

## Article

# Nermin Yıldırım's *Saklı Bahçeler Haritası* (The Hidden Gardens Map) in the Context of Multiple Personality Disorder

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**Abstract:** Novels, which take shape in imaginary worlds, are closely connected to life and reality. Psychiatric disorders also belong to life and reality and are part of the content of literary works. Authors sometimes make use of mental disorders to tell a story or to give depth to fiction. Such disorders, which started to be seen in Turkish literature in the novels of the Tanzimat period, play particularly dramatic roles in texts produced after the 1960–1970s. Psychological disorders include dissociative disorders, one type of which is multiple personality disorder. The person experiencing this type of dissociation develops two or more independent personality systems in response to feelings of anxiety. One of the most important works of recent Turkish literature, Nermin Yıldırım's *Saklı Bahçeler Haritası* (The Hidden Gardens Map), first published in 2013, is a novel in which multiple personality disorder plays a significant role. This study attempts to determine how the defining criteria and symptoms of multiple personality disorder are exhibited in the aforementioned novel and how its effects and related issues are conveyed to the reader.

**Keywords:** psychiatric disorders; dissociative disorders; multiple personality disorder; Nermin Yıldırım; *The Hidden Gardens Map*

## 1. Introduction

Nermin Yıldırım was born on 7 March 1980 in Bursa, Türkiye. She has published a number of novels: *Unutma Beni Apartmanı* (Forget Me Not Apartment) in 2011, *Rüyalar Anlatılmaz* (Dreams Unspeakable) in 2012, *Saklı Bahçeler Haritası* (The Hidden Gardens Map) in 2013, *Unutma Dersleri* (Lessons in Forgetting) in 2015, *Dokunmadan* (Without Touching) in 2017, *Misafir* (The Guest) in 2018, *Ev* (The House) in 2020 and *Bavula Sığmayan* (Not Fitting in the Suitcase) in 2022. Nermin Yıldırım's dramatic treatment of psychiatric disorders in her novel may be attributed to her work as a reporter, editor and columnist for various newspapers and magazines. However, Yıldırım reflects the language of her own reality by looking at the human and society from her own perspective in her novels. In this direction, the author presents a wide range of psychiatric disorders in the realm of the imaginary by recreating them. Many of these novels feature a protagonist with psychiatric disorders. This is the case in her third published novel, *The Map of Hidden Gardens*.

This novel is written with a spiral plot. The female protagonist, Suad Paşazade, who is used to convey the main plot, writes letters to her sister, Behiye, who does not exist at all; she then writes back on Behiye's behalf as if the letters were written to her by putting herself in Behiye's place. These plot points reveal indicators of multiple personality disorder, which is the advanced stage of dissociative disorder. Multiple personality disorder occurs when a person hosts more than one person in their body. The deep wounds opened in the psyche of



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an individual exposed to traumatic events constitute the source of this, and Suad's trauma stems from throwing her brother, Fuad, into a well and causing his death.

This article begins by presenting information about the history of psychiatric disorders and multiple personality disorder; then, information about the novel is provided, and it is analyzed in the context of multiple personality disorder.

## 2. Definition and Content of Multiple Personality Disorder

Dissociative disorders are among the most frequently encountered psychiatric disorders. Dissociation is the condition in which a group of psychic activities, which form a unity among themselves, break their ties with the rest of the personality and act independently. In cases where the effect of anxiety intensifies, the disruption of the personality's order leads to the emergence of symptoms reminiscent of psychosis by dominating the consciousness, the memory of defense mechanisms and sometimes even the whole personality (Geçtan 2020, p. 212).

Dissociative reactions pave the way for mental symptoms characterized by disturbances of consciousness. These are sometimes reminiscent of blackouts and sometimes delusional disorders. In these cases, which are characterized as neuroses because they are temporary reactions, the person exhibits extreme emotional reactions as if in a dream world; they may be in a state of bewilderment, behave dramatically or talk nonsensically and irrelevantly. Such dissociative reactions are the expression of the person's attempt to live out some of their desires in a dream world or the re-enactment of a traumatic memory from the past. Occasionally, they may also appear as an attempt to add an emotional element to the person's emotionally unsatisfied life. In such cases, the person often creates and tells unusual stories about themselves in a romantic and dramatic way (Masserman 1961).

