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THE RESURRECTION OF THE MEDUSA IN THE FEMININE TEXT: DİDEM MADAK'S POETIC DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

Didem Madak is one of the representative female voices of modern Turkish Poetry flourished within the tradition of Western influence. With regard to the ideas raised by Hélène Cixous, the paper reveals how Madak's discourse undermines the closed signification system and puts the very language into question. The paper attempts to read Madak's poetry as *écriture féminine* and problematizes her discourse punctuated with ongoing ruptures, eruptions, protrusions and various types of linguistic creativities that subvert and violate the symbolic order. Cixous' allusive reference to Medusa of Greek mythology is significant in that the monstrous female gorgon's repugnant face with a curse-power is believed to turn the gazers into stone. Medusa's visage is considered to be the sign of female rage as well as male anxiety. Direct allusion to the myth of Medusa has heated up the debate as to the production of "*écriture féminine*," which, disclosing maternal realm of discourse, highlights the significance of "what women's writing will do" instead of "what it is." The paper reveals that Madak has produced a nonlinear discourse of female voice with open-ended rhetorical questions as well as evasive metaphors, adopting a genuine ironic voice that undermines the binaries reinforced so far by mythologies. Thus the paper argues that Didem Madak's poetry makes it possible to hear the undercurrent laughter of Medusa while roaming on the fringes of *écriture féminine*.

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

As suggested by Hélène Cixous in her "The Laugh of the Medusa," the threatful exposition to Medusa's face is compared to the involvement in *écriture féminine* in that Medusa's visage indicates female rage or insurrection explored and represented through *écriture féminine*, which Didem Madak has produced in her poetry. Like Cixous, Madak, stressing women's historical-sexual difference in perception and

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expression, questions the traditional idea as to women's writing. Therefore, she reveals textual femininity in her poetic discourse, and, as opposed to some reductive psychoanalytic approaches to femininity and to the concept of "other," she deliberately works on historical-sexual differences of women and women writers.

Hélène Cixous, like other feminist theorists, rereads/reinterprets Lacanian concepts of the Imaginary and the Symbolic Order. Cixous, in her "The Laugh of the Medusa" explores the issue of feminine writing in her theoretico-poetic fashion with her non-authoritative yet very conscious and bold style. Likewise, Didem Madak foregrounds the similar issues alongside with her striking narrative poems. Madak, as a sensitive female -and feminine- voice, is aware of how so-called classifications have always excluded women and m(other) from the system of language. Both stand against the oppressive and determining formulations that inevitably suppresses the imaginary realm of creativity. Instead, they both attempt to undo the closed signification system, which Derrida claims is phallogocentric ideology, and subverts the patriarchal patterns.

Cixous proposes women to realize their sexuality and to seize the occasion to speak in their own style. Furthermore, referring to women's ongoing relationship to their (m)other and the issue of femininity, she argues that women should confront and overwhelm their anxiety and realise the idea that women are privileged to produce *écriture féminine*. Madak's peculiar style as part of *écriture féminine* is therefore considerable in terms of her recurrent references to mythology and use of metaphors, which, to a great extent, reveal female imaginary as well as representing the sensitivities of a female writer. In her poetry, violated and distorted male discourse gives way to the eruptions of the experience of women. The female voice in Madak's poetry prevalently teases and undermines the symbolic; and her laughter, associated with that of Medusa, resonates from fore-language.

Cixous and Madak are concerned with changing the old game of binary oppositions, of the suppression of female sexuality and history, and of the exclusion of feminine desires from the symbolic. She argues that it may be possible through women's own style, which makes it possible to hear the resonance of fore-language. Madak, as once Cixous has emphasised, fills her lines with streams of an outrageous song. Therefore, to put figuratively, although Medusa is killed by Perseus, Cixous believes she never dies, and her subversive laughter (not mere words), can be heard in the feminine texts.

Madak questions the control of language on woman's libidinal economy. As Lacan suggests, woman's desires cannot be translated into the symbolic. So, it is observed that the words, particularly verbs that refer to action, are not in service of the expression of the feminine desire; instead, the marginalized woman is objectivized, transformed, shaped, controlled and manipulated by the very "male" verbs and predicates. This ironic state of a feminine text is indicative in Madak's lines.

