today -a medical category created to define people who have lost their ability to think and behave “normally”- is a modern one. It appears that madness does not have a concrete and unconditional meaning across different times and cultures, and the mad serve as ‘the others’ by assuming different social roles and cultural connotations. Over the course of history, the mad have been comic figures to be laughed at, dangerous and incurable creatures to imprison, or poor lost souls to be cared for and healed.

The social history of madness discussed thus far has been specifically Western. Even though it explains a great deal about social and historical construction of madness in general, in order to conduct an analysis of novels from modern day Turkey, we also need examine the social history of madness in this specific geography. Tracing the roots of madness as a social construct the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, we can find many similarities between the Western and Anatolian concepts, but also some differences.

It is striking that social perspective on the mad is in compliance with the modernization project throughout the continuum between the Ottoman Empire and the Republican period. The Jacobinism is the determinant quality of this project. The continuity and ruptures between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic reflect upon the discussions on how to evaluate madness. The traditional Ottoman society, which most of the time associates madness with being “veli” (saint, the sacred personality who is graced with the wisdom of God) literally confines such people in the later period. It is necessary to emphasize that this dual approach to the place of the mad in the social life partially continues until 20th century, albeit in a gradually decreasing manner. For instance, Reşat Ekrem Koçu construes this perspective through a meta-language: “The Istanbulite treated quite well the mad who were not wild and did not perform criminal offenses; a large portion of the people even saw a divine charm and considered their inconsistent utterances, the awkward noises they made, their cries and strange attitudes and behaviors to be a meaning and secret sign.”(Koçu, 1966, p. 4353) The regulatory institute for the mad in the Ottoman Empire was called “bimarhane” (asylum). In his study on *Topbaşı Bimarhanesi*, Fatih Artvinli explains the Persian etymology of the word; bimar means sick and hane means house and he states that the place was used as the institution where only the mad had been confined since the end of 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century. (Artvinli,

2013, p. 25) There are numerous records and testimonies confirming that the miserable situation of bimarhanes both before and after the Second Constitutional Era (1908). The cholera endemic that broke out in 1893 at Topbaşı Bimarhanesi is highlighted as a milestone. (Arvinli, 2013, p. 105) Although a new bimarhane was planned to be built at the time, it was not built. The new institution –Emraz-ı Akliye ve Asabiye Hastanesi– that was founded in Bakırköy in 1927 becomes the mark of modernization in the official historiography. In her study entitles *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete Delilik (Madness from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic)* Rüya Kılıç (2015) states that the actors of the relevant historical period approached their professions with a historian's attitude, even assuming the role of the historian more than the historians themselves. (p. 5) According to this narrative,

Modern psychiatry is divided into two main periods – pre and postmodern psychiatry. The former of these periods has two opposite subheadings. While the mad people were treated very badly in Europe at the beginning, a civilized practice and treatment were applied on them in the Orient, particularly by Turks and Ottomans. Moreover, some principles of the modern psychiatry were sometimes uttered for the first time and applied but a dark period followed these practices. Fortunately, when the modern psychiatry based on the Western knowledge entered the Ottoman Empire at the end of 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. But the real progress was made during the Republican period with the establishment of Bakırköy Psychiatric Hospital. (Kılıç, 2015, p. 90)

While the actors of this narrative are connected to one another with a chain, they most of the time become legendary. For instance, the last chief physician of Süleymaniye Bimarhanesi and the first physician of Toptaşı Bimarhanesi Louis Mongeri (1815 – 1882) are remembered as “the Pinel of Istanbul” when he unchained the mad. His subsequent Reşad Tahsin Bey (1870 – 1936) represents the Ottoman-Turkish physicians at a European congress. The interesting point of this congress is the fact that madness is associated with civilization and madness is regarded as a benchmark between reactionism and modernism. The number of the mad people increases in the civilized societies. The reason for the few number of mad people in the Ottoman Empire is the undeveloped quality of the society. (Kılıç, 2015, p. 14-20) At this point, it is necessary to remember that the statistics for women have a striking impact. As Arvinli (2013) puts it, “Taking the Ottoman social

structure and the process of confinement in the asylum, it is seen that an institutional solution is sought when it is no longer possible to confine women at home or their care becomes impossible.” (p. 153)

The third and most important name is Mazhar Osman (1884 – 1951), who played a significant role in spreading the profession and assumptions with regard to modern conceptualization of madness. Osman organized conferences open to public participation in the early stages of his career and authors and intellectuals of the period such as Abdülhak Hamid, Mahmut Sadık, Celâl Nuri, Cenap Şahabettin, Süleyman Nazif, and Hüseyin Rahmi participated his events. (Kılıç, 2015, p. 28) It might be said that these conferences facilitated the widespread inclusion of psychological cases in the early Ottoman-Turkish novels. However, it is crucial to bear in mind that the mad were not allowed to talk and presented as a spectacle at these conferences although the audience was able to see them. Literature during this period tried to assume the role of a means in voicing the mad although it was governed by the twisted hands of men.

It is necessary to state that Mazhar Osman saw psychiatry as a means to establish a healthy society in Turkish modernization after the Republic was founded and to that end he assigned psychiatry with the functions compatible with the *Zeitgeist* of 1930s. This is an approach that aims to increase the population through healthy individuals and casts women particular roles in this process. He talks about women who must conserve their joy and smile, must not unnecessarily be jealous and who must be otherwise taught such manners. Other important psychiatrists of the period such as Fahrettin Kerim Gökay (1900-1987) shares similar ideas. (Kılıç, 2015, p. 127-130)

When we look at the historical development of madness in the Ottoman Empire, we see that this history advances in an intertwined manner with the social while transforming it and made its way into the daily language and literature in a similar pattern with the history of madness in Europe.

It is crucial to add at this point that in this work I do not challenge the medical definition of mental illness which has been established as follows: “clinically significant behavior or psychological syndrome or pattern that occurs in an individual and is associated with present distress or disability (in areas of functioning) or with a significantly

increased risk of suffering, death, pain, disability, or an important loss of freedom” (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p xxxi) in DSM-IV-TR. At the moment psychiatry has already reached a point that is miles away from its original starting point: “Over the last decade, scholarship has, of course, been changing—enormously. Medical history has moved from a positivist to a critical phase and has begun to shift from the scientific history of disease to the cultural history of diseases and the study of illness as metaphor.” (Gilman et al., 1993, p. viii) When I use the term “madness”, I usually refer to people who have been pushed to the realms of the abnormal and unreason because they do not conform with the societal norms that firmly determine the borders of the normal. The main focus of this thesis is the literary representation of madness and the meanings produced by that representation.

1.2. Women and Madness

“Now, woman has always been, if not man’s slave, at least his vassal; the two sexes have never divided the world up equally; and still today, even though her condition is changing woman is heavily handicapped. In no country is her legal status identical to man’s, and often it puts her at a considerable disadvantage.” (de Beauvoir, 2011, p. 29)

Simone de Beauvoir wrote these sentences above in 1949. It has been sixty-seven years since she so sharply portrayed the asymmetry between the two sexes in her classical work *The Second Sex*. While today in many countries women have succeeded to gain their equal legal rights, this has not ended the inequality between men and women. As de Beauvoir (2011) stated, woman’s condition was and is changing, sometimes thanks to women who create political pressure on people in power and other times due to social and historical necessities¹. Still, equal pay, control over their own bodies, and life without violence from men are not things that women are able to take for granted. At this moment we can ask, why? Why are “male” and “female” still not equal in spite of all the campaigns

¹ For example, in World War I, the need for women to work outside their homes.

and struggles by women? Why is the violence against women still a big issue around the globe? Why did women become the second sex in the first place?

The root of all these issues, we find, lies in the idea imprinted on people's minds during the gender formation process that sexes are inherently unequal. Similar to madness, gender roles, are also constructed. In this respect, gender roles resemble madness in their ability to define what is normal and what is acceptable in a society in terms of behavioral norms. Throughout the course of history, the binary gender system has created and sustained sharp boundaries for male and female roles. During the Renaissance the thought that "man's superiority to the animals on the Great Chain of Being lay in reason, further extolling the rational civilized male over women, children, and peasants" (Porter, 2002, p. 56) came into prominence and lay the ground for Western thinking subsequently. According to Derrida, Western metaphysics is based on dichotomous oppositions in which the two antagonized poles of the dichotomy are hierarchically placed, such as presence/absence, reason/sensibility, same/other, and nature/culture. (Showalter, 1975, p. 3)

Male and female also have their assigned places in the "metaphysical logic of dichotomous oppositions which dominates philosophical thought" (Showalter, 1975, p. 3). For de Beauvoir (2011), even though many people asked why men get to be the superior sex in this binary way of thinking in the first place, usually the answers are based on natural dispositions of the two, and this only helps men sustain their privileged position within the society (p. 25)

However, as de Beauvoir (2011) states so famously and succinctly: "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman." (p. 330) What the societal norms impose on women as proper feminine behavior and how a woman should be does not result from innate female characteristics shared by all women, but is rather socially constructed and normalized through the course of history. Women's condition today was defined in the process of the establishment of modern civilization. She was defined and marked as *the Other* not as a result of some innate characteristic but due to socially constructed norms. In the binary gender system, women are assigned to the secondary position in relation to men. As Plumwood frames,

In dualism, the more highly valued side (males, humans) is construed as alien to and of a different nature or order of being from the 'lower', inferiorised side (women, nature) and each is treated as lacking in qualities which make possible overlap, kinship, or continuity. The nature of each is constructed in polarised ways by the exclusion of qualities shared with the other; the dominant side is taken as primary, the subordinated side is defined in relation to it. Thus woman is constructed as the other, as the exception, the aberration or the subsumed, and man treated as the primary model. The effect of dualism is, in Rosemary Radford Ruether's words, to 'naturalise domination', to make it part of the very natures or identities of both the dominant and subordinated items and thus to appear to be inevitable, 'natural'." (Plumwood, 2002, p. 32)

In a system that constructs women as the opposite of men and the subordinated other, in order to be accepted as "normal", women have to behave compliantly and obediently. Since the boundaries defining normal are strictly necessary to keep the system intact and unquestioned, not conforming to the definitions of the system is punished severely.

As discussed previously, the construction of madness as we know it has its foundations in the rise of reason starting in The Age of Enlightenment and its predecessor, the Renaissance. With the shift that took place in the nineteenth century, which defined mental illness as something to be cured and the insane as someone who needs help and taming from professionals, the madman lost its fearsome image. With this shift, madness became associated with the fragile and seductively dangerous female character, rather than the untamable and violent masculine character. (Showalter, 1987, p. 21) In the same vein, the representation of madness after the Victorian Age has mostly been based on female madness in the Western cultural context, marking madness as a "female malady". (Showalter, 1987) This shift in the perception of madness as a *female malady*, rendered visible in both the language of psychiatry and the cultural products of the era, still remains, albeit implicitly:

Depressive, hysterical, suicidal, and self-destructive behaviour thus became closely associated, from Victorian times, with stereotypes of womanhood in the writings of the psychiatric profession, in the public mind, and amongst women themselves. Freud himself classically asked: 'what do women want?', and went on to diagnose penis envy. Classic hysteria, so common in Freud's day, may also have disappeared, but it has perhaps metamorphosed

into new and primarily female conditions, notably anorexia nervosa, somatization disorder, and bulimia. (Porter, 2002, p. 88)

Even though psychiatry as a scientific venture has a claim to be objective, it is not free from the cultural framework and language that places women on the side of unreason in the dichotomous logic of modernity. Showalter (1987) claims that although madness was considered a female malady, the gender problem was overlooked by psychiatry for many years, as in many other scientific endeavors. According to Showalter “historians of psychiatry have paid little attention to questions of gender.” (1987, p. 5)

Chesler (1972) also asserts that the mental health care system is biased against women and prone to mark them as insane. With the feminization of madness and the medicalization of the anxiety resulting from social oppression, it became harder for women to stay within the lines of “normal” established by a misogynistic culture. “It is clear that for a woman to be healthy she must ‘adjust’ to and accept the behavioral norms for her sex even though these kinds of behavior are generally regarded as less socially desirable.” (Chesler, 1972, p. 69) For women, being well-behaved and adjusted to the norms of society are the conditions for being accepted as normal. For example, during the Victorian Ages even being an unmarried middle age woman could be enough to mark someone as “abnormal”: “Stigmatized by terms like “redundant,” “superfluous,” and “odd,” they were also regarded as peculiarly subject to mental disorders.” (Showalter, 1987, p. 61)

In psychiatry, especially the examples of hysteria and trauma play significant roles in showing how the cultural norms and expectations shape the image of madness hence the diagnosis and treatment of the illness. For example, marked as a female malady, hysteria and its changing meaning over time is important in demonstrating how psychiatry can overlook inherent gender biases and create medical categorizations based on not scientific facts but cultural presumptions. Named after the Greek word for uterus, hysteria established as the ultimate female malady at the end the nineteenth century played a significant role for the development of psychoanalysis. (Showalter, 1987, p. 18) The debates of the time about gender, sex and culture epitomized in hysteria turned it into “almost a philosophical category—rather than as a medical diagnosis or set of therapies.” (Gilman et al., 1993, p. xi-xii) Varying hysterical symptoms associated with women

pejoratively sustained the stereotypes of femininity and gender binary oppositions. (Gilman et al., 1993, p. 286)

Emerged as the male counterpart of female hysteria, mental and behavior disturbances resulting from trauma are categorized under the diagnosis Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The DSM-IV-TR (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) defines trauma as “1) an experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death, serious injury to oneself or others, and 2) a response involving intense fear, helplessness, or horror.” (Widera-Wysoczańska & Kuczyńska, 2010, p. 8) In order to be diagnosed with PTSD, the victim of the traumatic event should feel intense fear, helplessness or horror. (DePrince & Freyd, 2002, p. 72) Earlier definitions of trauma focused on the unexpectedness of the traumatic event as a distinctive trait. Yet these definitions failed to encompass women’s experience of trauma. For women in patriarchal societies, even though traumatic encounters such as sexual assaults, violence and abuse are not unexpected, these are still traumatic experiences (Caruth, 1995, p. 101).