The *DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders)* defines four different dissociative disorders: amnesia of mental origin, fugue of mental origin, depersonalization disorder and multiple personality disorder (Putnam 2012, p. 17). Multiple personality disorder, which is the advanced stage of dissociative disorder, contains all the basic elements of other dissociative disorders (Putnam 2012, p. 37). In multiple personality disorder, the person may develop two or more independent personality systems for anxious feelings. Each system consists of its own unique, consistent and clearly defined emotional and thought processes. At times, there are transitions from one of these personalities to another. Each period can last from a few minutes to several years. One personality may be cheerful, carefree and fun-loving, while the other may be calm, hardworking and dignified, which dramatically distinguishes them from each other (Geçtan 2020, p. 214). Each of these personalities may have a different name, age, character, gender, origin, voice, dialect, vocabulary, thoughts, habits, past, memories and even prescription of glasses (Şar 2017). These different personalities are alter personalities. In addition to the patient's alter personalities, there is also a host personality. Alter personalities are named by the host personality (Balcioğlu and Balcioğlu 2018).

Childhood trauma is generally recognized as an important factor in the development of multiple personality disorder. The interplay between the trauma and normative childhood capacities, such as the capacity for hypnotism, spontaneous dissociation, imaginary relationships and fantasy, triggers the development of multiple personality disorder. The child uses these capacities adaptively to protect against trauma. The traumatized child continually enters into contextually stable dissociative states, acquiring a history of a repertoire of dependent states in experiences, affect and behavior. Over time, this is elaborated into alter personalities (Putnam 2012, p. 101).

Multiple personality disorder in adults is characterized by symptoms that superficially resemble depression or anxiety. Dissociative symptoms such as amnesia, fugues or

depersonalization are rarely reported by the person themselves. Self-harming behaviors and migraine-like headaches are common (Putnam 2012, p. 101).

Patients with multiple personality disorder, usually women, are often observed to undergo a sudden dramatic transformation, revealing a very different side to their previous behavior. This other side, in addition to displaying physiological phenomena such as pain sensitivity or bodily symptoms, is often childlike and different in food, affect, behavior, speech or other preferences from the adult personality under pressure. Transitions between personalities often appear rapid and are often related to environmental stimuli. Some patients have syncopal episodes or short periods of sleep. In general, there is an amnesic barrier separating the personalities (Putnam 2012, pp. 53–54).

Alter personality types in patients with multiple personality disorder are constantly observed by clinicians. Dramatic differences in speech, affect, artifice, behavior, sensory phenomena and other bodily phenomena differentiate alter personalities. Psychiatric and medical symptoms such as headaches, auditory hallucinations and gastrointestinal disturbances are commonly described by clinicians throughout the entire history of multiple personality disorder (Putnam 2012).

Some clinical features of multiple personality disorder have changed over time. The most striking of these is that the number of alter personalities reported for the first cases is different from the number found in modern patients. Many early cases presented with a dual personality, a condition rarely seen in modern patients. When there were more than one, usually no more than four separate personalities were identified. A trend toward an increasing number of identified alters has been observed more recently. A retrospectively applied review of thirty-eight case reports meeting *DSM-III* criteria found an average of 3.5 alter personalities, with the total ranging from 1 to 8 (Putnam 2012). Allison (1978) reported an average of 9.7 and a range of 1–50; Bliss (1980) reported an average of 7.7 and a range of 2–30. Putnam et al. (1986) found an average of 13.3 alters for one hundred independently diagnosed multiple personality disorder patients, and Kluft (1984) found an average of 13.9 alters in his thirty-three multiple personality disorder patients. Therapists reporting cases of fifty or more alters in a single patient is not unheard of, and experienced therapists have seen at least one or more of these complex patients.