Madak attempts to undermine conventional binary oppositions, which, however, appear to be traditional rigid hierarchies of superior/inferior or active/passive categories. Language/thought operate upon these oppositions and so are myths and legends. As Cixous

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suggests, any "ordering" calls for these oppositions, through which narratives generate meaning(s). Madak, in her poems, some of which are genuine narratives, draws attention to the centrality of the Father, the Phallus, the Orchestrator of the values and history as such.

Madak creates a feminine text, which is not obsessed with masculine classification, systematisation, hierarchization and representation. She breaks the symbolic inclination of imbuing the words with desire and repression: Her idiosyncratic style with a criss-crossed and condensed structure and in a poetic (somewhat narrative and prosaic) language provides a better example violating the symbolic. So, Madak's evasive metaphors are so subversive that the figures and exclamations challenging male prejudices reveal her body politics. She rejects Lacanian exclusion of (m)other and daughter from the territory of language. Rather, she explores this intimate bond between (m)other and daughter in a way that represents *écriture féminine*.

As a result, Madak's poetic discourse represents *écriture féminine* by deconstructing the binary logic of traditional patterns. Both Cixous' poetic text and Madak's narrative poetry celebrate the female body and female stories, and deliberately work on their difference from that of men, and conceive of women's experience prior to producing *écriture féminine*. According to Cixous and Madak, feminine writing is different with its lyric/poetic language that never gravitates around a centre annulling the difference. Women's writing is/should be open to the multiplicity of meanings with endless suggestions and multiplies the differences rather than diminishing. Therefore, Madak, as stated in Cixous's theoretico-poetic essay, does not talk about women but makes them heard in her poems. For this reason, Madak's poetry is both feminist and feminine, *is about* and *is* feminine writing, and it *does* something as well as meaning.

Keywords: *The Laugh of the Medusa*, Didem Madak, *Écriture Feminine*, Hélène Cixous

KADIN YAZININDA MEDUSA'NIN YENİDEN DOĞUŞU: DİDEM MADAK'IN ŞİİRLERİNDE SÖYLEM

ÖZET

Didem Madak Modern Türk şiirinin Batılı Edebiyat geleneği içinde yetişmiş önemli temsilcilerinden biridir. Bu çalışma, Didem Madak'ın şiirlerini Hélène Cixous'nun ortaya attığı tartışmalar ekseninde ele almakta, Madak'ın şiirsel söyleminin dilin bizzat kendisini sorgulayarak, kapalı göstergeler sistemini nasıl altüst ettiğini göstermektedir. Şairin şiirlerini "kadın yazını" (*écriture féminine*) olarak okumayı, onun çeşitli figüratif sapmaların yanı sıra kışkırtıcı metaforlarla dolu şiirsel söylemini irdelemeyi ve şiir dilini sorunlaştırmayı amaçlayan bu çalışma, Madak'ın söyleminin referansiyel göstergeler sistemini nasıl sarstığını ve söz konusu dili nasıl sorguladığını ortaya koymaktadır. Cixous'nun ünlü makalesindeki Yunan mitolojisinin önemli figürlerinden, lanetli yüzü ile bakanları taşa çeviren canavar kadın Medusa'ya yaptığı gönderme, kadın öfkesinin yanı sıra, bunun karşısında tedirginliğe düşen erkek kaygısına

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işaret etmesi bakımından da dikkat çekicidir. Medusa efsanesine yapılan atıf, tartışmayı paternal söylem alanının dışını ifşa eden “kadın yazını”na getirir ve onun “ne olduğundan” çok “ne yaptığı”na vurgu yapar. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma, Madak’ın bugüne kadar mitolojiler tarafından takviye edilmiş ikili karşıtlığı sarsan ironik bir ses olduğunu belirterek, açık uçlu retorik soruların yanı sıra Madak’ın ele avuca sığmaz metaforların kullanıldığı akışkan kadın sesini ve o sese ait söylemi analiz etmektedir. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, Madak’ın şiirinin kadın yazını çerçevesinde ele alınabileceğini örneklerle göstererek, Medusa’nın arka planda yankılanıp duran kahkahalarına dikkat çekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: The Laugh of the Medusa, Didem Madak, Kadın Yazını (Écriture Feminine), Hélène Cixous