Not surprisingly, PTSD is more common among women than men (Tolin & Breslau, 2007, p. 1). Besides being one of the “mental disorders” that women predominate, PTSD is also significant in its unique relation to female experience in patriarchal societies. The unmistakable similarities between the symptoms of PTSD and the kind of “womanhood” prescribed to all women in patriarchy allow us to mark PTSD as another *female malady*.

“Listening to girls . . . sparked the realisation that the initiation into the gender codes and scripts of patriarchy bears some of the hallmarks of trauma: loss of voice, loss of memory, and consequently loss of the ability to tell one's story accurately. Once a woman has internalised the norms and values of a patriarchal order that requires her to care for others while silencing herself, she finds herself, in the words of Jean Baker Miller, ‘doing good and feeling bad.’” (Gilligan, 2010, p. xii; cited in Ussher, 2011, p. 36)

The process of gender formation entails a set of traumatic encounters especially for women. The silence that is required to fit in with the kind of womanhood desired by patriarchy and the silence that psychological trauma bears are similar. Hence, the

internalization of gender roles leads to the normalization of the trauma that these roles entail.

In a similar way to psychiatry, for a very long time women were not active subjects to shape and contribute to the field of literature but rather its objects. The problematic relation between women and madness, explained above, also became one of the defining factors in women's relation to writing and literature. Before we start to discuss how the relation between women and madness has been supported, sustained, challenged and subverted in literature, we must first talk about why and how literature and writing are important for the subject.

1.3. Madness and Writing

When Foucault wrote *History of Madness*, first published in French in 1961, he stated that his intention was not to write the history of the language of psychiatry but rather to “draw up an archeology” of the silence of the mad. According to Foucault, the language of the mad was unattainable since the age of reason and its language was established on the exclusion of madness and its language. (Foucault, 2006, p. xxviii) Mad people who were robbed of their subjectivity and became the objects of inquiry for psychiatry lost their language: “their own experience is annulled and voided.” (Felman, 2003, p. 3) While Foucault stated his intention of doing an “archeology of silence” when tracing the history of madness, his aim was to display the unique relationship between language and madness. Yet, how is it possible to find and narrate silence in writing? Foucault's choice of exploration for the true, genuine and lost voice of madness especially in literary texts from various famous authors such as Sade, Artaud and Nerval can lead us to the answer. (Felman, 2003, p.48) Because the history of madness is intertwined with the social history of language, the discourse around madness both shapes and shaped by the cultural representations of the term. (Gilman et al, 1993, p. viii) The cultural representations of illness, which occupy a significant place in common consciousness, are therefore affected

by discourse. That is the reason why Foucault pays significant attention to the role of language and literature when tracing the social history of madness.

However, even before the rupture between language and madness occurred, which Foucault claims is at the heart of the modern understanding of madness, the madness was a fascination for artists. Creativity as an act has always been considered to have a link with peculiarity, if not madness. For instance, before Renaissance madness was perceived as a dark power outside the reach of knowledge. (Foucault, 2006, p. xxxiii-xxxiv) Carrying all sorts of curiosity arousing images, it was a theme to be explored by artists of all kinds, such as writers and painters. Even after the medicalization of madness and confinement of mad people in the nineteenth century brought an end to the image of madman as a “witty fool” (Porter, 2002, p. 76), madness continued to be a popular theme for art and literature. For example, for fin de siècle artists, insanity was glorified as a sign of rejection of the bourgeois way of life, since around that time, madness was already associated with substance usage or venereal diseases. (Porter, 2002, p. 81) When the gender of the image of madness shifted from male to female, and the medicalization of the mental illnesses took place, cultural representations of madness changed accordingly. This change brought along the popularity of the image of mad women in literature and art.

Yet, even with all the interest around madness from artists, the problem of representing it through art remained a central problem because of the natural gap between the representations and the experience of madness. Madness as a condition located outside of language in the age of psychiatry, has no way of getting translated into the language of reason since its subjects can no longer speak that language. (Felman, 2003, p. 3-4) Therefore it both attracts and eludes cultural representation.

Nevertheless, the difficulty of the task of representing madness can only be overcome within the language especially in literature. Culler (1997) addresses the importance of literature by highlighting the power of literature in reshaping the given categories and create new ways of expression:

“Language is not a ‘nomenclature’ that provides labels for pre-existing categories; it generates its own categories. But speakers and readers can be brought to see through and around the settings of their language, so as to see a different reality. Works of literature explore the settings or categories of

habitual ways of thinking and frequently attempt to bend or reshape them, showing us how to think something that our language had not previously anticipated, forcing us to attend to the categories through which we unthinkingly view the world. Language is thus both the concrete manifestation of ideology – the categories in which speakers are authorized to think – and the site of its questioning or undoing”. (Culler, 1997, p. 59-60)

As Porter (2002) states, “In the culture of madness ‘reality’ and ‘representations’ endlessly played off each other.” (p. 64) As noted earlier, in this game of ever changing meaning and representation of madness, literature plays a significant role as being one of the most fertile areas for the deployment of a broad range of images and meanings. With its mastery over language and the capacity to create new ways of thinking, literature can include what is excluded, such as madness. Even though there seems to be no room for unreason in the Cartesian logic; literature can provide a space for the excluded in language. (Felman, 2003, p. 51)

Consequently, representing madness in language brings into question the plays of literature. Shoshana Felman, also writes about the importance of literature for restoring the subjectivity of the mad people by challenging the sovereign discourse:

“In the nineteenth century, the age of the establishment of the clinician’s power, literature interrogates and challenges this power, gives refuge and expression to what is socially or medically repressed, objectified, unauthorized, denied, and silenced. Literature becomes the only recourse for the self-expression and the self-representation of the mad. It alone restores to madness its robbed subjectivity.” (Felman, 2003, p. 4)

According to Felman’s explanation, in the period starting with the establishment of psychiatry as a hegemonic discourse and continuing to the present day, literature is the only way of giving voice to the mad and to madness itself. Since literature asks questions about the nature of madness and attempts to find a way to express this experience in terms of writing, it challenges the authority of the psychiatrist and the psychiatric discourse that already formed the way people think. As Felman explains, “in asking what it means to be mad, the literary text destabilize the boundary line between this “inside” and this “outside,”

subvert the clear-cut opposition between the other and the same.” (Felman, 2003, p. 4) With its unlimited tools, strategies, and space, literature can be the channel for communicating madness and amplify the experience. With its unique tools and relative freedom from the hegemonic discourse, literature could point out the arbitrariness of the sharp boundaries and subvert the definitive lines that separate normal from abnormal.

1.4. Women, Madness and Literature

“[W]oman is said to be "outside the Symbolic": outside the Symbolic, that is outside language, the place of the Law, excluded from any possible relationship with culture and the cultural order. And she is outside the Symbolic because she lacks any relation to the phallus, because she does not enjoy what orders masculinity – the castration complex.” (Cixous, 1981, p. 45-46)

Women’s exclusion from educational system as well as social and economic life affected their relation to writing. For a long time, the authority and creativity associated with writing were seen as exclusively male traits. For male authors writing was the source of “priority in the natural order and authority in the spiritual order”. (Bloom, in Richter, 2007, p. 1159) Consequently, instead of being able to actively participate in the creation process, women only served as one of the main objects of literature. Therefore, writing as a form of authority and power was not readily accorded to women who wanted to define themselves and tell their own stories instead of getting defined by men.

The interwoven relations between madness, women, language and writing explained so far defined the relationship that women authors have with literature in the first place. First of all, confined to the realm of unreason and enchained with the misogynistic female images generated by male authors it was obvious for the first female authors that they were not welcome in this solely male occupation: “For, as is so frequently the case in

the history of sex relations men view the smallest female steps towards autonomy as threatening strides that will strip them of all authority.” (Gilbert & Gubar, 1988, p. 66)

As Gilbert and Gubar (2000) maintain, by the time women proceed to write their own stories, there were already a set of ingrained metaphors and stereotypes around the female image. Hence, when women first “attempted the pen” long after their male counterparts, the first challenge for the female author was to resist and subvert the images created to portray her.

Since both patriarchy and its texts subordinate and imprison women, before women can even attempt that pen which is so rigorously kept from them they must escape just those male texts which, defining them as “Cyphers,” deny them the autonomy to formulate alternatives to the authority that has imprisoned them and kept them from attempting the pen. (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 13.)

Self-definition through writing and aesthetic expression was not an easy task for the women writers of the nineteenth century since women were simply seen as lacking the autonomy that the writing necessitates. During that time, there were already well-established patriarchal images of femininity created by the patriarchal society and supported by its male authors. Literature, being one of the major means in creating and promoting the cultural representations and stereotypes, functioned to sustain the dichotomous female image through male gaze in patriarchal order as angel in the house vs. mad/monstrous woman out of the home. (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 17) With the ability to control the identity of their female characters, male authors were able to control the eternal image of womanhood for over decades. (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 12) While attempting the pen, woman writer also attempted at being a subject rather than an object created by male imagery and trapped in a male-constructed society. Gilbert and Gubar write,

That is, precisely because a woman is denied the autonomy – the subjectivity – that the pen represents, she is not only excluded from culture (whose emblem might well be the pen) but she also becomes herself the embodiment of just those extremes of mysterious intransigent Otherness which culture confronts with worship or fear, love or loathing. (2000, p. 19)

In the literary world where male authors can declare that, “The lady is our creation... The lady is the poem” (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 13), first thing to achieve was to obtain subjectivity.

For all literary artist, of course, self-definition necessarily precedes self-assertion: the creative “I AM” cannot be uttered if the “I” knows not what it is. But for the female artist the essential process of self-definition is complicated by all those patriarchal definitions that intervene between herself and herself. (2000, p. 17.)

The first problem that the women authors had to overcome upon entering the realm of literature was the difficulty of attaining self-definition through writing. To achieve subjectivity in language, literature is of vital importance because it can intensify and deepen the obscurities of identity problems created in the historicity of language. (Irzik & Parla, 2014, p. 9) Hence, women sought subjectivity through self-definition as Gilbert and Gubar proposes; but also through a performative self-assertion into the literature.

Another problem was, as discussed by Felman in *What Does a Woman Want? Writing and Sexual Difference*, “the problem of women’s impossible autobiography, proceeding from the fact that women have been trained to view themselves as objects. Their own story is thus often alien and unavailable to their own consciousness.” (Felman, 2003, p.5-6) Impossibility for women to write their own stories, stemming from the exclusion from reason followed by the exclusion from language entails the problems of inherent self-objectification. As Felman says, “The way we think and speak arises out of decisions our language has already made for us.” (2003, p. 18-19) Since every attempt at breaking the silence and escaping from the non-linguistic realm in which they are imprisoned meets with disapproval on account of not conforming to their true nature (Irzik & Parla, 2014, p. 7), trying to write their stories in a language that plays a significant role in their subjugation is one of the struggles that women authors have to face.

Even after women entered the literary domain and started to be accepted as authors, their relationship with language and literature was still significantly different from male authors. With writing, male authors were able to control their creation and with the rejection of influence, they could claim priority. Ownership over text and characters led to the control over creation and identity. When her male counterparts had to deal with what

Harold Bloom calls “anxiety of influence”, which denotes a patrilineal battle for literary supremacy between male authors and their precursors, female authors had to fight with authority figures from the opposite gender as their precursors who fall short in capturing female experience. (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 47-49) Especially the image of madwoman in literature, as the crystallization of the stereotypical femininity that lies at the heart of patriarchal order was standing as an obstacle between women and their self-definition. Confinement of women in the realms of silence, nature, privacy and mystery and the establishment of the connection between femininity and madness in the gender binary system of patriarchal societies, was evident in the symbolic madwoman.

Trapped between an image that is degrading and not true to her experience as a woman and a battle of authority with someone who enclose her to “extreme stereotypes (angel/monster)” created an “anxiety of authorship” for female writers of the nineteenth century. The anxiety and hardship of authorship brought along the women’s attempt to take control over their self-image. In order to do so, they embraced the angel/monster women images subversively. (2000, p. 44) Reading women’s madness in literature as the rejection of and rebellion against gender norms, Gilbert and Gubar attribute an emancipatory power to it. The popularity of the stereotypical dual image of angel/monster in women’s literature evident in the works of the first female authors, Charlotte Brontë, Jane Austen, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Emily Dickinson, Mary Shelley and George Elliot, highlights the adversity of the challenge to kill off the dual image of angel/monster in literature. Female authors of the nineteenth century embraced the dichotomy but instead of taking angel/monster images as opposing poles they constructed the two posing as doubles. According to Gilbert and Gubar, this was the reflection of the anxiety of authorship emerging from the frustration with male literary tradition and its denigration of women. (2000, p. 44)

Women authors of modern Turkish literature faced similar problems of authority and had to overcome the images of femininity created by male authors. In *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış* (A Critical Look at the Turkish Novel, 2013), Berna Moran states that during the modernization process of Tanzimât (Reorganization) in Ottoman Empire, with the aim of westernization, women’s place in society was one of the many things to be reorganized. Women had scarcely any rights in Ottoman Empire’s patriarchal and Muslim society. Focused on the problems of the society, Tanzimât novelists first wrote against

arranged marriages which they saw as a problem causing unhappiness and oppressing women. However, when writing against arranged marriages, similar to the Western Literature that they inspire from, they created two opposite types of women characterizations: “Victim type” and “Femme fatale type”. (p. 39) When “victim type” is characterized by her obedience, innocence, morality, passivity and virginity (p. 42); “femme fatale” is driven by her sexual urges, destroy young men and embodies all the opposite characteristics of “victim type”. (p. 40) Even though Tanzimât novelists were highly inspired by earlier Western novels, according to Moran, these two types of female characterizations were not direct adaptations of their European counterparts. Because of the disparate social conditions, forms and characters taken from Western Literature were adapted to the cultural and social context of the authors’ era. (p. 46) Moran’s explanation delineates how the conceptualization of ideal/undesirable women in simplistic stereotypes persists in different cultural and social contexts, even though the stereotypic traits of the characters change.