The *DSM-IV-R* defines multiple personality disorder as follows:

- Two or more separate identities or personality traits in the same person.
- These identities or personality structure control the behavior of the individual in a recurring manner.
- The patient shows failure to remember personal information that cannot be explained by ordinary forgetfulness.
- The disorder is not caused by the physiological effects of a substance (e.g., gaps in consciousness or chaotic behavior in alcohol intoxication) or by a general physical condition (e.g., complex partial seizures), and in children the symptoms are not attributed to imaginary playmates or other imaginative play (American Psychiatric Association 1994).

Multiple personality disorder is a psychobiological response to a relatively unique set of experiences that unfold along a limited developmental trajectory. The effective treatment of multiple personality disorder requires an understanding of its traumatic causes and the adaptive role of dissociation in initially alleviating the overwhelming trauma of childhood. Although there are different views on the genesis of multiple personality disorder, the most widely accepted is that recurrent childhood trauma increases normative dissociative sensitivity, which in turn provides the basis for the emergence and gradual maturation of alter personality states (Putnam 2012).

Although their aims are different, the point that unites psychiatric disorders and literature is the human being who is at the center of both. Literary texts tell about human beings. The poets and writers who bring life to literature deal with all aspects of human beings, including psychiatric disorders, in their works. “Every work of literature carries the disease as the bottom and depth of human existence and the deep effect of the disease on the human soul to its pages” (Taşdelen 2015, p. 99). Disorders are generally used in literary genres such as novels in order to make fictional people interesting. At this point, a psychiatric disorder such as multiple personality disorder will be found interesting by the reader and will attract the reader’s attention.

### 3. Evaluation of the Novel Titled *Saklı Bahçeler Haritası (The Hidden Gardens Map)* in the Context of Multiple Personality Disorder

The novel begins with letters covering the period between 1960 and 1961, delivered to Rıdvan, the general director of a publishing house, fifty years after they were written. The reader is presented with a picture of the inner restlessness of individuals, the lives that are trying to be built on the shattered past and the hidden thoughts that describe the selves who have lost their identity with existential pain. These people do not accept the life attributed to them and, through their imaginations, seek to live through someone else the life they cannot live for themselves (Demirkıran and Gürbüz 2023, p. 24).

Although the dates of the letters in the novel are given as 1960–1961, the events detailed in the letters begin in approximately 1923, considering that Suad, who suffers from multiple personality disorder, was born in 1918 and she was five when she caused the death of her brother, Fuad. The letters of the siblings Suad and Behiye and the existential pain arising from the negative experiences of the individual, which are revealed years later, take place in the book through their association with the recent history of Turkey. This fiction is embodied by facts or events that take place in the individual’s memory and create a fragmented self.

The letters of Suad and Behiye are delivered to Rıdvan in mysterious ways in different places in the novel. Rıdvan hesitates in deciding whether these letters are fictional or not, and the question marks in his mind begin to increase. Behiye is abroad when the letters begin, and toward the end, she wants to return to Turkey. This is a turning point in the revelation of the truth. Suad does not want Behiye to return, and this reluctance reveals that she never actually had a sister named Behiye but only a brother named Fuad. When Suad was only five years old, she pushed her brother, Fuad, into a well and caused his death. Suad starts having mental problems and is hospitalized in a clinic. Suad rapidly develops a dissociative state, with physiological and physical features linked to body images and emotions caused by the trauma she has experienced. She externalizes her imaginary friendship and fraternal systems related to the alter personalities seen by her as external factors. In the story of the novel, these externalized systems manifest as her sister, Behiye. Suad, who experiences “failure to integrate various functions of identity, memory and consciousness” (Çörüş and Ekberzade 2012, p. 100), lives with Behiye as if she has a different self-image and identity. This second personality, which does not exist at all, is cheerful and lively and does not suffer from any of the physical ailments that plague Suad. Suad writes about this in her letter, in which she states that she resembles Behiye and her great-aunt’s granddaughter Halide, who is called to their house by her family to keep her company and to include her in social life:

“Halide was very much like you in her extroverted nature. She went off to school but never managed to be home on time. My mother was suspicious of her excuses that her classes were taking too long and worried about what we would do if something happened to her while she was under the supervision of this

household. That's when I thought of you. Just as they couldn't do anything when you ran away, they wouldn't be able to do anything if she ran away. But I could never tell my mother what I was thinking because it was forbidden to talk about you." (Yıldırım 2020, p. 30)