...guide us through our terrors, through the depths
of our anger into the sources of our power as women.
Froggi Lupton, Gorgon Medusa

Let it be done, right now, in language.
Cixous

Annemin ölümünü eskiciyen satacaktım/
On mandal karşılığında
Didem Madak

Introduction

References to Medusa are abundant and it is a source of inspiration for many critical writings. Medusa of Greek mythology, the monstrous female gorgon, refers to a winged woman with snake-like venomous hair and a beautiful yet subversive visage, having a repugnant face with a curse-power that turns the gazers into stone. She is said to have been beheaded by Perseus, who later uses Medusa’s image as a weapon since the image is believed to have an evil-averting power (Albrecht, 2009, p. 21). Freud used the story to explicate his resonant concept of “castration” in his “Das Medusenhaupt (Medusa’s Head).” Freud argues that “threat of castration manifests itself with the sight of the female genitals, probably those of an adult, surrounded by hair, and essentially those of his mother” (Freud, 1955, p. 273). The forbidden and threatful exposition to Medusa’s face/image can be compared to the involvement in the act of reading *écriture féminine* where mother (in her hair-covered genitals, may stir the reader’s/gazer’s infectious desire and fear of castration at a time, which brings about the reprisal of the Phallus and the threat of Father/Logos. So, the terror of Medusa is associated with the fear of castration despite the fact that the image has long been concomitant with physical beauty and charming power. Feminist use of the image of Medusa intermittently refers to the presage of the evil aspect of Medusa, turning out to be a herald of various types of anxiety as it projects the scary mirror back to those who are afraid of castration. Mary Valentis and Anne Devane told in an interview report that “it was always Medusa, the snaky-haired monster of myth, who came to mind ... as the most horrific woman in the world” (Valentis, Devane, & Weinstein, 1994, p. 5). It is seen that Medusa’s visage is considered to be the sign of female rage as well as male anxiety. Direct allusion to the myth of Medusa has heated up the debate as to the production of “*écriture*

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feminine,” which, disclosing maternal realm of discourse, highlights the significance of “what women’s writing will do” instead of “what it is.”

This paper argues that Didem Madak’s poetic discourse, punctuated with ongoing ruptures, eruptions, protrusions and various types of linguistic creativities, can be read as *écriture féminine*. Madak’s discourse, therefore, subverts the symbolic order, undermining the closed signification system and putting into question the language as such. Moreover, Madak’s nonlinear discourse and open-ended rhetorical questions as well as evasive metaphors violate the binaries reinforced in time by mythologies, thereby making it possible to hear the undercurrent laughter and genuine ironic voice of the Medusa while roaming on the fringes of *écriture féminine*.

Theoretical Background

Cixous in her “The Laugh of the Medusa” explores the issue of feminine writing in a theoretico-poetic and non-authoritative style. She, like other feminist theorists, rereads and reinterprets Lacanian concepts of the Symbolic Order and the Imaginary. Madak, as a livid and subtle female -and feminine- voice, is aware of how existing classifications have always excluded women and m(other) from the system of language. She focuses on and deciphers established ideologies in her striking narrative poems and raised analogous issues with Cixous. Both stand against the oppressive and determining formulations that reinforce the existing phallic orientation suppressing the imaginary realm of creativity. As opposed to some reductive psychoanalytic approaches to femininity and to the issue of “other,” Cixous and Madak deliberately work on historical-sexual differences. They both attempt to undo the closed signification system, which Derrida claims is phallogocentric ideology, and challenges the patriarchal binary schemes in order to manipulate the signifiers, and questions the closed-ended definitions of *écriture féminine*. The question of “what women’s writing will do” instead of “what it is” makes sense only if it could foreground women’s historical-sexual difference in that female perception and feminine expression thoroughly ally with textual femininity.