In a similar tendency with their female precursors, many women authors of modern Turkish literature used the theme of madness in their stories, poems and novels. Madness as a theme sometimes functioned as a subverting mechanism changing and enhancing the meaning of the term in the hands of these authors. For example, authors such as Leyla Erbil, Sevgi Soysal, Gülten Akın, Latife Tekin, Tezer Özlü, Şebnem İşigüzel, Aslı Erdoğan and Sevim Burak played significant roles in drawing attention to the problems that women face while using madness as a literary strategy and theme.

As we can conclude from the explorations of the interwoven history of madness, literature and women; problems of representing womanhood and madness in literature are still relevant. Mine Söğüt’s mad women are the continuum of the madwoman image created by long and complicated historical processes. Since the dualistic and stereotypical images of both madness and womanhood still persist, and these experiences still resists representation through the hegemonic language, exploring the representation of madwoman in modern day literature can provide powerful insight about gender and woman subjects.

CHAPTER II

The breakage of the verse enacts the breakage of the world.

(Shoshana Felman)²

Within reach, close and not lost, there remained, in the midst of the losses, this one thing: language.

This, the language, was not lost but remained, yes, in spite of everything. But it had to pass through a frightful falling mute, pass through the thousand darknesses of death-bringing speech. It passed through and yielded no words for what was happening – but it went through those happenings. Went through and could come into the light of day again, “enriched” by all that.

(Paul Celan)³

Phyllis Chesler starts her classical work *Women and Madness* (1972) with the mythological tale of Demeter and her daughters. According to the myths, Demeter had four daughters: Persephone, Psyche, Athena and Artemis. When Hades, the god of death, kidnapped and raped Persephone in order to make her his queen, Demeter became furious and cursed mankind for her daughter’s “natural fate” (p. XV, 1972). Upon seeing the fate of their sister, “the maiden’s helplessness and rape, the young bride’s childlessness, the mother’s suffering –the terrifying simplicity and repetition of it all” (p. XVI, 1972) other three began to question their own. Questioning Persephone’s - along with her mother’s and

² in Caruth, (1995), p. 32

³ in Caruth, (1995), p. 33-34

sisters' - traumatic fate is still relevant for her modern day sisters when the atrocities she faced are still traumas faced by women all over: violence, rape, motherhood or childlessness in a world that both demands and kills children...

As discussed briefly in the previous chapter, the secondary place of women in comparison to men in patriarchal societies underlies many problems and double standards that women face during their daily lives. Overlooked gender bias in many areas of social life along with cultural productions highlight the permanence of injustice among sexes. As we can conclude from the brief summary of the historical progress of psychiatry, a critical lens is always necessary; even when the subject we are dealing with has at its core the claim to be objective. Literature, with its unique relation to language, can multiply and crystallize what is overlooked, and help maintain a critical look.

In this chapter, the aim is to read the writings of Mine Söğüt to gain insight into the possible meanings produced by madwoman image in literature and how madness as a literary theme and strategy can be deployed in telling the stories of women traumatized by patriarchal societies' inherent contempt and discrediting attitude towards women. "The terrifying simplicity and repetition" of women's suffering embodied in the mad women characters vividly portrayed by Söğüt offers a better understanding of female experience and the double standards they face daily in a misogynist world. Keeping in mind the silence expected from women and the silence that madness bears resulting from the separation from sanity and its language, whether and how we can tell women's stories which are based on silence will be questioned. Even though experiences such as madness and trauma are deemed impossible to convey because of the rupture between language and the experience itself, literature can make the reader catch a glimpse of the unnarratable experience by recreating insanity through narrative and showing the limits of narrative in a way to demonstrate sharply the impossibility to narrate. By magnifying prevalence, repeating traumas countless times, weaving the narrative with repetitive structure and content, playing with narrative voice, and narrating the silence; literature can re-enact the traumatic experience of gendering and madness in text.

In reading Mine Söğüt's writings the aim is to see how she utilizes her texts in order to materialize madness. With the construction of text, repetition both in themes and

structure, non-verbal forms of communication, and the blurred lines between reality and delusion, her narrative makes the reader experience the madness through textual representation. We can claim that Söğüt's narratives are indeed "mad" themselves both thematically and structurally with the conscious and well calculated choices of subjects and narrative strategies by Söğüt. Focusing on the marginalized and marginal thematically, always telling even the most horrific stories with brutal honesty, her texts become the textual embodiment of madness.

In Söğüt's narratives we see the reflection of inequality and suffering that women face daily because of their gender. Her works elucidate that even when trauma becomes one's normal with its expectedness, it is still traumatic. Söğüt's narratives are important in their insistence on using women's madness as a response to trauma, a reflection of the impact created by traumatic encounter. Her weaving of womanhood and trauma induced madness together in text highlights the silence and recurrent suffering that both possess.

In this chapter, first Mine Söğüt's four novels and her last fictional work which is a collection of short stories will be summarized. After outlining her work, I will focus on how gender becomes the ultimate source of madness in Söğüt's depiction of a crazy world; and how this madness is embodied and materialized in text. Discussing the role of Mine Söğüt's mad women in understanding the maddening gender impositions and questioning the way literature inscribes madness in text, the aim is to delineate the ways in which literature unravels embodiment of madness.

2.1. Mine Söğüt's Fictional Writings - A Brief Summary

2.1.1. Five Sevim Apartment Building / Beş Sevim Apartmanı

Mine Söğüt's first book *Five Sevim Apartment Building* (Beş Sevim Apartmanı, 2003) embodies the first examples of Söğüt's grasp of madness and gender. The book is telling the stories of the inhabitants of *Five Sevim Apartment Building*, five "lunatics"

abducted from a psychiatric institution by an equally mad psychiatrist. The psychiatrist, Samimi, is left to his aunt's care as a child after his father dies and his mother moves abroad without her son after marrying a foreigner. Wretched with abandonment and loneliness, Samimi starts seeing genies and fairies in his dreams and befriends them. After many years of isolation from people around him and spending time with these creatures in his dreams, Samimi falls in love with a woman. However, genies and fairies forbid him from showing any interest in the woman and threaten to kill both him and the woman he loves. Samimi becomes both furious and scared by his only friends' opposition to his happiness. Giving up his love, he dedicates his life to making everyone believe that the genies and fairies do not exist in order to take his revenge. To carry out his plan, he buys a five storey building –Five Sevim Apartment Building– and places the five people he kidnapped from a psychiatric institution. All of his captives believe that they are possessed by genies and fairies. Samimi believes that he can unlock the mysteries of his former supernatural friends by studying people possessed by them, then destroy them from within. All five inhabitants of Five Sevim Apartment Building killed women (mothers, grandmothers, imaginary sisters) or womanhood (their sexuality) upon going mad.

The name of the apartment, Five Sevim, comes from the traumatic story of a woman named Huriye. Huriye is left by her beloved husband after she could not give birth to a male offspring for him. As she tries to have male babies for years, she gives birth to five baby girls instead, all named Sevim, all of whom die soon after being born: “Five Sevim girls. Five dead girls... I have buried five ill-fated babies...”⁴ (p. 30) cries Huriye. She knows that the only ill-fate little baby Sevims have is being born as girls in a patriarchal world; she knows that her baby girls are dying because of “lovelessness” and “hate” (p. 30). When her husband leaves her following the birth of the fifth Sevim, Huriye adopts five cats, names them all Sevim and starts caring for other cats in the streets. Accepted as “half-insane and silent” (p. 24) she is nicknamed as Five Sevim Huriye after her five cats. One day, upon seeing genies and fairies in her dream Five Sevim Huriye disappears without any clue. Her dead body is later found on the tomb where she used to go and pray for male babies when she was younger. Huriye and all her baby girls are victims of patriarchy that only values males. Rejected by her husband Huriye goes half-mad;

⁴ Beş Sevim kız. Beş ölü kız... Beş bahtsız yavrucağ gömdüm... (p. 30)

rejected by their father five Sevims die. Söğüt's narration of womanhood, with only two options left by patriarchy, death or madness, and in both cases silence, manifest itself explicitly in Five Sevim Huriye's and her daughters' ill-fates.

In *Five Sevim Apartment Building* (2003) Huriye and her daughters are not the only females to be traumatized or killed by Söğüt's narrative world that hates women. The madman placed on the first floor by Samimi, named Oğuz, has been institutionalized for killing his mother. His mother, Gülsüm, was kidnapped by a man when she was eighteen years old and remained isolated at home by her abductor/husband. She feels happy for a while, however when they start to face financial problems, her husband forces her into prostitution. Refusing prostitution, Gülsüm tries to go back to her family, but they do not accept her back into their home. At that time, Gülsüm finds out that she is pregnant and it is too late for an abortion. Upon failing to abort the baby herself, she directs all her anger to her husband and kills him in his sleep. (p. 45-46) After giving birth to her son Oğuz in prison Gülsüm never cares for him. Oğuz is raised by the other women in prison. One day he hears them whispering: "She is waiting for him to grow up: that mad woman will kill this poor innocent boy when he grows up."⁵ (p. 46) From that moment on, Oğuz believes that his mother will kill him when he grows up, and he makes himself believe that he is a dwarf who will never grow up. After they are released from prison Oğuz creates an imaginary world for himself, always staying at home and hiding from his mother whenever possible. When he turns fifteen, his mother, who now works during the night, one day turns to Oğuz and says: "You are grown up now. (...) I can't take care of you anymore. If you want to stay in this house, go find a job and work."⁶ (p. 48) His mother's words, which are only complaints concerning the financial burden he imposes on her, makes the already paranoid Oğuz believe that she will kill him. Oğuz kills his mother that day. According to Söğüt, Gülsüm's fate is a common one, an "ordinary story" (p. 45). Yet, its ordinariness does not make the experience any less devastating for Gülsüm. Despite the commonness of her traumas, Gülsüm still goes mad, kills her husband, hates and is killed by her son.

The second inhabitant of Five Sevim Apartment Building is Yeşim the nymphomaniac. Neglected by her parents, Yeşim starts to seek attention from men at the

⁵ "Yavrucağın büyümesini bekliyor: büyüsün öldürür bu günahsız garibi o deli kadın. " (p. 46)

⁶ "Artık büyüdün. (...) Sana daha fazla bakamam. Bu evde kalmak istiyorsan, gider kendine bir iş bulur, çalışırsın." (p. 48)

age of twelve. One day when she is fourteen, her mother finds her on the floor unconscious and covered in blood. After the doctors tell the mother that her daughter was four months pregnant and aborted the baby by herself, she becomes devastated. She also worries about telling her husband about it: “It was the hardest thing for a mother. No, actually it was the second hardest thing. The actual hardest thing was to tell the father.”⁷ (p. 64) Struggling with accepting her daughter’s secret life and the anxiety of telling her husband about it, the mother goes mad. Going mad is salvation for her: “Thus, she is saved from telling what has happened to the (...) father.”⁸ (p. 64) After learning what has happened to his daughter and wife, the father has a heart attack and dies. Upon losing her parents, Yeşim starts to live with her grandmother. Since no one is willing to tell an old lady who has just lost her son-in-law and whose daughter has just gone mad about the “immorality” (p. 65) of her granddaughter, Yeşim feels free to sleep with many men around the neighborhood. Yet, one day, fearing that her grandmother will find out about all her wrongdoings, Yeşim tells her that she has been visited and raped by genies at nights. Believing her granddaughter's story, old woman takes her to a hodja, in order to save her from genies. Instead, the hodja makes sure that Yeşim only sleeps with him. After a while, Yeşim is institutionalized for killing her grandmother. In Yeşim’s story, the psychological problems that a young girl faces destroy a family because of the shame that her mental condition and behavior might brought upon it. Yeşim’s story shows precisely how the perception of a mental illness is affected by gender norms and roles. The taboo surrounding women’s sexuality and the fear of being marked as immoral make the parents focus on the social consequences of their daughter's illness rather than her well-being.

On the third floor of the Five Sevim Apartment Building, Yusuf lives believing that he is the victim of a neglected and abused childhood. In reality, carrying suicidal tendencies and frustrated by the failure of his attempts to take his own life, one day Yusuf kills his mother. Even madness of men kills women in Söğüt’s text, similar to real world. It is also worth mentioning that Yusuf is the only character in *Five Sevim Apartment Building* whose madness is not overlooked by his family or became a source of trauma and oppression for him. Coming from a relatively wealthy and “normal” family, his main

⁷ “İşte bu bir anne için en zor şeydi. Hayır, aslında ikinci zor şeydi. Asır zor olan işin babaya nasıl anlatılacağıydı.” (p. 64)

⁸ “Böylece olan biteni (...) babaya anlatmaktan kurtuldu.” (p. 64)

discomfort is the apathy of his parents towards his need for attention. Yusuf, with his privilege of being wealthy and male, is in contrast with other main characters. In this regard, story of Yusuf's madness, differs from the others whose mental problems are induced or worsened by traumas related to gender norms.