Suad writes in her letters that her father often invites a German journalist named Franz to their house in order to be informed about the developments in Europe and to ensure that German is spoken at home. During these visits, Behiye and Franz fall in love, and when Franz returns to his country, Behiye runs away from home and goes with him. In fact, none of this is real, but Suad develops a defense mechanism against the situation caused by the death of her brother, Fuad, and she is amnesic about the behavior of her first personality, Suad, and her second personality, Behiye. Behiye's cheerful and lively behavior, which is the opposite of Suad's, is reflected in Behiye's letters to Suad, which include her criticism of her sad, suffering-oriented attitude:

"But you are too fond of your sadness to leave it easily. And too resentful to make peace. You used to be like that too; instead of growing and maturing with it, you wanted to get lost in it. I think you used to believe that suffering had something cleansing about it; you used to breathe in your wounds like the ascetics who tried to wash away their sins by bleeding themselves. You always mocked the steps towards happiness, you belittled them. However, a person matures not with his wounds, but with his scabs." (Yıldırım 2020, p. 39)

As the quote suggests, Behiye remembers her whole life story. Each personality thinks of itself as the normal version of Suad and the other as the abnormal version. In addition, when Suad suffers from occasional anxiety attacks, other personalities emerge. The Iranian religious and astronomical scholar Qutbeddin Shirazi; Hezarfen Ahmed Çelebi, who is mentioned in Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname* and is rumored to have lived in the Ottoman Empire; Thomas Edison, who significantly influenced 20th-century life with his inventions; and many others appear as the personalities Suad takes on:

"(. . .) whenever I felt overwhelmed under the pergola, I looked up at the sky for a long time, suggesting to myself that I was actually in the city of Tabriz, not in the garden of the mansion, and that I was healing Tekûdar while at the same time trying to unravel the secrets of the sky. (. . .) Another time, I got stuck on Hezarfen. In these dreams I saw with clear eyes in broad daylight, I was Hezarfen, I was a thousand sciences, that is, I knew a lot. (. . .) In order to escape from myself, I left no door unturned, no life untouched, no persona untrodden. One day I found electricity, the next day I was composing a whole concerto all by myself. (. . .) At first, I chose people who already existed in order to clothe their souls, and where I couldn't reach the truth, I would create false stories for them. But then I started to create out of nothing, to create people who never existed and feel as if they were them. In time, I expanded the shop, you see." (Yıldırım 2020, p. 64)

Suad becomes more and more distant from displaying her normal state of consciousness due to the trauma of throwing her brother, Fuad, into the well. In order to avoid exhibiting the behaviors required by the normal state of consciousness, she constantly tries to enter into certain situations, each of which can be considered to be filled with Suad's sense of self to a certain extent. Because Suad has not learned from childhood to regulate her behavioral states and to transfer her sense of self to different contexts and demands in order to develop her life as an integrated personality, instead of an integrated self, she creates multiple selves that can be elaborated through a series of dissociative states in alter personalities as seen in the quote above. In the context of trauma, this is a life-saving solution for Suad, who is already powerless.

Throughout the novel, Suad appears to pass alternately and successively into two different states of mental existence. For instance, the phenomena related to the Behiye state appear in a more sociable structure, which distances her from her natural state of being, which is pensive and quiet. When she assumes the persona of Behiye, she starts taking photographs and learns to print. After a while, she even goes beyond her ability and energy in her normal state by taking photographs of the interviewee while her husband, Franz, is being interviewed:

“In a short time, I learned how to take photographs and how to develop film in the darkroom we took over from the baby-free nursery, between spirals, tanks, aggrandizers and solutions. Then Franz, as surprised as the day he brought the camera, said, “What do you think, can we start working together? I will do my news and you will take the photos. We’ll get along like husband and wife.” I immediately accepted his offer with the happiness of walking together not only in love but also in life.” (Yildirim 2020, pp. 44–45)

Alter personality types similar to those seen in patients with multiple personality disorder are constantly observed. Behavioral, sensory and bodily phenomena almost always differentiate alter personalities, and in the letters between Suad and Behiye in the novel, it is revealed with astonishment by Kevork, who delivers the letters to Rıdvan, that Suad even changes her writing style when she assumes the personality of Behiye: “Let’s say Ms. Suad wrote the letters in different styles according to the identity she assumed and the psychology of that identity. But how did she differentiate her writing style like that? That I could not understand” (Yildirim 2020, p. 341). The fact that even the writing style in the letters is different is due to the revelation of the alter personality Behiye through Suad’s defensive reaction to what Suad experienced as a distressing traumatic experience and the alter personality gaining autonomy and achieving its own difference (Kluft 1984).