Madak’s peculiar style as part of *écriture féminine* is crucial in terms of her recurrent references to mythology and use of metaphors, which, to a great extent, reveals female imaginary as well as representing the sensitivities of a female writer. The title of Cixous’s essay and Madak’s book titles *The Tree of Áhs* (*Áhlar Ağacı*) and *Pepper Flakes Neighbourhood* (*Pulbiber Mahallesi*) are so suggestive that they refer to both male misogynic mythology and phallogocentric theory. Cixous identifies Perseus, who has traditionally been destined to murder Medusa, exerting masculine oppression and denial. Cixous argues that Medusa has never died and she is very rich in associations since she reminds us of all history of suppression, repression and oppression, which is also the history of suppressed mothers, silenced daughters and muted sisters as well as marginalised others, having historically been banished or inferiorised. Medusa’s exploding laughter is so evocative and subversive that social perception or individual expectation shaped by authoritative male discourse, is violated and distorted through language, giving way to the eruptions of women’s experience. The voice in Madak’s poetry prevalently teases and undermines the symbolic; her laughter is fused with that of Medusa that resonates from fore-language, and whoever has a relationship with (m)other can hear this laughter. Both the suppressed voice of (m)other and the laughter of Medusa/Madak cannot be translated into the symbolic as the endless desires of femininity cannot be put into words. Cixous’s speaking subject, that is Madak here, is conspicuously disoriented, having its own rhythm. The reader can hear the levels of the symbolic (words) and “laughter” (non-linear subversive poetic discourse) at the same time.

Cixous states that women should come to terms with their own sexuality, pain and anger suppressed and ignored by male theories and ideology, or, in Lacanian terms, by the Symbolic order. “Sweeping away syntax” (1997a, p. 342), for example, and insistence on writing without any model indicate such evasive texts. They should seek emancipation from that order since women “are the sowers of disorder” (1997a, p. 341) and, they should seize the occasion to speak in their own style that makes them heard and allows them to be an initiator in the symbolic system as well. Besides, “there are exceptions” and “there always have been those uncertain, poetic beings” (Cixous, 1997b, p. 97), who, men or women, cannot be reduced to the state of coded (I)dentities (Cixous, 1997b, p. 97) because human beings are complex, mobile, multiple, open, becoming entities. They are aware that their identity is not a fixed, finished, closed and centred constitution but an open process, always reconstructed and plural. Cixous argues that art or creation is not possible without this feminine plurality and argues that “there are some men who are not afraid of femininity” (Cixous, 1997b, p. 342). She gives Jean Genet’s writing as an example of “sext” and states that his writings “divide itself, breaks itself into bits, regroups itself, is an abundant, maternal, pederastic femininity” (Cixous, 1997b, p. 97). Therefore, she maintains that the sex of the author no longer matters, but the “sex” of writing, which is multiple, poetic, non-linear, and does not annul the individual differences and peculiarities, multiplying repressed tones of femininity. Therefore, her new insurgent concept of feminine writing claims that it is possible to talk about “female-sexed texts” or “sexts” (Cixous, 1997a, pp. 335- 342), which elicit the suppressed imaginary, the realm of other and bodies as nonverbal gestures of desire. Cixous maintains that they are privileged to produce feminine texts because of women’s close relationship to m(other), the maternal, the imaginary and body. Figuratively speaking, they can better hear the ‘laugh of the Medusa’ or the “haunting voice of mother since early childhood” (Cixous, 1997a, p.334). Therefore, Cixous claims that women “write in white ink” (1997a, p. 339) because women “have been there [in the imaginary] often” (1997a, p. 342).

Cixous, thus, argues that what matters is not the sex of the author, but the sex of the text; and, *écriture féminine* exemplifies multiple, poetic, non-linear texts, and does not try to annul the differences, rather it attempts to multiply them. Hence, according to her new insurgent concept of feminine writing, it is possible to talk about sexed texts or feminine texts. Cixous revels in the pleasures of non-linear, open-ended and poetic style that includes a number of novel metaphors, images and mythological allusions, and intends to illustrate femininity in writing. Thus, “The Laugh of the Medusa” is *about* and is feminine writing just as Madak’s poetic discourse incarnates the characteristics of this kind of writing. As Lacan argues, the development stages of an individual are as follows: Imaginary stage, in which the baby is in the paradise of infancy and united with the mother blissfully; Mirror stage, in which the child is between the desires and language, having just begun to recognise its (m)other; and entrance into the Symbolic order, in which society imposes an (I)ntity to the child concurrently through acquisition of language. The child enters into the realm of society, that is, Symbolic order, organized by the Law of the Father, which “governs possible relations between separate entities” and reveals itself through the figuration of the symbolic Phallus, which “symbolises both separation from the (m)other, and the desire to reunite with the (m)other” (Battersby, 1989, p. 136). There is, however, little place in society for desires, which are related to fore-language and close relationship with the imaginary stage and m(other). Considering the fact that male authority excludes mother from the organization of language since she resists binary oppositions. Medusa is a sign of resistance to the discourse of the Law, figuratively speaking, the female author rejects “coupling with the father”; therefore, “it is the father who acts as –is- mother” (1997b, p. 92). Thus, she is condemned to be passive or non-existing, and she has been considered as “unthinkable, unthought of” (p. 92) state of socio/psycho-linguistic imprisonment. Traditional insistence upon the anatomical difference can be considered in this context because woman