Elif, a young woman with sexual identity disorder, stays at the fourth floor of the building. Being an only child, the daughter of an abusive man who only wishes for a boy, Elif finds the escape from her unwantedness in dressing up and pretending to be a boy. When her father gets drunk at nights, he also participates in this game of self-deception. In time Elif forgets about being a girl and starts believing that she is actually a boy: "Elif, the protagonist of this game forgot about the truth soon enough. Even she would not know if she was a girl or boy. This omission created locked doors inside her. She hid all her feelings behind these doors."⁹ (p. 98) When her father dies when she is 10 years old, the oppression and self-hatred he created does not disappear for Elif; on the contrary despite her mother's protests, she keeps mourning for her father. After spending many years believing her gender to be male and creating an imaginary sister in time, Elif's quiet strangeness takes a radical turn when her mother marries again and gives birth to a boy. The day of the birth Elif goes mad and starts to write "A child was murdered"¹⁰ (p. 100) on every surface she can find. Murdered as a subject because she is a girl, Elif seeks salvation in disguising as the more desirable and "superior" gender. In order to obtain a little bit of love and acceptance, she kills her womanhood.

Melike is the last resident of Five Sevim Apartment Building, residing at the fifth floor. Born out of wedlock and not knowing her father, Melike grows up with dreams of meeting him. Raised by her mother and grandmother, both of whom have had many lovers and gave birth to many fatherless children, Melike stays at home and take care of the other children of the house during the day. One day, when no one is at home but Melike, a man comes looking for Melike's mother. Believing that this man could be the father in her dreams, Melike invites him in. The man rapes Melike and leaves. After spending a few days as if nothing happened, Melike sees her father/rapist in her dream and asks: "Why?" The man answers: "It is because of your mother and grandmother." (p. 117) Upon this

⁹ "Bu oyunun baş kahramanı Elif, çok geçmeden gerçeği unuttu. Kız mıydı, erkek miydi o da bilemez oldu. Bu unutuş onun içinde kilitli kapılar yarattı. Tüm hislerini, duygularını bu kapıların ardına sakladı." (p. 98)

¹⁰ "Bir çocuk öldürüldü." (p. 100)

answer, Melike wakes up and kills her mother and grandmother. According to Melike, her mother and grandmother are the ones to blame for all the terrible things she faced: “They repelled my father... They left me fatherless... They hid my father from me... My father...”¹¹ (p. 117) Suffering all her life because of a father that never came and driven insane by trauma caused by a man, Melike still blames and punishes women. Being the cause of rejection by men, mother’s and grandmother’s “immoral” behaviors are punished severely.

All the stories of five mad residents of Five Sevim Apartment Building and the story of Huriye, mother of five dead Sevims, depict a world where gender norms work against women. Huriye, Yeşim, Elif and Melike are all driven mad by traumas related to gender norms. Likewise, two male characters, Oğuz and Yusuf’s stories also demonstrate how gender roles and madness affect women. Both Oğuz and Yusuf kill their mothers.

2.1.2. *The Red Time / Kırmızı Zaman*

Mine Söğüt’s second book, written in 2004, *The Red Time* (Kırmızı Zaman) tells the stories of four main characters whose lives are woven together around a forgotten Executioner Cemetery and madness. An old man named Uncle Time (Zaman Dayı), a poor little girl named Hüsrân (Disappointment), a young man named Botan and an Executioner from the past. In a similar fashion to her first book, Söğüt weaves the stories around madness. Nearly all of the characters have at least one woman traumatized and maddened in their own stories. Uncle Time, a mysterious fisherman, is actually a prisoner on the loose who have been jailed for killing a young girl by cutting her half with an axe. In reality, as a strange man living mostly in woods near his village after losing his parents, he finds a girl raped and nearly dying. The girl, her bottom half covered in blood, asks Uncle Time not to take her to the village in that state in order to prevent her mother from the shame that her daughter’s rape will bring (p. 158). Botan’s mother is maddened after she finds out that her husband who left many years ago is killed by his girlfriend. Fixated on his father’s

¹¹ “Onlar babamı kaçırdılar... Onlar beni babasız bıraktılar... Onlar benden babamı sakladılar... Babamı...” (p. 117)

death and neglected by his mad mother, Botan starts to search for his father's corpse in morgues and cemeteries. The Executioner, Leon, is the illegitimate son of a rich Jewish woman and a poor Gypsy man born at the end of 19th century Ottoman Empire. When his mother was sent away after giving birth as punishment by her father, her newborn baby was given to his father's Gypsy family where he was raised by his grandmother (p. 61-62). Lastly, the little girl Hicran is the long awaited daughter of a poor family, who is not permitted to go outside due to her severe allergies.

Unlike Söğüt's other fictional works, mad women are not the main characters in *The Red Time* but make up the side stories. Mother of the young woman who was raped and nearly murdered by the time she was found by Uncle Time; daughter of Uncle Time's inmate friend from prison who is also kidnapped, raped and murdered at the age of twelve; both Botan's mother and his father's lover driven crazy by Botan's father. Similar to any other narrative by Söğüt, the world of *The Red Time* is also a cruel one, especially for women. Even though the book is mostly deals with the subjects of violence, madness, death and fate on a larger scale, traumatic existence of women still comprises the background of narrative and helps to underscore the prevalence of violence and injustice. When the little girl Hüsrân first started to think about the world they live in and its mysteries the one thing that she is sure of is that the world is more evil for women than men: "Yet, Hüsrân knew, there were always news of honour killings in newspapers that his father brings home from time to time. Generally, women were the ones to be murdered in these killings." (p. 40-41)¹², "[I]n the newspapers women were always falling for the wrong men. Women were always the ones to get hurt in the end." (p. 41)¹³

2.1.3. *Şahbaz's Marvellous Year 1979 / Şahbaz'ın Harikulâde Yılı 1979*

Şahbaz's Marvellous Year 1979 / Şahbaz'ın Harikulâde Yılı 1979 (2007) tells the story of year 1979, one year before the military coup in Turkey. Divided in two sections, the book comprises of first the fictional account and after the almanac of the year 1979. In

¹² "Oysa Hüsrân biliyordu, zaman zaman babasının eve getirdiği gazetelerde hep namus cinayeti denen haberler vardı. Bu cinayetlerde öldürülenler genelde kadınlar oluyordu." (p. 40-41)

¹³ "(Oysa) gazetelerdeki haberlerde hep kadınlar yanlış adamları seviyordu. Sonunda zarar gören de hep kadınlar oluyordu." (p. 41)

Şahbaz's Marvellous Year 1979, Söğüt choses to tell the story of a collective trauma, through individual interpersonal traumas. Her narrative relies on the suffering and madness of women in creating a traumatic setting for the novel.

The book starts with the story of a cursed village. One day, a young girl named Hacer starts to dance naked and sings in the middle of the village: “Hacer... Mad Hacer... Possessed Hacer... dancing bare naked with identical crystal little genies around her and singing in a language that no one knows of.”¹⁴ (p. 7) After her twin brother, Mustafa, kills Hacer in front of whole village, the village experiences a short period of blessing. All the crops growing steeply, all women getting pregnant at the same time; people of the village believed that by murdering his sister, Mustafa brought blessing to their community. Yet, when all the women started to give birth to twins and the drought comes back even worse than before, people realized that the death of Hacer actually cursed them. Killing their own children and hoping to forget, people left the village. Only one set of twins survived the killings. Born in the cursed village, Melih and Salih are the sons of one of the only remaining set of twins. When the old wise woman in the village had a dream about the forgotten curse, she warns everyone about it. In order to lift the curse, Melih and Salih should kill their older sister. With the help of their father, they do so. That day, their mother runs away with their father's twin brother. Their father marries again, and has a daughter. After having another daughter, their father sends the twins with the fear that they might kill again. After a while, they return to village and kill their father and step mother. Later, Melih and Salih finds themselves in killing circle. Melih kills woman, puts the blame on Salih who does not remember anything, institutionalize him, then after his release starts killing again. Orphaned by her brothers, Emine is given to orphanage. When she is old enough to leave, Emine moves to the city, changes her name to Mehtap and meet with her half-brothers by chance. Not knowing their kinship, Mehtap/Emine sleeps with Melih and gets pregnant. Scared by giving birth to twins, she leaves one of them in a mosque's courtyard. Melih thinks that the curse of twins has been lifted since there is only one baby, hence he lets the boy lives.

¹⁴ “Hacer... Deli Hacer... Cinli Hacer... etrafında birbirinin aynı küçük billur cücelerle çınlıçplak dans ediyor ve kimsenin bilmediği bir dilde şarkı söylüyor.” (p. 7)

All-knowing bird-like creature named Şahbaz is actually the main character of the story. Şahbaz is behind every evil act committed; every killing, torture and pain is actualized in the knowledge of and sanctioned by him. Yet, he is not evil per se; he is only the embodiment of fate with all the things, good and bad. Since there is not much good in Mine Söğüt's narrative fate, Şahbaz is portrayed as an evil character. At the beginning of 1979, Şahbaz finds a tortured and dying woman in a police station and starts to care for her. Feeding her like a baby bird and telling her all the terrible stories happening in the city that year, Şahbaz keeps the "dead woman in the cellar" nearly alive, for a year. Woman in the cellar is already dead as a subject. Unable to talk, move and live, she is only a toy in the hands of Şahbaz, the evil fate: "They killed me either. You know Şahbaz, I am dead. In the silence and stillness of the dead, who knows how long I have been lying here. Indeed, I could also be lying down in a grave, couldn't I?"¹⁵ (p. 106) According to the woman, going mad or dying are the same: "Are these wounds never going to heal? Is the woman never going to die? The women sometimes die at nights. In her dreams. Even though she is embarrassed to embrace death as a salvation, she dies sometimes."¹⁶ (p. 102) "Is going mad the salvation Şahbaz? I want to be freed from old realities by going mad."¹⁷ (p. 145) The dead woman in the cellar is the embodiment of Söğüt's trauma prone, silenced and confined portrayal of womanhood throughout her literary works. Following her story for one year, we witness the acceptance of losing voice, being confined, not living yet still being alive... The woman asks the necessary questions: "How did I get used to it? How did I accept a life like this?"¹⁸ (p. 161) Nameless dead woman's mother is also one of the many women driven mad by the evil and death seizing the city and killing children that year. Waiting her daughter to come out of the police station for days, she loses her mind: "She went mad. An emancipated mad living on the streets. Like a bird freed from the

¹⁵ "Beni de öldürdüler. Biliyorsun Şahbaz, ben bir ölüyüm. Bir ölünün sessizliğinde, bir ölünün kıpırtısızlığında, burada, kim bilir ne zamandır yatıyorum. Aslında bir mezarda da yatabilirdim, değil mi?" (p. 106)

¹⁶ "Bu yaralar hiç geçmeyecek mi? Kadın hiç ölmeyecek mi? Geceleri bazen ölüyor kadın. Hayalinde. Ölmenin bir kurtuluş olduğunu düşünmekten utansa da, ölüyor bazen." (p. 102)

¹⁷ "Delirmek kurtuluş mudur Şahbaz? Delirerek kurtulmak istiyorum eski gerçeklerden." (p. 145)

¹⁸ "Ben buna nasıl alıştım? Nasıl kanıksadım böyle bir hayatı?" (p. 161)

enslavement of motherhood. Exempt from troubles, grief and worry. She walks, just walks.”¹⁹ (p. 167)

Similar to all other Söğüt’s narratives, women dying in the hands of men have nothing to do or say about their fate. Traumatic encounters are so common in the narrative that they are the “normal” for the society: “When Salih said “I will kill you”, she could not even scream. As if she was saying “Alright kill me, then I will go to the kitchen and turn on the burner for stuffed peppers.” As if she was accepting, waiting to die, to be murdered like it was something so ordinary.”²⁰ (p. 70) Still, when the traumatic events occur, they are devastating enough to kill or drive the subject mad, especially women who are surrounded by trauma.

2.1.4. *Madam Mr. Arthur and Everything in Her/His Life / Madam Arthur Bey ve Hayatındaki Her Şey*

Madam Mr. Arthur and Everything in Her/His Life (2010) is Mine Söğüt’s latest novel. It tells the story of Madam Mr. Arthur and the lives he affected. Madam Mr. Arthur is an evil shemale. Madam Mr. Arthur is portrayed to be the source of all evil in Turkey during the politically and socially tumultuous days of 1960’s and 1970’s. S/he is portrayed to be behind all the tortures, unsolved murders, and people going missing during that time period. S/he and her/his lover Keşşaf Hanuman plans the murders together and when Madam Mr. Arthur dreams and Keşşaf take her/his photographs during her/his dreams, the evil deeds became actualized.

In the beginning of the story, we see an old and lonely Madam Mr. Arthur, living with her/his mute maid whom he calls Maria. Maria’s actual name is Olga. She is a fugitive from one of the iron curtain countries who escaped after the fall of iron curtain. Maria/Olga does not speak since she has witnessed all the cruelties during the war in her country; after losing her children, being raped and tortured she gave up speaking.