In people with multiple personality disorder, the host is defined as “the personality that exercises the greatest degree of control over his or her body over a period of time” (Kluft 1984, p. 23). The host personality is usually repressed, anxious, unable to enjoy, rigid, cold, highly compulsive, remorseful and masochistic and suffers from various body symptoms, especially headaches (Putnam 2012, p. 153). In the novel, all of these conditions manifest themselves in Suad. She expresses her distress and helplessness in her letters to Behiye:

“My vile headaches that had been haunting me since I was five years old had increased considerably, and the rats that were eating my brain had begun to crawl inside my head. Thinking hurt me, remembering made my wounds bleed. I could neither look at the sunlight nor endure the sound of human voices. In my dark room, where the curtains were stretched like armor against the sun, I pulled the quilt up over my eyes and lay there without eating, drinking or speaking.” (Yildirim 2020, p. 26)

Behiye, the alter personality of the host personality Suad, is familiar with more or less all of Suad’s life story. The personality manifested in the form of Behiye is characterized as a memory follower, a type that is often found in patients with multiple personality disorder (Kluft 1984). As a matter of fact, Behiye provides historical information about Suad’s past events and about her:

“When I read that you were back in the hospital, I remembered the day I visited you in the hospital years ago. You were five years old. You were pale, tired, tearful. Your little hands were exhausted fans that opened at the end of your thin wrists, and you held them out for me to pull you. Now I realize that whenever I dream of you between those white walls, you will always be five years old. What

a pain to know that childhood can only be preserved in memories. . .” (Yıldırım 2020, p. 38)

The alters in the personality system of a multiple personality disorder patient may have varying levels of awareness about each other. The host personality, Suad, is aware of the existence of the alter personality Behiye. The alter personality Behiye, who can also be characterized as a memory follower, knows Suad until the age of fifteen. This situation reveals that Suad and Behiye are aware of each other’s existence and behaviors, an attitude called “directional awareness” (Putnam 2012, p. 163), which is generally exhibited by most of the personalities in the system of a multiple personality disorder patient.

Patients with multiple personality disorder may exhibit a significant proportion of cases of transgenderism (Putnam 2012, p. 94). Transgenderism refers to a clear incompatibility between one’s adopted gender identity and one’s assigned sex at birth. Therefore, the person wants to live and be accepted as a member of the other sex (Turan et al. 2015, p. 154). As a matter of fact, it can be said that Suad, the host personality in the novel, undergoes a process like this. In the novel, Suad’s great-aunt’s granddaughter Halide, who is called to their house for friendship, decides to marry Fikret, whom she meets during her education. Fikret lost his mother and then his father at a young age. On his deathbed, his father entrusted his son not to his distant, unkind relatives who had never asked him to remember him for a day but to his Armenian neighbors, whom he had lived with for years, almost as a single house, and whom he considered family. This family, known as the Kuyumcuyanlars, took Fikret, whom they had known since he was a baby and treated as their own, under their protection and even kept him close to their own daughter, who was born years later. At that time, Suad’s family became very close to Mr. Fikret’s foster family. Dikran, Dudu and their daughter Eliz, members of the Kouyumjian family, start to visit the mansion where Suad lives. Eliz is deaf and mute, but she has a dazzling beauty. However, Eliz is the only person with whom Suad can truly communicate. Eliz can read lips and also teaches Suad sign language. They spend a lot of time together. However, the two-person world they have built disintegrates when Nevzat, the son of İbrahim Şecereli, one of the teachers at the School of Civil Engineering, who is an acquaintance of Suad’s father, starts to come and go to the mansion again. After a while, Nevzat begins to have deep feelings for Eliz, shares this with Suad and asks for her help. However, Suad does not like this situation because she fell in love with Eliz long before and expresses this in her letter to Behiye:

“No, my first feelings were anger and jealousy rather than surprise. Then I also felt sorrow somewhere inside me, I can’t lie. Fear of loss and loneliness for some reason. . . The more I thought about it, the more I realized. Of course, it wasn’t about Nevzat Bey falling in love with Eliz instead of me. . . It was about him falling in love with Eliz. I didn’t care in the slightest about sharing Nevzat Bey with Eliz, but I was terrified of sharing Eliz with Nevzat Bey. In other words, I wasn’t jealous of Nevzat Bey, I was downright jealous of Eliz. In time, I realized that my feelings for her were not about the space left vacant by you, but directly related to the stringed instrument of my heart. Mr. Nevzat, who had gone so far astray as to carry letters in his pocket, thought he was the only one in our group of three friends who had lost his heart to Eliz, because he had never looked inside me. However, I loved Eliz before him, more than him, more than anyone else. But instead of spewing what was in my heart in daring letters, I preferred to keep silent inwardly.” (Yıldırım 2020, pp. 78–79)

Sexual identity is one of the basic elements of self-perception and identity and begins to develop in early childhood. According to the theory of identity development, self-

perception develops in the 6th–18th months, in the phase defined by Lacan as the mirror phase. Integration of the self is possible with an appropriate mirror phase. The child's sense of themselves as a boy or a girl—in other words, the formation of core gender identity—begins in the first one and a half to two years of life. At this age, the individual is aware of being a boy or a girl. Sexual identity and the sense of sexual identity are established around 3–4 years of age. It is not possible to change sexual identity after this age. Society and parents develop and strengthen the child's sense of self through mirroring. It is suggested that transgender individuals have problems with the development and completion of these processes (Öztürk and Uluşahin 2011).

Experiences in the early years of life, the presence of appropriate identification models and upbringing are the main psychosocial factors affecting sexual identity development. Unsatisfactory relationships with parents and siblings, rejection, a history of childhood neglect and abuse, domestic violence and separation are other factors that play a role in etiology (Öztürk and Uluşahin 2011). It is known that traumas experienced in childhood can lead to identity conflicts, and identity conflicts can result in transgenderism (Keskin et al. 2015, p. 439). In the novel, Suad's deep trauma and hospitalization processes as a result of causing her brother's death, as well as her unsatisfactory relationship with her mother and father, form the basis of her identity conflict. It is argued that multiple personality disorder and symptoms such as anxiety, depression and decreased stress tolerance, which are common in the disorder, are commonly seen in transgender people, that femininity and masculinity cannot be adequately integrated in transgender people and that self-structuring develops imperfectly (Michel et al. 2001).

Similarly, despite being a woman, Suad does not develop an emotional affinity towards any man throughout the novel. In addition, Suad does not show the care and attention a woman might be expected to show to her hair, face, body and clothes. In the letters she writes to her sister, Behiye, all the famous personalities she portrays, such as Qutbeddin Shirazi, Hezarfen Ahmed Çelebi and Thomas Edison, are men. In the novel, Suad has no sexual orientation towards any gender until she gets to know Eliz and falls in love with her. Situations such as her inward infatuation with Eliz and her jealousy of a man who is in love with her are revealed as her sexual orientation towards her own sex, which also evokes homosexuality. Suad, whose multiple personality disorder is not understood by her family and doctors, is forced by her family to marry Sermet, a rich man in his late forties, in August 1945 when she is 27 years old. The only reason Sermet marries Suad is to be at the forefront of society with the daughter of a good and rich family in order to become a member of parliament. Suad has no feelings for Sermet because of her situation, but she is disgusted by his physical appearance and demeanor. Three months after their marriage, Sermet asks Suad when her period is. His purpose in asking this is to impregnate Suad by observing the most fertile period. The fact that Suad is forced to have sexual intercourse with Sermet at certain periods is the beginning of the end for her. The transformation of her psychological pain into physical pain and the squeezing of her soul inside her body become dramatic. This is also a manifestation of discomfort with one's gender or an intensified sense of being unsuitable for the sexual role traditionally required by one's gender. However, the situation that draws attention at this point in the book is that the practice of changing gender in transgender people is never considered by Suad, and she does not take any steps in this direction.