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“threaten[s] the stability of the masculine edifice” (p. 92). Woman, with her whole being, resists analysis, rejects that there is only one libido, which is male, (this is the denial of feminine sexual pleasure and historical experience) and refutes the difference between having /not having the phallus, the center.

Cixous's discourse move on to the metaphorical premise that “women should make their body heard” (p. 338) because women have been suppressed, oppressed, silenced and excluded due to the breath of whole woman” (p. 338), to their whole being, their body, voice and desires, and there is a close relationship between the denial of their body and voice, sexuality and writing. Therefore, Cixous proposes women to realize their sexuality and seize the occasion to speak in their own style. Furthermore, referring to women's ongoing relationship with their (m)other and femininity (Showalter, 1977, p. 62), she stresses that women should confront and overwhelm their “anxiety” (Gilbert & Gubar, 2000, p. 46) and stand with the idea that women are privileged to produce *écriture féminine*.

Analysis

As Cixous states, “wherever an ordering intervenes, a law organizes the thinkable by oppositions” (p. 91). These organizations claim to produce meaning precisely through these oppositions, that is, “active” would be meaningless without “passive.” Madak questions the fact that woman is associated with passivity, and that language as a system and symbolic order privileges “man” as active, a superior category: “Bilirsin işte erkekler büyükayı, kadınlar küçük cezve / Bugün bir harf girdi atmosferime, tutuştu ve yandı / Siyah bir gelinliğe benzeyecek bu şiir [[They say] men are big dipper, women are little dipper you know / Today a letter entered my imagination, burned and flamed / This poem will look like a black bride]” (Madak, 2012b, p. 16). She attempts to undermine patriarchal binary thought, which is fundamentally based upon oppositions. These oppositions, however, appear to be traditional rigid hierarchies of superior/inferior or active/passive. It is apparently known that thought has always worked by these oppositions and even myths and legends, besides philosophical systems, have been infected with these dualities (Cixous, 1997b, p. 91). These oppositions bearing traditional hierarchy, sun/moon, culture/nature, day/night, action/passion, therefore, result in the victory of ‘male privilege’ (p. 91), which mandates individual persona to be controlled by the symbolic order: “Bana artık büyü diyorlar [They say it's high time I grew up...]” (Madak, 2012b, p.15). Her address to her mother as a “witch” and questioning of the traditional discourse of poetry is significant at this context. Her comparing *écriture féminine* to a “black bride” implies that she is aware of her difference in terms of body, experience, history and language and also gives the impression that she acknowledges her status as a witch/Medusa: “Ben yürümüyorum Füsün¹ Cadde yürüyor / Bir cadı olduğumu buradan anlıyorum / Hiçbir takım tutmuyorum, yıldızların takımından başka [...] / Siyah bir gelinliğe benzeyecek bu şiir [Füsün, it is not me but the Street walking / Thus I understand I'm a witch / I do not support any team, other than the stars [...] / This poem will look like a black bride (Madak, 2012b, p. 16). Madak questions the frame of meaning, constructed in a phallogocentric system, referring to a transcendental/eternal signified or the symbolic Phallus. She points to such “phallogocentrism” as “Bağırmak denen bir adam saltanatını kurmuş burda [A man called Shout has established his reign]” (Madak, 2012b, p. 15). She, in a way, responds to Cixous' question: “What is it?” She draws attention to centrality of the Father, the Phallus, the orchestrator of the values and history as such. She subverts so-called relationship between the signifier and the signified and foregrounds its arbitrary status. She tries hard to transform language and changes it into an open-ended play between the presence of one signifier

¹ Mother of the historical author.

and the absence of others. As Derrida suggests, this binary logic is so fragile that it cannot produce any meaning through fixed signification process.