¹⁹ “Delirdi. Sokaklarda yaşayan özgür bir deli. Annelik esaretinden kurtulmuş bir kuş gibi. Dertten, kederden, endişeden muaf. Yürüyor, sadece yürüyor.” (p. 167)

²⁰ “Salih “Seni öldüreceğim” dediğinde, bağıramadı bile. “Peki öldür, sonra ben mutfağa gider, dolmanın altını yakarım” der gibiydi. Ölmeyi, öldürülmeyi sıradan bir şeyi kabul edermişçesine bekler gibiydi.” (p. 70)

When Olcayto, a young author visits Madam Mr. Arthur to see her/his old pictures in the hopes of gaining the inspiration from them to write a book, he is not aware of the devastating consequences of his seemingly simple action. Madam Mr. Arthur's evilness starts to unfold once again. First, Olcayto meets with an old prostitute named Nagehan who lives across the street from Olcayto's window. Nagehan sees the pictures of Madam Mr. Arthur and ran away from Olcayto's apartment looking scared. She told him to look for Kedileş (Catcarcass) if he wants to get some answers. Kedileş is an old Gypsy man who used to work for Madam Mr. Arthur. Kedileş told Olcayto that he does not know what happened to Madam Mr. Arthur but if he wants to find out, he has to talk to his lover Keşşaf Hanuman. Olcayto can only find a woman who shares Keşşaf's last name: Şehnaz Hanuman. Even though Şehnaz knows that she is the daughter of Keşşaf and he paid for her every need throughout her life, she has never met him and knows nothing about him. Upon learning that her father Keşşaf was the lover of a shemale, Şehnaz sleeps with a shemale prostitute in despair. A Kurdish boy named Deniz, is also a part of these messy, labyrinth-like connection between characters. When Maria/Olga first came to Turkey, she works in a hairdresser salon and meets Deniz. Seeing a resemblance between her son and Deniz, Maria/Olga moves in and lives with him until she is beaten to death by Deniz's brothers who are after Deniz as a matter of honour. When Deniz's brothers left Maria/Olga to death on a road across the street of Madam Mr. Arthur's black mansion, Madam Mr. Arthur takes her in and names her Maria.

In the last chapter, Madam Mr. Arthur is dead with her/his murderer unknown and now Olcayto is sitting in his place. Maria/Olga and Olcayto are trapped inside Madam Mr. Arthur's black mansion. Maria tells Olcayto/Madam Mr. Arthur her/his story: When Olga was young, she met and slept with Madam Mr. Arthur and gave birth to her/his child; a baby girl named Nagehan. Madam Mr. Arthur carefully observed the girl from a distance, never entering her life. One day, Madam Mr. Arthur's lover Keşşaf falls in love with another man named Ruhat. When Ruhat, Keşşaf and Nagehan sleep together, Nagehan becomes pregnant with two babies; one is from Ruhat and the other is from Keşşaf. After babies are born, Keşşaf takes his daughter, Şehnaz and raises her from a distance. Ruhat raises his son Olcayto with his wife. Later, Madam Mr. Arthur kills both Keşşaf and Ruhat in the fear that Keşşaf can love Ruhat more than her/him.

At the end, Madam Mr. Arthur and Nagehan is dead, Şehnaz is missing. Olcayto and Maria/Olga are trapped inside the mansion. When Olcayto, now playing the role of Madam Mr. Arthur utters: “This is a ridiculous story”, Maria/Olga answers: “Life itself is even more ridiculous.” (p. 162)

Bearing many similarities with *Şahbaz’s Marvellous Year 1979* (2007), with character doubles, history repeating itself many times, an evil and omniscient character deleting borders between genders; *Madam Mr. Arthur and Everything in Her/His Life* also focuses on the subjects of evil, gender roles, masculinity and its relation to violence, femininity and madness.

It is important to note the difficulty of the task to summarize *Madam Mr. Arthur and Everything in Her/His Life* since it requires the confinement of a very complicated, chaotic and labyrinth-like narrative into a linear one. Therefore, it should be noted that the summary above only provides a slim outline for the reader.

2.1.5. *Mad Women Tales / Deli Kadın Hikâyeleri*

Being Söğüt’s fifth and last fictional book, *Mad Women Tales* (2011) is the most vocal one among Söğüt’s other books on the social causes of madness for women. It is a great example in showing that there is not just one, coherent story for women when it comes to their relation with madness. The women going mad in the stories are from different races and social classes; they have different educational and social backgrounds. The most prominent common ground for these women is their madness which is the result of living in a society that surrounds women with all kinds of trauma. The traumatic encounters that causes women in the stories go mad are usually experiences commonly faced by women characters in all of Söğüt’s narratives: Rape, not being able to give birth, post-partum depression, losing children, being the victim of incest, sexuality disorders... When in some of the stories, the reasons for women to go mad are manifested openly in narrative, in some of the cases they are left for the reader to trace. Yet it is nearly always possible to trace the madness to an external force or a social inducer.

Mad Women Tales is comprised of twenty-one short stories, twenty-one short poems before each story and ten illustrations portraying ten uncanny female images.

The stories in the book are as follows: That Marvellous Hair of My Mother (Annemin O Harikulade Saçları), The Magnificent Life That Wants to Kill Me (Beni Öldürmek İsteyen Muhteşem Hayat), Kurdish Cats Gypsy Butterflies (Kürt Kediler Çingene Kelebekler), Hibiscus Tea (Hatmi Çayı), The Woman with Something Like Fire Inside (İçinde Ateşe Yakın Bir Şey Olan Kadın), Good Night Dead Cats (İyi Geceler Ölü Kediler), Skillful Pink Hand (Maharetli Pembe El), When We Could Be Living Our Own Lives (Kendi Hayatlarımızı Yaşamak Varken), Madam Mr. Arthur (Madam Arthur Bey), Why Didn't Naz Bury the Cat Deeper? (Naz Neden Derine Gömmemiş Kediği?), Windows Love Butterfly Mads (Pencereler Kelebek Delileri Sever), When Flies Make Love (Sinekler Sevişirken), Vak Vak Tree (Vak Vak Ağacı), Farewell Ceremony (Veda Töreni), I Died in an Unjust Land (Vicdansız Bir Memlekette Öldüm Ben), Snake (Yılan), In the Park Missing a Tree (Ağacı Kayıp Parkta), Balloon (Balon), Isn't the Impossibility of Love That Makes It a Tale, Grandmother? (Aşk Hikâye Yapan İmkânsızlık Değil midir Anneanne?), Fingerless Yakup (Parmaksız Yakup), Why Did I Killed Myself in This City? (Kendimi Neden Bu Şehirde Öldürdüm?).

2.2. Can Mad Woman Speak?

As explained thus far, writing about madness and gender entails representation problems as well as authorial ones. When a text written by a female author delve into the traumas of gender and utilizes the image of madwoman to that end, problems of representation emerge: What purpose do the madwoman serve in that particular narrative? Does the dialogue of and about madwoman say something original and subversive; or does it sustain the old dual images of angel/monster dichotomy? Does the silence of madwoman just another portrayal and reminder of the lost voice of women; or could there be a disruptive meaning and symbolic resolution in that silence?

Keeping these questions in mind, in the rest of this chapter, Mine Söğüt's works outlined earlier will be read to demonstrate how the madness and womanhood are represented in narrative. With a narratological examination of narrative voice, reiteration and silence in text, the aim is to reveal the ways in which Söğüt manages to materialize madness in her writings. Through this madness in narrative, Söğüt also evokes the effects of gender imposition.

As an attempt to escape the two choices provided for a text by the traditional approaches, creating an empirical and definitive outside voice or silence in telling madness, Mine Söğüt find the solution in turning her texts into a maddening, chaotic, multifaceted narratives where there are no boundaries between stories, characters or even genres. From poems to stories, Turkish to French, songs to dictionary entries, scientific facts to supernatural creatures, text to illustrations... It is not possible to anticipate when to encounter these different elements in Söğüt's narration. Most of the time, the reader find herself not knowing whether to trust the narrator or the text itself or not. On the one hand, nearly always there is a third person narrator who seems like an all-knowing outside eye which calls the reader to believe the narrative. On the other hand, the reader is torn between the world of supernatural creatures, mythical tales, lies and almanacs, dictionary entries and psychiatric definitions. Repetition of stories, characters and phrases adds to the circular yet unexpected stream of events in these texts.

We can begin by examining the ways in which Söğüt employs narrative voice to overcome the challenges of providing a voice for those who lost their own.

2.2.1. Voice of Mad Women

In their groundbreaking book *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* first published in 1979, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar read the Victorian Literature's female authors to demonstrate how male imagery confined women with a dual identity of either angel or monster has been

transferred into female authors' writings when they attempted to pen. It is no surprise that women struggled to break out of the male imagery when they created their own female characters. Yet, the process of gender formation underlies the difficulty of the task of self-definition for women. As Butler explains, the formation of the subject as "I" does not come before or after the formation of gender. Instead, the speaking "I" emerges through the process of gendering. Hence, subjectivity of the speaking "I" relies heavily on the asymmetrical construction of gender. (Butler, 1993, p. 3) Also, "a split is introduced in the feminist subject by the distinction between sex and gender." (Butler, 1999, p. 9) Entering the gendering process creates a split in all of its subjects, but especially for the ones that are constituted as the other. That is why it has been a challenging task for women to create a voice, a speaking "I", with the language that has played a significant part in their oppression through gender relations.

Moreover, Mine Söğüt's novels and stories focused mostly on the subaltern people of society such as ethnic minorities, immigrants, poor, disabled, mentally unstable people and women brings into question another obstacle in giving voice. In "Can Subaltern Speak" (1988), Gayatri Spivak discusses the im/possibility of acquitting voice for the subaltern by focusing on the representation of the other by the western gaze. She questions the very endeavor of representing a subaltern group with the hegemonic discourse which plays an active role in the othering process. In the end, Spivak concludes that "The subaltern cannot speak" since its construction as the subaltern relies on the language of its oppressor (1988, p. 308).

In a similar vein, Michel Foucault sees a "rupture in a dialogue" between the languages of the rational mind and the mad (2006, p. xxviii). According to Foucault, after the rupture resulting from the glorification of reason and the exclusion of unreason by modern western thinking during the Enlightenment, the only remaining way to trace the history of madness is to explore the silence created by this rupture. For him, madness was unnarratable since it will always defy meaning because of its exclusion from the language of reason. Since the language of reason was established on a conscience exclusion of unreason and insanity, the language of madness was lost. Foucault states, "Classical madness belonged to the realms of silence. [...] In itself, it was a silent thing: there was no place in the classical age for a literature of madness, in that there was no autonomous

language for madness, and no possibility that it might express itself in a language that spoke its truth.” (Foucault, 2006, p. 516) Therefore, Foucault argues that madness was impossible to convey with the language of reason which excluded and stigmatized it in the first place.

When we read Butler, Spivak and Foucault together, the question of representing mad women who are oppressed and robbed of subjectivity raises more than ever. If there is no “I” without the construction of maddening gender construction and it is not possible to speak as an objectified and mad subject, then how can one tell the stories of women? In Söğüt’s writings, the answer lies in the gaps and dissolutions of language which disrupts the hegemonic discourse to represent unnarratability within the limits of language and literature. Söğüt plays with the narrative voice in a way to tell the stories of these people without confining them to the voice of the sovereign.

When questioning the ways in which madness and the maddening impact of gender impositions are constructed in text through narrative strategies in Mine Söğüt’s writings, the first strategy to look into is the perspective. In all of her fictional writings, Söğüt deliberately plays with the narrative voice to create an unreliable narrator. This strategy both highlights her own position as a female author who is trying to exist in a male dominated world of literature, and also the unnarratability of her choice of themes. By creating a narrative voice that tells supernatural tales with a nearly factual firmness, that openly lies and admits lying, that shifts constantly between first and third person Söğüt establishes a sense of uncertainty and uncanniness.

Especially in *Mad Women Tales* (2011), in which every story has its own point of view and voice, the narrative perspective and voice gain significant importance in creating the madness that captures the text and characters. *Mad Women Tales* (2011) is comprised of twenty-one stories with twenty-one short poems before each story. While all the stories include one or more mad women characters, all maddened by some external force; short poems function to connect the narrative and reflect a powerful depiction of womanhood. For a better understanding of Söğüt’s take on the subject of womanhood and its relationship to madness, it would be best to read the poems first. Ordered consecutively, the poems form a manifestation for women who suffer in the hands of patriarchy.

Mad Women Tales (2011) starts with the following poem:

*I will tell you of a delusion of an existence cursed with womanhood.
I will walk you through a lonely, desolate crowd
defined solely by what goes on in the space between their hair and their toes,
condemned to give birth,
destined to lose their children.
I will look out the windows that
women, hiding behind the doors leading to their souls, tore through their bodies
when they lost their minds.
I will jump off those windows over and over and over again.*²¹ (p. 9)

Apart from establishing the tone of the narrative, the first poem is also noteworthy in its unfolding of Söğüt's understanding of woman as "a delusion of an existence cursed with womanhood". Accordingly, being a woman is not an existence, but a "delusion" of one. Besides, by mentioning womanhood as a curse she underlies the fate imposed on women because of their gender. By narrating how women are defined only by their physical existence and become prisoners in their own bodies, Söğüt highlights the objectification of women. The description of a walk which can be read as life based upon the portrayal of loneliness in a "desolate crowd" (p. 9) Söğüt portrays the lonely and oppressed place of women in life. Women are both "condemned" to have children and "destined" to lose those children in a violent world ruled by men, as we will see in the stories and novels. Utilization of words such as cursed, defined, condemned and destined underlies once again the external forces that shape women's lives.

