

Cultural Adaptations and Gender Representations in Turkish Translations of *Little Women*

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Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* has had a profound cultural impact since its publication in 1868, particularly in its exploration of gender roles and societal expectations. This study examines two Turkish translations of the novel by Belkıs Sami (1931) and Suna Tanyol (1953), analyzing how these translations reflect the shifting socio-political landscapes of Türkiye. Using Lawrence Venuti's (1995) theories of domestication and foreignization, the paper explores how the translators navigated cultural adaptation. The 1931 translation aligns with Türkiye's early Republican ideals, incorporating domesticating strategies to present the text in a manner more familiar to Turkish readers during a time of cultural transition. Conversely, the 1953 translation adopts foreignizing approaches, reflecting Türkiye's increasing openness to Western influence and highlighting the cultural and ideological shifts of the 1950s. Through comparative analysis, the study explores themes of gender, societal norms, and the translators' roles as cultural mediators. It argues that these translations not only adapt *Little Women* to Turkish cultural contexts but also serve as mirrors of evolving gender ideologies in Türkiye. By preserving or transforming characters like Jo March, these translations offer insights into how literary works influence and reflect cultural attitudes toward gender roles. This research highlights the relationship between translation, culture, and gender, emphasizing the need for further studies on how translated literature influences societal norms.

Keywords: *Little Women*; cultural adaptations; gender roles; domestication; foreignization; Turkish translations

1. Introduction

Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888) was a prolific American writer who produced a wide range of works, including novels, short stories, poems, and children's literature. She is best known for her novel *Little Women* (1868), a semi-autobiographical coming-of-age story about four sisters growing up during the Civil War. *Little Women* was an instant success and remains one of the most popular novels in American literature. The characters in the novel are based on Alcott's own family, and the events depicted are inspired by her personal experiences. According to Elizabeth Silverthorne, *Little Women* is a classic novel that continues to connect

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with readers today due to its exploration of universal human experiences such as growth, adversity, and the development of relationships with family and friends. The March sisters struggle with the same weaknesses that Alcott and her sisters have, such as envy, timidity, selfishness, and impulsiveness. However, they also love and support each other, and they learn to overcome their challenges (Silverthorne 2002, 7–10).

A core theme in the novel is the challenge of gender roles. In Victorian America, women were expected to be submissive, domestic, and focused on marriage and motherhood. Jo March, the protagonist of *Little Women*, rejects these expectations. She is a strong, independent young woman who dreams of becoming a writer. She refuses to marry for money or security, and insists on going after her passions, even though it means facing societal disapproval. Other characters in the novel also challenge traditional gender roles. Through its portrayal of the March sisters, *Little Women* challenges the idea that there is only one way to be a woman. The novel shows that women can be strong, independent, and successful in many ways. This also shows that women can pursue beyond traditional feminine roles.

In my exploration of the translations of *Little Women* by Belkis Sami in 1931 and Suna Tanyol in 1953, I examine the interplay between Alcott's narrative and the socio-political dynamics of Türkiye. 1931 and 1953 translations of *Little Women* were chosen for this study since they represent significant periods in Turkish society. The 1931 translation was the first translation of the novel to be published after the adoption of the Latin alphabet (1928) in Türkiye. This translation can be seen as a part of the transitional steps in Türkiye's modernization process, which has the potential to inspire Turkish women to challenge traditional gender norms. The 1953 translation is also important because it was published during a period of increasing interest in American culture in Türkiye. This can be assumed to lead Turkish women to see American women as role models. Employing Lawrence Venuti's (1995) concepts of domestication and foreignization, this analysis extends beyond linguistic studies. Therefore, this article aims to reveal how these translations serve as reflective mirrors of the shifting societal discourse, providing insight into the changing perspectives on gender roles and societal expectations over time.

2. Literature Review

The novel *Little Women* by Alcott has been translated into numerous languages, including Turkish. The Turkish translations of this novel provide an opportunity to examine how translators' choices can shape cultural perceptions of gender. Several scholars have examined the impact of translators' choices on cultural perceptions. Yeşim (Sönmez) Dinçkan's (2019) article analyzes the linguistic complexities of address forms in the translation of *Little Women* into Turkish. The study examines the translator's decisions regarding the use of address pronouns ('sen' [T]-'siz' [V]) and their sociolinguistic implications. This analysis examines how characters communicate in the novel, focusing on family dynamics, acquaintances, and interactions with strangers. It aims to enhance our understanding of translator decisions in literary translation, particularly regarding sociolinguistic factors, character relationships, and the importance of address terms (Dinçkan 2019, 90).

A couple of years after the translation of the novel *Little Women*, Alcott wrote the second part of the book *Good Wives* and it was translated into Turkish by Belkıs Sami. This translation was examined by Arsun Uras Yılmaz and Serpil Yavuz Özkaya (2018) in their article focusing on the Turkish translations of Alcott's *Good Wives* by Belkıs Sami (Boyar) (1930) and Necmettin Arıkan (1966). The analysis applies Anthony Pym's translation historiography and the study questions 'who, how, where, when, for whom, and with what effect' the translations occurred. Following Pym's model, translators are treated as influential social actors. The findings reveal that Sami, educated at the American College for Girls, reflected American culture and conveyed religious terms in her translation, while Arıkan, an educator, borrowed and explained foreign terms. The choices made by the translators reflect their social responsibility and missionary aims, positioning them as impactful social actors in translation (Uras Yılmaz and Yavuz Özkaya 2018, 210). While the primary focus of this analysis centers on *Good Wives*, it nonetheless offers a valuable understanding of Sami's translation strategies, providing insights into her broader approach beyond the specific context of the novel.