Madak questions the control of language on woman's libidinal economy. As Cixous puts, that is "neither identifiable by man nor referable to the masculine economy" (1997b, p. 95). Lacan maintains that woman's desires cannot be translated into the symbolic, and thus, as Madak suggests, there can be so little place in society and the symbolic for her desires because of suppression. So, it is observed that the words, particularly "verbs" that refer to "action," are not in service of the expression of the feminine desire; instead, the marginalized woman is objectivized, transformed, shaped, controlled and manipulated by the very "male" verbs and predicates. This ironic state of a feminine text is indicative in Madak's lines: "Yanlış da olsa fiiller için çekici bir kadını [Even if false, I am an attractive woman for the verbs]" (2012b, p. 21). Here the symbolic is implied as having a devouring inclination for woman, who has to produce *écriture féminine* to overcome already established conventions of the symbolic order: "Şiir şiir olalı böyle şiirsizlik görmemişti [Poetry as such had never seen such poetry]" (2012b, p. 22). So, Madak is against "a network of millennial cultural determinations of a complexity men and women are caught up in" (1997b, p. 96). Considering the fact that whenever one attempts to talk about man or woman, this complex network leads the argument back to the binary logic of the symbolic order/language and to the well-known stories of oppositions, reductionisms, suppressions, and to the gravitation around a phallic centre. She needs to find a way out of the ideology of society, whose conceptualisations, in fact, are "null" and "void" (p. 96). Madak, in this sense, minds Cixous' earlier warning: "Beware, my friend, of the signifier that would take you back to the authority of a signified! Beware of diagnosis that would reduce your generative powers" (Cixous, 1997a, p. 347). She, as if consolidating and repeating Cixous's warning, yells out: "Dünyaya bir kadının eli değse Zeyna! / Şöyle ağır bir halı gibi çırpılsa / Tozlar havalansa... [If only a woman touched the earth, Zeyna! / If only the crust is beaten like a heavy carpet / Leaving the dust in the air ...]" (Madak, 2012b, p. 23). She, on the one hand, imagines a heroic woman, shaking the established order of the symbolic, and on the other hand, rejoices her being a "Medusa": "Bir cadının içli geçmiş zamanındayım / Elektrikli süpürgeден zalim toz yumakları boşaltıyorum [I live in the wound tense of a witch / I discharge the cruel dust piles from my vacuum cleaner]" (Madak, 2012b, p. 49).

Cixous and Madak suggest that poetic discourse changing the old two-fold game, of the suppression of female libidinal economy, sexuality and history, and of the exclusion of feminine desires from the symbolic, which denies whatever resists rationality and seems decentred. She argues that it may be possible through "women's own style in language" (1997a, p. 339), which aims to shatter all the framework of institutions and allows "hearing the resonance of fore-language" (p. 345), that is, Lacanian imaginary. When Cixous declares that her "text is filled with streams of song" (1997a, p. 339), she means the same thing. When Madak fills her lines with streams of a song, she does the same thing. Therefore, although Medusa was killed by Perseus, Cixous believes she never died, and her subversive laughter (not mere words), can be heard in the feminine texts. Although the feminine has been regarded as unrepresentable through the symbolic order and compared to "death" (p. 340), she aims to release it as much as possible in language by "smashing yokes and centres" and "inventing an impregnable language" (p. 342): "Saklayacak bir yerim yoktu ganimetlerimi / Karanlık şiirlerden başka (Madak, 2012b, p. 46). I had no place to hide my loot / Other than dark poems. In fact, these dark continents, that is, dark poems, provide the author with a liberating realm of creative imagination. Madak's epigraph marks her desire for the maternal realm of creative imagination where there is no friction and expressing yourself, that is, the act of writing is something like ice skating: "Böylece Kay'a bir çift yeni patenle birlikte hürriyeti ve dünyayı verecek olan Ebediyet kelimesini kendiliklerinden yazmaya başladılar [The Snow Queen had told Kay that if he managed

the word “eternity” he would be free and have the whole Earth and a new pair of skates]” (Madak, 2012b) (Andersen, 2016).