In May 1950, Suad's husband, Sermet, who had a son named Adnan, was found dead in his bed one morning shortly after. It is thought that his death was caused by a heart attack. However, the truth is very different. In her letters to Suad, Behiye, the alter-ego sister, questions whether she had anything to do with Sermet's death. In her letter to Behiye, Suad confesses that she slowly poisoned Sermet and killed him. Suad's motive

for committing this murder lies in the fact that although she had given Sermet a child, he forced her to have sexual intercourse again in order to give birth to a second child:

“Since you’re most curious about this out of all the things I’ve written about, I’ll satisfy your curiosity right away. It was me who killed Sermet, I poisoned him with my own hands. Not in a moment of anger or anything like that, but deliberately, over time, little by little, every day, with the patience of an ant. . . Whether you find it strange or shameful, I don’t regret what I did one bit. She deserved it. Because while I thought she was going to remove her stinking breath and her aba hands that pricked me like thorns when she took her son in her arms, she continued to come to my room even after Adnan was born.” (Yıldırım 2020, p. 292)

For Suad, whose traumas led to identity conflict and whose identity conflict resulted in transgenderism, “the lack of support from important people who played a soothing role such as mother, father and other relatives” (Tamam et al. 1996, p. 49) triggers multiple personality disorder. Until that day, there is no significant person other than Eliz who plays a soothing role for Suad. She knows that she cannot meet Eliz, but being with her and spending time together is enough for Suad. However, after Eliz’s marriage to Nevzat, Suad’s family forces her to marry Sermet, she is forced to have sexual intercourse with a man she loathes when she never thought of having sexual intercourse with a man and Sermet forces her to have a second child when she thought she would be free from sexuality after giving birth to a child. Suad develops “dissociative disorders characterized by severe, regressive symptoms called hysterical psychosis” (Tutkun et al. 1995, p. 29). One of the behaviors manifested in this direction is harming the environment. After throwing Fuad into the well and causing his death, Suad, who did not exhibit any behavior such as harming the environment and others until Sermet’s death, enters an unwanted marriage and settles in Sermet’s house. In particular, Suad’s bedroom becomes a place where her menstrual periods are monitored and she is raped. The abuse of confinement, which leaves Suad in isolation and sensory deprivation in a way that constantly terrifies her, paves the way for the progression of dissociative processes such as multiple personality disorder and leads her to commit murder. Suad takes her behavior of harming others and the environment to the next level.

Suicide is one of the most common behaviors in patients with multiple personality disorder. This is evidenced by the findings that three-quarters of patients with multiple personality disorder have made one or more suicide attempts (Putnam 2012, p. 93). Suicide, which has a very long history in the history of humanity, is death caused directly or indirectly by a negative action undertaken by the victim, knowing that it will lead to death (Durkheim 1992). In the novel, Suad can never be a mother to her son, Adnan, due to her condition. Suad returns to her father’s house after Sermet’s death, and her son is taken care of by the journeyman who has been taking care of him since he was a little boy. During this time, Eliz, who is actually Armenian but was affected by the organized attack against the Greek minority in Istanbul on 6–7 September 1955, first witnesses the looting of Dikran’s shop and his death from a heart attack. Unable to recover from the tragic event, Eliz commits suicide. Suad loses first her mother and then the journeyman. Suad’s father sends his grandson, Adnan, to boarding school. Suad responds negatively to Behiye’s request to return in her last letter, citing her departure from this world as the reason for this. After the trauma she has been experiencing since the age of five and the negative developments added on top of it, she finds no other way but suicide due to the symptoms of stress disorder. However, she thinks of it not as suicide but as a journey and affirms it:

“It’s like that. Some put a bag over their head, some electrocute themselves. Some run into a wall with a speeding car, some hang themselves. You never know who will do what. The Japanese commit harakiri, young girls take pills, soldiers use bullets, the sick use morphine, housewives use rat poison, the elderly use salt spirit. Because death, which comes with an invitation, suits everyone differently. A human being carries within him whims and talents that are invisible from the outside. That’s why I’m not going to do any of this. This may surprise those who think they know me well and expect such madness from my sick soul, like you, but I’m not going to join the caravan of those who kill themselves. I’m just going on a long journey I’ve been dreaming of for years. I will fly, or I will fly like a tiny fairy dust. Let’s see. . .” (Yıldırım 2020, p. 337)

Reactive situations in which an individual’s life is suddenly interrupted as a result of challenging and damaging experiences constitute psychiatric crises. Individuals can often develop effective solutions when faced with events in life, and these difficulties usually do not lead to a significant crisis (Devrimci Özgüven et al. 2003, p. 14). However, the existing coping skills of a person like Suad, who is directly affected by multiple personality disorder, are inadequate. The events she has experienced since her childhood and her mental state prepare the ground for her to be always open and prone to being affected. Suad’s inability to reduce or eliminate the emotional pressure caused by recent losses and events leaves her with no more strength. Suad, who has been in a crisis situation since the day she threw Fuad into the well, cannot recover her mental health because she cannot obtain support from her environment or appropriate professional help. The personality systems she develops against her feelings of anxiety in a crisis situation, especially Behiye, are actually a manifestation of her call for help and her effort to communicate. However, she no longer has hope for the help and communication for which she has been waiting for years, and she loses control and takes refuge in suicide. By identifying her suicide with the act of flying, she reminds us of Hezarfen Ahmed Çelebi<sup>1</sup> in his last moment.

#### 4. Conclusions

Psychiatric disorders are a fact of life that authors incorporate into literary works. One of the many different types of psychiatric disorders is dissociation, and one type of this is multiple personality disorder. Nermin Yıldırım’s novel *The Map of Hidden Gardens* is a dramatic example of a representation of multiple personality disorder in fiction. Suad, the female character in the novel, causes the death of her brother, Fuad, by throwing him into the well in the garden of their house when she was a five-year-old child. For Suad, who is exposed to a traumatizing life event, this situation appears in the story as a preliminary cause of her multiple personality disorder. Suad is hospitalized as a result of the chronic dissociation caused by the murder of her brother. The deprivation, isolation, chronic headaches and restlessness, along with the depersonalization caused by her guilt and inability to establish sufficient emotional bonds with her family, create traumatic experiences that divide her between her own alters, mostly her sister, Behiye. Suad is filled with a certain sense of self in each of these fragmented states as she constantly enters into a certain situation in order to escape from trauma or from performing behaviors in which she fails to manifest her normal state of consciousness. Instead of a coherent self in the face of different behavioral situations, Suad creates multiple selves that can be elaborated through a series of dissociative states located in alter personalities. In the context of trauma, this is a life-saving solution for the already powerless Suad. However, as Suad grows older, this becomes a bad stimulus in the adult world, where memory, behavior and sense of self are under constant stress. Suad, who expresses depression, a wavering mood, an overwhelmed manner, a loss of a sense of pleasure and a generally negative outlook on

life, experiences a sense of losing her sense of time and finding herself in different places with a certain regularity throughout the novel. She also exhibits a case of transgenderism, although she never takes steps towards a gender transition. Her situation is limited to the fact that she does not display the appearance of a woman, has no feelings for the opposite sex and falls in love with Eliz, who is her own sex. Suad takes her place in fiction as a dramatic multiple personality disorder patient with psychiatric symptoms, dissociative symptoms, anxiety symptoms, thought disorder, alter personalities, transgenderism and self-destructive behaviors, which she exhibits from the beginning to the end of the novel. In this respect, Nermin Yıldırım's *The Map of Hidden Gardens* is an important work in Turkish literature in which almost all of the causes, criteria and symptoms of multiple personality disorder are exemplified in fiction.

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## Note

- <sup>1</sup> Information about Ahmed Çelebi, who lived in the 17th century, is based only on Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname*. Since he understood various sciences and arts, he was known as Hezarfen, meaning "the man of a thousand sciences" (Kaçar 1998, p. 297).

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