What is striking in all of the poems is that they are all written in first person with an emphasis on "I" as the definitive subject. In this first poem, the narrator addresses the reader directly: "*I will tell you*", "*I will walk you through*". The positions of the reader and the narrator are sharply established in the beginning. The narrator claims to take the reader through a journey to witness womanhood. Indeed, in all of the twenty-one poems and twenty-one stories the reader witnesses different traumatic aspects of womanhood ending in madness. Yet, there is not one, coherent and direct voice in these stories unlike the poems.

²¹ Size kadınlıkla lanetlenmiş bir varoluş hezeyanı anlatacağım. / Sizi saçlarının ve ayaklarının ucu arasında olup biten şeylerden ibaret, / doğurmaya mahkûm, / çocuklarını kaybetmeye mühürlü, / yalnız, yapayalnız bir kalabalıkta dolaştıracağım. / İçlerine açılan kapıların arkasına saklanmış kadınların / Delirerek bedenlerinden dışarı açtıkları pencerelerden bakacağım. / O pencerelerden tekrar ve tekrar ve tekrar kendimi aşağı atacağım. (p. 9)

*A wound big as a cave in my groin.
A long thin thread between giving birth and killing.
A thick beam between losing my mind and cooking up the food.
I come and go.
I come and go.
With every step I smash s-o-m-e-t-h-i-n-g.
Now I will vomit that thing on you.
Now I will carve your eyes out with that thing.
Now take look... a good look... I will become that thing.*²² (p. 17)

In the poem above, “a wound big as a cave” and “a long thin thread and a thick beam” might be read as metaphorical depictions of female and male genitalia; thus showing how sexual difference based mainly on having/lacking phallus works against women. When female genitalia feel like a wound for women, it marks the difference between the one who gives birth and creates life; and the one who kills and takes lives. In this dual system, there are neither many options nor the freedom to choose for women. They can either fulfil their assigned gender roles and cook up the meal; or they can choose to rebel against the system and go mad. Women can only follow the path chosen for them and “smash” themselves in the process, or embrace the pieces left from that “s-o-m-e-t-h-i-n-g” that has been crushed in the making of desirable, docile female image and use it as a weapon. However, this is not a positive embracement of femininity, but rather a rebellion against the forced requirements of womanhood as a way to crush them with violence. Woman here became the smashed “s-o-m-e-t-h-i-n-g”. Söğüt’s choice to break up the word “something” into its letters becomes the visual embodiment of the “smashing” that has been the core of womanhood and madness. The narrator of the poem is insistent on calling the reader to witness her process. The open invitation in the last verse “Now take a look... a good look” reminds the reader her position as the witness between stories. What is being witnessed is the smashing of that “s-o-m-e-t-h-i-n-g” both figuratively and visually. Here, we can say that the womanhood embodied in the mad women becomes a performative act.

²² Kasıklarımında mağara gibi büyük bir yara. / Doğurmakla öldürmek arasında uzun ince bir ip. / Delirmekle yemek pişirmek arasında kısa kalın bir kalas. / Gidip geliyorum. / Gidip geliyorum. / Her adımda b-i-r-ş-e-y eziyorum. / Şimdi o şeyi üzerine kusacağım. / Şimdi o şeyle gözlerini oyacağım. / Şimdi bak... iyi bak... ben o şey olacağım. (p. 17)

Women, not being able to create a unified and stable “self” that is not lacking and not outside language, smashes the language and system by descending into madness.

*By night I sleep under a heavy, very heavy rock.
By day I live at the tip of a delicate, frail leaf.
By night the rock crushes me down.
By day the wind knocks me over.
I bleed and bleed.
And so I write down my dreams in blood.²³ (p. 39)*

*You'd be surprised if you saw me making love.
I open my legs with great passion.
Nobody knows
where... where... where... I lie
when I lie under a man.
My tongue is long like a snake's.
It burns all the spots it licks.
My ears are deeper than wells.
Strange sounds flow down to it.
There is a big... huge... giant stain on my shell.²⁴ (p. 49)*

*I am not a woman,
I never gave birth, never made love,
Never been through that door,
Haven't collapsed into myself yet.²⁵ (p. 137)*

*Indeed I am only as much as
The pain in my groins and the wetness between my legs.
No more... no less.
Leave me alone.
To make all the love I want, to die wherever I want.²⁶ (p. 167)*

In these poems Söğüt portrays an elusive, repressed femininity that has been crushed under patriarchy to the point of not having a voice. Writing down dreams in blood, having a tongue like a snake symbolizes the lost voice and the impossibility for women to

²³ Geceleri ben ağır, çok ağır bir taşın altında uyurum. / Gündüzleri hafif, çok hafif bir yaprağın ucunda yaşarım. / Gece beni taş ezer. / Gündüz rüzgâr devirir. / Kanadıkça kanarım. / Hayallerimi o yüzden kanla yazarım. (p. 39)

²⁴ Beni sevişirken görseniz şaşarsınız. / Bacaklarımı hırsla açarım. / Kimseler bilmez bir erkeğin altına yattığımda aslında / nereye... nereye... nereye... yatarım. / Dilim bir yılan gibi uzundur. / Yaladığı her yeri yakar. / Kulaklarım kuyulardan derindir. / İçine olmadık sesler akar. / Kabuğumda büyük... büyük... çok büyük bir leke var. (p. 49)

²⁵ Kadın değilim ben, / Doğurmadım, sevişmedim, / O kapıdan geçmedim / Daha içime çökmedim. (p. 137)

²⁶ Aslında ben kasıklarımındaki sancı ve / bacaklarımın arasındaki ıslaklık kadarım. / Ne bir eksik... ne bir fazla. / Beni rahat bırakın. / Dilediğim kadar sevişeyim, dilediğim yerde öleyim. (p. 167)

express themselves. Metaphors of nature such as rock, wind and snake are also references to the place of femininity in the nature/culture dichotomy. Woman in the poem not only has a close relationship to nature but she is the nature itself.

However, even it is with blood, she dares to write her own dreams. She openly manifests her sexual desires or exhaustion. In the poems, she gains power from her connection to the nature. Even though the woman is expected to fit impossible standards by gender codes, and reduced to “pain in groins and wetness between legs”, she still feels entitled to reject that womanhood by remarking “I am not a woman”. The refusal of womanhood and language both represented in madness through a performative silence.

The stories in *Mad Women Tales* (2011) are all told by different narrators. Sometimes the mad woman speaks for herself in a stream of consciousness, sometimes a third person narrator tells her story, and in some cases the story is comprised of a hybrid of different point of views. This combination of different narrative voices and styles, infiltration of different languages and the ruptures in narrative all contributes to the disruption of language in the whole as a way to recreate madness in form.

For example, the first story “That Marvellous Hair of My Mother”, is a stream of consciousness of a young woman whose mother committed suicide. She is sitting with a fortune teller in the hopes that woman can analyze a dream that she never had and reveal the truth behind her mother’s suicide. Right after the first paragraph, someone says: “Practising... practising... practising...”²⁷ (2011, p. 11) It is the only time in the story an utterance is marked with quotation marks and cut the narrative. Rest of the story follows the different possible flows of events that lead to her mother’s suicide.

“They must have removed the rope from her neck gravely.
Gravely...
Gravely?
Is it possible? Is it possible to remove a rope from a body hanging from the
ceiling without hurting it?
Possible.
When people die time slows down. Dense times occurs gravely...
No!

²⁷ “Temrin...temrin...temrin...” (s. 11)

My grandmother must have screamed with haste.
No!
My grandmother must have been petrified.”²⁸ (2011, p. 12)

The lines above materialize the uncertainty and obscurity of the story. We as the reader do not know more than the narrator. The sense of suspense is visible in the sharp cuts between the lines. This technique to cut narrative by lines is one of the many ways Söğüt uses to evoke a sense of obscurity and suspense.

In “The Magnificent Life That Wants to Kill Me”, the interruptions in the narrative are delivered by songs in French, English and Turkish. In the story an old woman in her death bed reminisces about her life and sufferings. Her memory is fading, and she is holding on to the songs she knows in many different languages: “Remember what the song says: *Vie qui veut me tuer*, the life that wants to kill me, *c’est magnifique*²⁹, is magnificent! Magnificent doctor! Death is magnificent!”³⁰ (2011, p. 23) Her madness which is in the form of dementia makes her an unreliable narrator which contributes to the fogginess of text:

“I have counted, I know exactly five hundred and sixty-three songs. By heart. In many languages.”³¹ (p. 19)
“Seven hundred and forty-two songs. Not few. Myriad of songs.”³² (p. 19)
“I have learned three hundred and twenty-one songs in seventy-seven years. What will happen to those songs when I die my dear?”³³ (p. 19)

The unreliability of the character who is the narrating voice, spreads her madness to the text. Because of the trauma itself which drives the woman mad, the narrator is bound to be unreliable. First she is excluded from the language of patriarch, then she enters to the realm of trauma and madness which also yields a shattered language. Even though the reader cannot trust the narrator, she can still feel for the traumas of the old woman, her

²⁸ “Boynunudan ipi usulca çıkarmışlardır. / Usulca... / Usulca? / Bu mümkün mü? Tavana aslı bir bedeni incitmeden boynundan ipi çıkarmak mümkün mü? / Mümkün. / İnsanlar ölünce zaman yavaşlar. Usulca vuku bulur ağır zamanlı olaylar... / Hayır! / Anneannem telaşla çığlık atmıştır. / Hayır! / Anneannem kasılıp kalmıştır.” (s. 12)

²⁹ Italics in original.

³⁰ “Şarkı ne diyordu hatırla: *Vie qui veut me tuer*, beni öldürmek isteyen hayat, *c’est magnifique*, muhteşemdir! Muhteşemdir doktorcuğum! Ölmek muhteşem!” (s. 23)

³¹ “Saydım, tam beş yüz altmış üç tane şarkı biliyorum. Ezbere. Bir sürü dilde.” (s. 19)

³² “Yedi yüz kırk iki tane şarkı. Az değil. Ne çok şarkı.” (s. 19)

³³ “Yetmiş yedi yılda üç yüz yirmi bir tane şarkı öğrenmişim. Şimdi ben ölünce ne olacak onca şarkı kuzum?” (s. 19)

loneliness, fear and madness. The confusion of the mad woman becomes visible in the confusion of the text.

The disruptions in narrative are abundant in Mine Söğüt's writings in many different forms. In "Good Night Dead Cats", excerpts from Torah cut the narrative several times along with French phrases. A mad woman speaking to stray cats in French reads them excerpts from Torah:

"AND YOU SHALL NOT MISTREAT A STRANGER, NOR SHALL YOU OPPRESS HIM, FOR YOU WERE STRANGERS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT..."

Egypt c'est où, vous savez? Do you know where Egypt is?

"Yes, we know, you have told us before miss. You said Egypt was a faraway land. You said cats were sacred there. You said your ancestors had lived there. Your prophet was born there. First you were happy, then you were oppressed. You have been exiled from your lands."

Woman do not hear the cats, continues to read:

"YOU SHALL NOT OPPRESS ANY WIDOW OR ORPHAN. WHEN YOU LEND MONEY TO THE POOR PERSON, YOU SHALL NOT BEHAVE TOWARD HIM AS A LENDER; YOU SHALL NOT IMPOSE INTEREST UPON HIM. IF YOU TAKE YOUR NEIGHBOR'S GARMENT AS SECURITY, UNTIL SUNSET YOU SHALL RETURN IT TO HIM, FOR IT IS HIS ONLY COVERING; IT IS HIS GARMENT FOR HIS SKIN. WITH WHAT SHALL HE LIE?"^{34, 35} (p. 53)

The leaps between languages and the contrast created by the holy and commanding voice of the Torah and absurd utterances of stray cats and mad woman once again discompose the narrative. Söğüt's deployment of seemingly serious textual excerpts to create contrast is not rare in her writings. She uses this strategy nearly all of her fictional narratives.

³⁴ *"GARİBE HAKSIZLIK ETMEYECEKSİN VE ONA GADRETMEYECEKSİN; ÇÜNKÜ SİZ MISIR DİYARINDA GARİPTİNİZ..." / Mısır c'est où, vous savez? Mısır neresi biliyor musunuz? / "Evet, biliyoruz daha önce anlattınız bize bayan. Mısır çok uzak bir yer dediniz. Kediler orada kutsaldı dediniz. Benim atalarım da orada yaşardı derdiniz. Sizin peygamberiniz orada doğmuş. Önce mutluymuşsunuz, sonra zulüm görmüşsünüz. Topraklarınızdan sürülmüşsünüz." / Kadın kedileri duymaz, okumaya devam eder: / "HİÇBİR DUL KADINI VE ÖKSÜZÜ İNCİTMEMEYECEKSİN! EPER BİR YOKSULA ÖDÜNÇ PARA VERİRSEN, ONA KARŞI TEFEÇİ GİBİ OLMAYACAĞSIN. ONUN ÜZERİNE FAİZ KOYMAYACAĞSIN. EĞER KOMŞUNUN ARABASINI REHİN ALIRSAN, GÜNEŞ BATMADAN ONCE ONA GERİ VERECEKSİN. ÇÜNKÜ O KENDİSİNİN TEK ÖRTÜSÜDÜR, BEDENİNİN GİYİMİDİR. NE İLE YATSIN?" (s. 53)*

³⁵ Italics and capitalization in original.