Madak's use of imagery is curious in that she identifies her text, in Cixous's terms, with “lively combination of flying colours, leaves, and rivers” (p. 345) and imagines that these “rivers plunging into *the sea* we [women] feed” (p. 345). The sea imagery is quite important for her and in fact, the sea is hers, and she then identifies herself also with the sea. Woman, their sexuality and open-ended multiplicity are expressed through this imagery because “our [their] seas are what we make of them, full of fish or not, opaque or transparent, red or black, high or smooth, narrow or bankless; and we are ourselves sea, sand, coral, the seaweed, beaches, tides, swimmers, children, waves...” (p. 345). It is seen that she does not define what it is to be feminine but uses imagery to express what it *can be* through the sea image, in which nothing excluded, classified or differentiated; it is feminine multiplicity, and water, the sea, the earth, waves, ocean... all are considered feminine, which is associated with both surface and the depth, the symbolic and the imaginary together.

Madak is above all a poet, who cannot ally herself with representationalism, and by using all these devices, such as metaphors, displacement, imagery, etc., she “shatters the framework of institutions” (p. 343) and makes the reader “hear the resonance of fore-language” (p. 345). She hardly hides her desire to roam beneath the symbolic, saying “takatim yok o kadar / kelimeler ölsün istemem [I have no such strength / I don't wish the words to die” (p. 28) and realizes the fact that woman's worldwide unconscious “blazes the trail in the Symbolic!” (p. 344). In Toril Moi's terms, her desire for “the comforting security of the mother's womb,” (Moi, 2002, p. 115) which is associated with the maternal realm of *écriture féminine*, is indicated in her use of language. It means that the Medusa's/the (m)other's repressed voice is being heard within her poetic language, the best examples of which are revealed in her use of figurative language: “witches” (p. 335), “dark continent” (p. 336), “birds and rubbers” (p. 336), “earthquake” (p. 337), or playing with words such as “sexts [sexed texts]” (p. 342) and “pwetty [pretty] eyes” (p. 347) can be considered.

Madak creates a feminine text, which is not obsessed with masculine classification, systematisation, hierarchization or representation. She breaks the symbolic imbuing the words with desire and repression: “Yazmak istediklerimin etrafında gezindim / Bugün hayata bir zararım olsun istiyordum [Roaming around what I want to write / I wanted to be a bit of a joke today]” (Madak, 2012b, p. 40). It is seen that “the Laugh of the Medusa” can be heard through these lines. Her idiosyncratic style with a criss-crossed and condensed structure and in a poetic (somewhat narrative and prosaic) language provides a better example violating the symbolic:

O zamanlar İstanbul yeniydi. Pulbiber mahallesine taşınmasam eskimezdi. Mahallenin leylası kim olsun diye beni seçtiler. Gözlerimin birine korsan yaması kestiler. aynaları yaldızladım sarıya. Ağladım. bi faydası olursa. Çekirdekler gibi çitledi beni şiirler. O zamanlar İstanbul yeniydi. vakalar vardı. [...] ben o zaman şiir ithafkârı oldum. Tırtıldilligil gibi oldum. Kömürlük penceresi dili albino kedimle gayet iyi. Karafatma bana ev Verdi. Allah razı olsun. Kötüşarkılaraahıştım. Eyyvahh. Eyyvah. Eyyyyyvahhhhhh. Eyyyyyyeeyeee-

Eyyyyyyyyy.....

Eyvallah. (Madak, 2012b, p. 92)

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At that time Istanbul was anew. If I had not moved to the Pulbiber neighbourhood, it would not have happened to grow old. They elected me the lady of the neighbourhood. I wore a pirate patch they had cut for one of my eyes. I gilded the mirrors yellow. I cried. If it would help. Poems cracked me like sunflower seeds. Istanbul was anew at the time. There were serious cases. [...] then I became a poem dedicatör. I became like a caterpillar. Things were good with my albino black cat having a mouth like a window of a cannon. The cockroach gave me home. God be with her. I got used to bad songs. Ohhh no. Oh no. Ohhhh.... Ohhhhh... Fare... well...