In *Five Sevim Apartment Building* (2003) there are breaks in the narrative with sections from Koran (p. 18), names of psychiatric disorders (p.19), and little passages written in italic which seem like entries from a dream interpretation dictionary.

*Seeing **ribbon** in a dream is a sign of death. A relative of the one who sees ribbon in a dream dies. Dies. Dies. Dies...*³⁶³⁷
(p. 42)

The entries from dream interpretation dictionary both functions to dissolve the narrative and eradicate the already blurred lines between different narrative voices both literarily and structurally. These entries also contribute to the uncanniness of the text by foretelling the upcoming events.

Furthermore, the 1979 almanac in *Şahbaz's Marvellous Year 1979* (2007); the dictionary entries explaining concepts such as time, fear, fate, father, lie, myth and Allah before each section of the book in *The Red Time* (2004) are also contribute Söğüt's crazy, entangled, unexpected narrative with the contrast they create when they are juxtaposed with the nonsense.

Söğüt's plays of narrative create a language that is fragmented, chaotic and labyrinthic. The reader must work to find the meaning and her own way in the narrative which resembles an entangled ball of strings with no visible end. Her narrative plays allow Söğüt to generate a sense of madness in text. Escaping the linear narrative and the language of reason, Söğüt finds a way to express madness in literature.

2.2.2. Repetition

Repetition is one of key concepts of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory. The notion of "compulsion to repeat" explains the working of the repressed to return to the conscious mind. Freud explains repetition as "a transference of the forgotten past" (1958, p.

³⁶ "Rüyada **kurdele** görmek ölüme işaretidir. Rüyasında kurdele gören kimsenin yakınlarından biri ölür. Ölür. Ölür. Ölür..." (s. 42)

³⁷ Italics and bold in original.

151), something that keeps coming back to the surface from the past. Unable to comprehend the traumatic encounter in the first place, the survivor of the trauma represses the experience. In order to confront and overcome what has been repressed, the person re-experience the traumatic event. One of the explanations about the repetition compulsion that Freud attests includes the desire to master the incomprehensible experience and gaining active participation in the process:

At the outset he was in a passive situation –he was overpowered by the experience; but, by repeating it, unpleasurable though it was, as a game, he took on an active part. These efforts might be put down to an instinct for mastery that was acting independently of whether the memory was in itself pleasurable or not. (Freud, 2015, p. 10)

As being one of the main traits of trauma, the repetitive re-enactment of the traumatic event by the victim creates a sense of subjectivity through active participation and the possibility to overcome the vicious circle.

Literary narratives of Söğüt, which consist of relentless repetitions and unbroken yet incomplete circles turn the text itself into a trauma narrative. The repetition both in fates of women who go mad and the repetition of words, sentences and sometimes whole pages which make up a great deal of the narrative, highlights the impossibility of confrontation with the past and the repressed. In addition to that, Söğüt's narratives usually create two or more different realities. Similar in their traumatic nature, yet different in the detail, these different realities and unreliable narration maintain the traumatic effects created by the text. The plentitude of repetition in Söğüt's writings both narratively and thematically, emphasizes the magnitude of the repressed. As Freud wrote, "The greater the resistance, the more extensively will acting out (repetition) replace remembering." (1958, p. 151)

First of all, it is repeatedly reminded to the reader that the all the stories are the same and they will keep happening over and over again, especially for women:

*I will give you a secret.
The very same woman will die.
The very same woman will give birth.
The very same woman will escape.*

All one and the same.

All one and the same.

All one and the same.

*That woman... that very same woman... is completely insane.*³⁸ (p. 31)

The only womanhood according to Söğüt's narrative is a traumatic circle, where women are destined to die, give birth and escape from their established fates. The woman is bound to be insane, since there is no way out of the patriarchal order. Womanhood is united under the experience of trauma as "all one and the same", because according to Söğüt's narrative, it is one of the most common and overlooked experiences that women have to face. The poems recreate the frustration of the repetition compulsion. Not being able to overcome the maddening fate, women are forced to relive their traumas over and over again. The reader can get a sense of this inhibition in text. Not only stories but also the narrative itself does not let the reader to go forward without reading the same phrases countless times.

I killed all my children

I built up all the walls

I dug up all the wells

I cracked open all the cracks

In the darkness of the mind

I got sentenced to life for ages

God knows when

God knows when

God knows when

*I will be free.*³⁹ (p. 161)

Repetition of words and sentences along with the women characters and their nearly identical, always traumatic stories, create a narrative prison for the characters that they can never break free, unless they are dead or mad. The iterative in poems reveal the suspense

³⁸ "Size bir sır vereyim. / Hep aynı kadın ölecek. / Hep aynı kadın doğuracak. / Hep aynı kadın kaçacak. / Her şey birdir. / Her şey birdir. / Her şey birdir. / O kadın... o aynı kadın... külliye delidir." (p. 31)

³⁹ "Bütün çocuklarımı ben öldürdüm / Bütün duvarları ben ördüm / Bütün kuyuları ben kazdım / Bütün çatlakları ben açtım / Aklın karanlıklarında / Asırlardır müebbet yattım / Kim bilir ne zaman / Kim bilir ne zaman / Kim bilir ne zaman / Kurtulacağım. (p. 161)

Besides the repetition of phrases and words consecutively, Söğüt sometimes repeats an entire sequence of events with the exact same narration for different characters. For example, in *Madam Mr. Arthur and Everything in Her/His Life* (2010), Olcayto visits Madam Mr. Arthur's black mansion and travels through labyrinth-like corridors with Maria/Olga by his side. Eighty pages after Olcayto's visit, his father Ruhat's visit is narrated with the same wording. Olcayto's two pages long trip in the black mansion and the moment he met with Madam Mr. Arthur is recreated in Ruhat's timewise earlier visit.

As if they were in a pool composed of jelly. It is unclear whether they were swimming or walking. Woman on the front him at the back. They are moving forward. Opening up closed doors one by one. [...] He is slipping. He is falling. Deeper. Much deeper. Where!⁴¹ (p. 42-43)

As if they were in a pool composed of jelly. It was unclear whether they were swimming or walking. Kedileş on the front Ruhat at the back. They were moving forward. [...] He is slipping. He was falling. Deeper. Much deeper. Where!⁴² (p. 121-122)

By portraying the traumas as an impossible to change fate for women instead of individual and rare occurrences, Söğüt puts forward the systematic and structural problems inherent in the patriarchal order as the reason for the women's suffering:

He loved them all. He never wanted to kill any of them. But he did not know any better. You love and kill women. Without knowing why. Then you forget everything and start all over again. Life is that simple. Or that complicated...⁴³ (p. 71, 2007)

The imperative to kill women is naturalized for men. Without knowing or questioning why, they kill women. Murdering women is not an outcome of some personal problem in Söğüt's texts. The repetition of the murders marks them as unavoidable and unquestioned.

⁴¹ "Jöleden müteşekkil bir havuzda gibiler. Yüzüyorlar mı, yürüyorlar mı belirsiz. Kadın önde o arkada. İlerliyorlar. Kapıları teker teker açarak. [...] Kayıyor. Düşüyor. Derine. Çok derine. Nereye! (p.42-43.)

⁴² "Jöleden müteşekkil bir havuzda gibiydiler. Yüzüyorlar mı, yürüyorlar mı belirsizdi. Kedileş önde Ruhat arkada. İlerlediler. [...] Kayıyor. Düşüyordu. Derine. Çok derine. Nereye! (p.42-43.)

⁴³ "Hepsini sevmişti. Hiçbirini öldürmek istememişti. Ama bildiği başka bir şey yoktu. Kadınları seversin ve onları öldürürsün. Nedenini hiç bilmeden. Sonra da her şeyi unutup, her şeye yeniden başlarsın. Hayat bu kadar basittir. Ya da karmaşık..." (p. 71)

Furthermore, in Söğüt's narratives filled with twins, never ending traumatic curses, repetition of fates and stories, blurring and highlighting the rapture between reality and fiction at the same time; madness gains materiality in the structure and narration. In *Five Sevim Apartment Building* (2003) every story is told twice, one from the viewpoint of the insane characters and one by the narrator. Unreliable narrators and repetitive narration reifies the madness.

Another function of these iterative narratives can be found in the uncanny effect that they create. According to Freud (1919), the doubles and repetitions create uncanniness for the experiencer:

These themes are all concerned with the phenomenon of the 'double', which appears in every shape and in every degree of development. Thus we have characters who are to be considered identical because they look alike. This relation is accentuated by mental processes leaping from one of these characters to another - by what we should call telepathy -, so that the one possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in common with the other. Or it is marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self. And finally there is the constant recurrence of the same thing - the repetition of the same features or character-traits or vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names through several consecutive generations. (1919, p. 3)

In *Şahbaz's Marvellous Year 1979* (2007), the narrator asks: "Şahbaz tells the woman life stories involving the same people. He always talks about doubles. I wonder... I wonder if Şahbaz is the woman's double?"⁴⁴ (p. 156) Echoing the narrator's questioning, the woman also fears that she has been divided into two: "Maybe I have been split into two. Ruptured. I ruptured myself and throw every piece in different places. Two by two..."⁴⁵ (p. 156) Repetition of characters especially for women characters, suggest the rupture of women in two by the dual images of patriarchal femininity. Also, the uncanniness of the rupture emerges through narrative.

⁴⁴ "Şahbaz kadına içinde birbirinin aynısı insanların olduğu hayat hikayeleri anlatıyor. Hep aynı insanlardan bahsediyor. Acaba... acaba Şahbaz kadının ikizi mi?" (p. 156)

⁴⁵ "Belki de ikiye bölündüm ben. Parçalandım. Kendi kendimi parçaladım ve her parçamı başka yere attım. İkişer ikişer..." (p. 156)

All pervading uncanniness in the narratives of Söğüt created by endless repetitions and countless doubles coincides with the uncanniness of the female body. Women constituted as the other signifies something familiar yet strange enough to be feared; a double image of angel and monster. Söğüt's women mostly embody this dual imagery by both exhibiting admission to the assigned gender roles and the obliteration of the same by stepping into insanity. Uncanniness in this context, once again traps the reader into a mad and circular textual maze.

2.1.3. *Silence and Nonlinguistic/Nonverbal Forms of Communication*

Old Lacan takes up the slogan “What does she want?” when he says, “A woman cannot speak of her pleasure.” Most interesting! It's all there, a woman *cannot*, is unable, hasn't the power. Not to mention “speaking”: it's exactly this that she's forever deprived of. Unable to speak of pleasure = no pleasure, no desire: power, desire, speaking, pleasure, none of these is for woman. (Cixous, 1981, p. 45-46)

*Lacking... lacking... lacking...
Everything is lacking.
But I'm complete.*⁴⁶ (p. 55)

According to Lacan, being located outside the language women are unable to speak of their own pleasures. Women are not the only ones deprived of speaking. Silence has always been a great part of madness as explained earlier. “With respect to “madness itself,” language is always *somewhere else*.” (Felman, 2003, p. 44) Especially when it comes to female madness, doubled with the women's expulsion from language, silence becomes the focal point of interest:

Silence: silence is the mark of hysteria. The great hysterics have lost speech, they are aphonic, and at times have lost more than speech: they are pushed to the point of choking, nothing gets through. They are decapitated, their tongues are cut off and what talks isn't heard because it's the body that talks, and man doesn't hear the body. In the end, the woman pushed to hysteria is

⁴⁶ Yarım... yarım... yarım. / Her şey yarım. / Oysa ben tamam. (p. 55)

the woman who disturbs and is nothing but disturbance. (Cixous & Kuhn, 1981, p. 49)

Silence plays a significant role in Söğüt's narratives. Many madwoman characters in Söğüt's narratives lose their ability to speak or simply refuse to communicate with verbal expressions. Since the "communication between thought and madness" cannot be direct the mediation of fiction plays a great role in narrating what is left outside the language of reason. (Felman, 2003, p. 50) According to Felman "madness is already to a large extent an experience of injustice, and more often than not it is also the experience of a trauma. Literature narrates the silence of the mad as it narrates the silence of the trauma." (Felman, 2003, p.6) Madness is both an experience of injustice and trauma. Hence, in narrating the silence of the mad, literature also narrates the silence of the trauma. Felman's claim for literature narrating the silence is also significant for telling the stories of women/womanhood. Since being a woman is also to a large extent an experience of injustice and trauma, silence is also women's confinement. Then, how does Söğüt's texts employ silence in a way to reflect on madness and womanhood? To what extent she can actualize the claim of the first poem: "*I will tell you of a delusion of an existence cursed with womanhood.*" (2011, p. 9) Can she thoroughly materialize the silence of the "delusion of an existence cursed with womanhood" in writing?

Maurice Blanchot (1995) asserts that "[W]ithout language, nothing can be shown. And to be silent is still to speak." According to Blanchot, one needs language even to show silence. However, how can someone show silence in language? One answer is that by dissolving and showing the limits of language literature can open up a space for silence to be shown.

*A single eye will spin round and round in its socket.
From a single full, thin, pink, white, purple lip
smoked, musty, resentful, trembling words
will pour down.
Pick them up.
Dig up a deep well. Throw them in.
Whatever there is... whatever there is... whatever there is...*

*Throw it all in.*⁴⁷ (s. 25)

Firstly, in the poems Söğüt creates a narrator who embodies many aspects of the maddening female condition and even the derogatory traits such as the placing women on the side of nature instead of reason which has been used to suppress and degrade women. Words pouring down from just one lip, “smoked, musty, resentful and trembling” also represents the lost and repressed voice of women by emulating the female voice with earthly sounds. These words are thrown deep into wells since there is no way for them to be heard or understood. Also, the repetition of the phrase “whatever there is... whatever there is... whatever there is...” adds to the effect of words falling through a well by creating echoes.