Farewell. (Madak, 2012b, p. 92)

Madak's feminine text is seen to "inscribe[s] in language her woman's style" (Cixous, 1997a, p. 339), problematizing her body politics: "Bir gün beni bir sıkıntı bombası olarak patlatacaklar / Korkarım bir şarapnel parçası olarak beni / Saplandığım bu etten hiç çıkaramayacaklar [One day they will blow me up as a nuisance bomb / I'm afraid I'm a piece of a shrapnel / They will never get me out of this meat]" (Madak, 2012b). The use of imperatives is also indicative in this context and the recurrent annihilation of the distance between the reader and the speaking subject is considerable: "Write! Writing is for you" (Cixous, 1997a, p. 335), "Let's get away from", "Let's hurry" (1997a, p. 342) "Beware my friend" (1997a, p. 346). She sometimes addresses the second person singular such as "you the poetic body, the true mistress of the Signifier" (1997a, p. 343), sometimes to the third person such as "a woman is never far from mother" (1997a, p. 339). Moreover, her address to herself with possessives is of note here. This indicates the eradication of distance and implies a strong sense of self: "my eyes, my tongue, my ears, my nose, my skin, my mouth, my body-for-the-other... I'm spurred on by feminine jealousy" (1997a, p. 345). It is full of metaphors, images, mythological allusions; it is non-linear, fragmented and fluid; it does not turn around a centre/Phallus because it does not theorize about anything but aims to break up or destroy the so-called theories. Her most subversive metaphor is a "tree of Âh's" (âhlar ağacı)."

So, Madak's famous metaphor of 'âhlar ağacı' is also subversive, the exclamation "âh" challenges both theory and practice and reveals her body politics. She rejects Lacanian exclusion of (m)other and daughter from the territory of language whereas she praises and works on this close relationship between (m)other and daughter. Contrary to Lacan, she conceives of women's intimate relationship with the imaginary, their impregnable unconscious, as an advantage as if "women write in white ink" (1997a, p. 339) of their unbroken relationship with their (m)other, but sadness still resonates in the lines of Madak. Her lines mark, particularly in the context of *écriture féminine*, a peculiar mental state of the persona, whose voice is "repetitive and monotonious," is filled with "the broken logical sequences" and "recurring, obsessive litanies" (Kristeva, 1989, p. 33). Her "âh" is so suggestive like a blank page, which seems impregnable, though pregnant with words. It is so tight, concise and condensed as well as incomprehensible and challenging; it is also pure and hot. This also has to do with the history of agony and history of women writers. Madak, therefore, assimilates her voice to the memory of precursor writers as follows: Acı eşiğinin olmadığını söyleyen Emily Dickinson'a [Emily Dickinson, who once said she could ever resist pain...] (Madak, 2012b, p. 41)." Concerning the history of women is the history of pain, she has discovered that her identity is to a great extent associated with agony and suffrage. The symptoms of such pain can be identified through *écriture féminine*, which favours confrontation, irony and challenge rather than elegiac whining. She says "sözleri tekrarlayarak yok eden çocuk gibiyim / Acı çekmeyi öğrendiğimde ismimi de öğrendim" [I am like a child who obliterates the words repeating them / Once I have learnt how to

suffer, I get my name]" (2012b, p. 49). But at the same time, she cannot help playing with the words: Zavallı kelimeler kedimin faresi olmuştı / Ben de onları çocuğum sanıp durmadan kokluyordum / Yaralarını sarıp azıcık ağlıyordum [Then the poor words became the mouse my cat is chasing / I soothed their injuries, and cried a little]" (Madak, 2012b, p. 65). It is seen that her relationship with language, or her existence through language can only be transformed into a maternal realm by manipulating the verbal bond through *écriture féminine*.

Conclusion

As a result, Madak's poetic discourse represents *écriture féminine* by deconstructing the binary logic of the existing system of signs as outlined in Lacanian concepts of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Both Cixous's poetic text and Madak's narrative poetry celebrate the female body and female stories, and deliberately work on their difference from that of men, and conceive of women's experience prior to producing *écriture féminine*. According to Cixous and Madak, feminine writing is different due to its lyric/poetic language that never gravitates around a centre annulling the difference. *Écriture féminine* should remain open to the multiplicity of voices, including that of the Medusa, with endless suggestions. Therefore, Madak, as stated in Cixous's theoretico-poetic essay, does not talk about women but makes them heard. For this reason, Madak's poetry *is about* and *is* feminine writing, and is both feminist and feminine.

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