*Don't ever ask me my name
Don't ever look straight into my eyes
Don't ever touch me when you pass by.
Imagine that I'm not here but there.
You can't reach there.
They demolished the bridges, burned the ships, the roads disappeared.
I'm different.
I'm as dangerous as cliffs
Eerie as rivers
Ecstatic as winds.*⁴⁸ (p. 63)

The “demolished bridges, burned ships and disappeared roads” symbolizes the impossibility for women to speak. Now, womanhood is something that belongs to nature; like cliffs, rivers and winds. Defined through the metaphors of nature, they have no name, no story to tell; no language of her own. Outside of language and killed as subjects, women are “not here but there”; they are out of reach.

In the story, Kurdish Cats Gypsy Butterflies, old Madam who is an ethnic minority cries: “What kind of world is this? Where did everybody go. Isn't there anybody who

⁴⁷ “Tek bir göz yuvasında fırl fırl dönecek. / Kalın, ince, pembe, beyaz, mor tek bir dudak / aranıp yerlere / tütsülenmiş, küflenmiş, küskün, titrek, kelimeler dökülecek. / Onları yerden topla. / Derin bir kuyu kaz. İçine at. / Ne varsa... ne varsa... ne varsa... / Hepsini içine at.” (p. 25)

⁴⁸ “Sakın bana ismimi sormayın / Sakın gözlerimin tam içine bakmayın / Yanımdan geçerken bana dokunmayın. / Varsayın ki burada değil, oradayım. / Oraya siz gelemesiniz. / Köprüleri yıktılar, gemileri yaktılar, yollar kayboldu. / Ben başkayım. / Ben uçurumlar kadar tehlikeli / Dereler kadar tekinsiz / Rüzgârlar kadar esriğim.” (p. 63)

speaks my language?”⁴⁹ (2011, p. 30) Her cry not only reveals her loneliness as an elderly woman, but also the need for someone to speak her own language. Being a woman and a minority with no one left to speak her language, she utters that after she will set her house on fire, “Everyone will scream in their own language.”⁵⁰ (p. 30)

Apart from being located in the realm of silence as the patriarchal order, many women characters choose silence as a way of avoidance instead of facing their traumas in Söğüt’s writings. As it can be seen from many of the examples, the silence is not a revolutionary act, but simply a refusal to participate in a game that you already have no power over: “After a while, Kader had gotten used to Elif living quietly, self-imprisoned in a male world.” (p. 100, 2004) Yet, even though madness cannot be considered a rebel act for the mad women of Söğüt, their madness materialized in text demonstrates the silence of women in a rebellious way.

When Hacer, raped by her brother, sings in a made-up language, her aim is not to convey her trauma but to end her suffering resulting from that:

*Zebut kimrek atançı
Tartihana burçka formançı
Karanzul vert
Karanzul vert* (p. 8, 2007)

My brother maddened me
In my womb his evil offspring
Somebody please kill me
Somebody please kill me⁵¹ (p. 9, 2007)

Hacer’s request for death outside any known language, marks once again her madness and death as a subject. Hacer cannot talk about her madness, in the language of the world that drove her mad. Yet, in order to die she calls for help from that world once again. There is an imperative to tell what has happened to her even though the given language is not sufficient enough to capture her madness. Hence, she turns to her made up language. Hacer’s renunciation of the given language marks the limits of language in telling the stories that are so overwhelming to tell by linear and reasonable narratives.

⁴⁹ “Nasıl bir dünya burası? Herkes nereye gitti. Dilimi konuşan kimse yok mu?” (p. 30)

⁵⁰ “Herkes kendi dilinde çığlık atacak.” (p. 30)

⁵¹ “Beni ağam delirtti / Karnımda onun kötü dölü / Biri beni öldürsün / Biri beni öldürsün.” (p. 9)

In Söğüt's writings, language gains a performative materiality, in which silence becomes visible by enacting the limits of language. When characters are faced with life shatteringly overwhelming occurrences, the language and the flow of the narrative starts to stagger. We witness the workings of madness in the disruptions, gaps, and breaks in the narrative which are directly linked with gender relations. Women's voice which has been lost by the imposition of gender roles can be extracted from these impediments in language. In the example of Olcayto seeing the photographs of Madam Mr. Arthur's evil deeds we see the narrative breaking into pieces and not being able to convey the magnitude of the event:

Madness is close.
Madness is close. [...]
On bridges.
On tramways.
On subways.
Dead-peo-ple-pho-to-graphs.
Burned bodies.⁵² (2010, p. 58)

The trauma of seeing something so evil changes the linear stream of events. The rupture in Olcayto's mind is seen in the rupture in "Dead-peo-ple-pho-to-graphs" and the break in the prose. The impossibility to portray such madness finds its reflection in the inadequacy of language and expressions, hence the disruption of both. By deliberately distinguishing the points where language is no longer capable of narrating with italics, capitals, bolds, breakage of words and sentences, different languages or made up words, Söğüt both reveals the distortion of reality in her characters and materializes the unnarratability of the experience.

Söğüt's narratives portray a world where trauma is the norm and madness is the natural outcome and also a rebellious performance for women. The importance of her work lies in the still shocking effect of her texts in telling trauma, suffering and madness. Even though "Insanity is a trauma that can be inured." (p. 67) it is still traumatic. Even when rape, murder, oppression, violence becomes one's normal, it is still traumatizing. Söğüt's narrative elucidates this with its insistence on madness, repetition and silence.

⁵² "Delirdi delirecek. / Delirdi delirecek. / Köprülerde. / Tramvaylarda. / Metrolarda. / Öl-müş in-san fo-toğ-raf-ları." (s. 58)

In all of her fictional writings, Söğüt searches for a voice for woman through madness and silence. She explores the limits of language and narrative to manifest how gender becomes a maddening and silencing force for all of the subjects it affects. Söğüt's mad women robbed of their subjectivity and voice find a way of expression through texts that gone mad, narratives resisting and disturbing the rules of language. Söğüt's texts mark the limits of language through literature. By exploring the limits and showing the incapacity to tell, Söğüt manages to materialize the incomprehensible and expose the readers to the maddening and silencing effect of gender formation.



CONCLUSION

Our country drive people mad... Especially women... The real problem is that people living under unfavorable conditions cannot speak of it and choose madness... These mad people have to suffer the tyranny of normalcy... As authors, we try to understand and protest through writing.

(Mine Söğüt)⁵³

As we analyzed so far, using literature's own devices and techniques such as narrator shifts, reiteration, dislocation of discourse and disruptions in the unity of the text Mine Söğüt finds her unique way to narrate the unnarratable. By maddening her texts, she manages to make her reader catch a glimpse of the unnarratable that is the maddening experience of gender formation especially for women. Yet, one of the main questions remain: What is the significance of the madwoman in telling the stories of women? Can mad women speak in these texts?

In The Madwoman Can't Speak: Or Why Insanity is Not Subversive (1998) Marta Caminero-Santangelo questions the power of the madwoman figure in subverting the dichotomous thinking that it supposedly criticizes. According to Caminero-Santangelo, the subversive metaphor of madwoman only offers an "illusion of power" contrasting with the feminist reading of madwoman as an empowering image. (p. 3) Caminero-Santangelo's rejection of the image of madwoman as a redemptive feminist symbol, stems from the disbelief in the subverting power of an image that is silent and imprisoned just as the patriarchal image of femininity that it tries to dismantle. If women are "resigning

⁵³ <https://yesilgazete.org/blog/2015/05/19/3-kadin-yazarla-delilik-hakkinda-bizim-ulkemiz-insanlarini-delirtiyor/> (accessed on October, 23, 2016)

themselves to silence, and to nonspeech.” through the image of madwoman, is it true that “the speech of the other ... then swallow them up, will speak for them”? (Makward, in Benstock, 1987, p. 49)

This criticism towards the metaphor of madwoman falls short in its negation of the power of literature in altering and subverting forms, meanings and stereotypes. By taking into consideration that even though “most Western literary genres are, after all, essentially male-devised by male authors to tell male stories about the world” (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 67), women managed to form their own narratives within those patriarchal constraints through the dynamism of literature and its plays with challenging given categories, meanings, images; it would be wrong to dismiss the subversive possibilities that the image of madwoman bears.

Culler (2000) asserts,

Literature is a paradoxical institution because to create literature is to write according to existing formulas – to produce something that looks like a sonnet or that follows the conventions of the novel – but it is also to flout those conventions, to go beyond them. Literature is an institution that lives by exposing and criticizing its own limits, by testing what will happen if one writes differently. (p. 40)

Culler’s explanation of literature as a field that breaks the rules and conventions of writing helps us understand how the madwoman image changed and include new meanings in the hands of different authors. In Söğüt’s writings silence inscribed in the dialogue and text created with the deployment of madwoman image, embody a powerful criticism towards the social constraints that drive people mad. Söğüt’s handling of the image of madwoman creatively and critically allows her narrative to expand the image.

Even though Söğüt’s images of mad women feed from the conventional and dominating image of madwoman, they also go beyond them in their silent resistance. Although Söğüt’s women are “resigning themselves in silence and nonspeech” they are not swallowed up by the speech of the other. Conversely, behind the imprisonment of madwoman in silence, there is a whole narrative speaking through the image. The linguistic

performance ensued in the silence of mad women weaved into the texts of Söğüt, produce new meanings for the image of madwoman that goes beyond the traditional one.

Failure of language and literature materialized in gaps, disruptions and breaks in the narrative, unravels the failure of subject who has only two choices: to accept the typical patriarchal construction of femininity or to reject the social construction all together by escaping into madness. Yet, we must note once again that none of the decisions above allow the mad women of Söğüt to acquire voice that is true to itself. Meaning that there is no complete and unified voice for these women after the initial loss upon entering gender normativity, neither in the language indoctrinated by patriarchal order nor in the madness which is just another form of mutism. The failure in language allows the reader to comprehend the loss and madness that is created by the gender relations. Narrative strategies and narratological devices deployed by Söğüt successfully turns her texts into representations of a madness that is a direct outcome of the patriarchal constructions of femininity and masculinity.

What all the mad women characters have in common is the very specific and traumatic kind of womanhood portrayed in them. Söğüt portrays women in a world where their gender prescribes them a certain role and with it a certain discomfort as well as a burden. As we can see in Söğüt's literary world womanhood equals to pain and suffering. The only way for women to stop suffering is going mad since madness locates them outside the gender norms and remove the burden to fulfil the role expected from them. Also, with the rupture from language and memory that comes with madness, they no longer have to deal with their traumatic past. Usually madness erases them as subjects and turns them into a silent and unresponsive bodies.

In a way the madness of women portrayed by Söğüt shows us there is not much difference between sanity and insanity for women. In the patriarchal order, women are already confined, silenced, erased as subjects. By carrying these outcomes to the extreme madness crystallizes the situation. However, madness is not the salvation as a liberating force in the lives of Söğüt's women characters. Mine Söğüt is not "praising the folly" in her stories of women and traumatic womanhood on the verge of madness. Her narrative

only demonstrates how madness is an integral part of gender impositions in patriarchal order.

In Söğüt's narrative madness not only implies clinically mad but also women who are eccentric with their lack of care for their prescribed gender roles. Even though Söğüt carefully uses the symptoms of modern psychiatry's strictly defined mental disturbances, it would be wrong to read her narrative with just this medical perspective. (Narlı, 2013, p. 261) Behind every description of psychiatric mental disturbances, there lies a social cause that drive the woman in question mad.

As we can conclude from the analysis of Söğüt's works, despite the endless repetitions of the most brutal experiences that Söğüt portrays abundantly, these experiences do not seem to lose their power to disturb and shake the reader. Madness weaved into the narratives of Söğüt demonstrates with great clarity and substantiality how people, especially women, in these texts are driven mad by the gender impositions. Furthermore, the madness gains materiality in narrative through narratological tools and strategies. Madness of Söğüt's women which usually is a performative act to forget and dissolve the language hence the disavowal of patriarchal order emerges as a visible and concrete means to demonstrate that

Even though the scope of this thesis mostly includes women as the victim of gender impositions, neither in life nor in Söğüt's narratives they are the only ones that suffer from the prescribed gender norms. In Söğüt's narratives the gender impositions are constructed as a traumatic and maddening experiences for everyone. In her narratives, little boys are forced to kill their sisters in the name of honour, homosexual and transsexuals are oppressed and destructed no less than females. Although the scope of this work is only limited to mad women characters, there are enough material to discuss gender and madness to a greater extent.

As we can conclude from reading Söğüt's work with a close look on the deployment of madness and womanhood, madness is not "a revolutionary act" (Felman, *Critical Phallacy*, 1975, pg.2) to be embraced for women under oppression. Women only "tore through windows from their bodies" when there is no actual window to breathe and their only option is either to die or live in their confined and predestined lives. By the time they open up these metaphorical windows which leads to madness they are already dead as

subjects; not allowed to speak, breathe or live. The “disruptions and gaps of traumatic experience” (Caruth, 1995, p.4) are reflected in Söğüt’s narrative with the disruptions and gaps in language. Yet, in madness these fictional women find a way to escape from their perpetual, never ending traumatic existence. By dissolving and breaking her narrative structurally, relying on countless repetitions and demonstrating the limits of language, Söğüt finds a way to make madness heard and seen in text.



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