While the available studies focus on linguistic complexities, address forms, and the broader translation historiography, a closer look at the Turkish translations of *Little Women* by Sami in 1931 and Tanyol in 1953 reveals an overlooked aspect in the current analysis. My research seeks to examine the complexities of these particular translations, using Venuti's

(1995) concepts of domestication and foreignization to show how they contribute to and reflect the changing socio-political dynamics of Türkiye. This examination not only enriches the understanding of translation strategies but also provides a perspective on the influence of translated literary works in shaping cultural attitudes towards gender roles in the Turkish context.

3. Methodology

In the landscape of translation, a huge cultural act occurs where cultural elements, ideology, and politics come together. The translator, beyond serving as a linguistic medium, assumes the role of a cultural navigator, managing the balance between linguistic fidelity and the preservation of cultural differences. This exploration into another culture involves not only understanding the language but also grasping the culture and the power dynamics at play.

Examining the roots of translation theory, Friedrich Schleiermacher's insights (Venuti 1995) from the 1813 lecture provide foundational understanding. Schleiermacher posits that translation can manifest as domesticating or foreignizing. Domestication aligns the foreign text with the cultural values of the target language, essentially 'bringing the author back home.' Conversely, foreignization exerts pressure on these values to convey linguistic and cultural differences. Schleiermacher's preference for foreignizing translation, as explained by French translator Antoine Berman, transforms translation into an ethical act—a space where a cultural other is clearly visible (Venuti 1995, 19–20). So, it can be said that domestication aims to adapt the foreign text to the cultural norms of the target language, essentially 'bringing the author back home.' In contrast, foreignization highlights cultural differences, preserving the linguistic and cultural distinctiveness of the source text.

Building on Schleiermacher's ideas, Venuti adds more to the conversation about foreignization. According to Venuti, foreignizing translation is not just a passive task; it is a strategic move meant to shake up the cultural norms in the target language. This deliberate shaking creates a reading experience that feels unfamiliar, highlighting the significant differences in the foreign text. However, to be successful, foreignization needs to break away from native norms. Venuti stresses that foreignization is not just about language; it is a cultural intervention, especially against the dominance of English-speaking countries and the uneven exchanges of culture. This method acts as a kind of resistance against ethnocentrism, racism,

cultural self-centeredness, and imperialism, aiming to promote fair geopolitical relationships (Venuti 1995, 20). Therefore, it can be claimed that foreignization is a purposeful choice by translators and cultures to express or present their unique identities. This shows the importance of preserving different cultures and making it easier for people from diverse backgrounds to understand each other in our connected world.

As pointed out by Venuti, the historical emphasis on translation is towards the domestication approach, which seeks to prioritize fluency and readability. However, it means to erase any traces of the translator's choices and interpretations (1995, 5). Venuti's critique of this dominant approach can be observed in examining Turkish translations of *Little Women*. The tendency toward cultural homogenization in domesticating translation raises concerns about the potential erasure of linguistic and cultural distinctions between the source and target texts. Venuti suggests that making everything the same might blend diverse cultural expressions, potentially silencing various voices in world literature.

As we go through Turkish translations of *Little Women*, the extent to which the translators become invisible or visible and the balance kept between what is familiar and foreign gains more importance on keeping cultural differences. Since the primary goal of this article is to examine the translations of 1931 and 1953 within the context of the current understanding of the time, the application of Venuti's concepts of domestication and foreignization will help to depict the position of women in society as reflected in the translations. The methodological approach acknowledges translation as a cultural act, where cultural elements, ideology, and politics converge. In this case, the translators go beyond linguistic accuracy; they also help bridge the gap between language and culture. My goal is to understand the impact of the translators' choices on cultural perceptions (especially on gender roles) within the changing landscape of Turkish society during the transformative periods of the 1930s and 1950s.

4. Translation in 1931 by Belkıs Sami

Belkıs Sami (1894–1966), a significant Turkish writer, translator, and educator, is notably recognized for her translations, especially of Alcott's *Little Women* into Turkish in 1931 published by Muhit Neşriyat. She studied at the American College for Girls in İstanbul, where she learned a lot about American life and culture. This background gave her a special point of view. As it is pointed out by Uras Yılmaz and Yavuz Özkaya, it could be argued that the

education she got in the American style impacted both the choice of the works to be translated and the decisions made during the translation process (2018, 210). As is evident from her choice of work in translation, she aimed to present the American way of life conceptually. However, considering the transitional period of the young Republic during which Sami was working, she might not have fully accomplished this goal. Her choice of translating *Little Women* can be seen as an indicator of her attempt to convey this idea, even though the circumstances of the era might have posed challenges to its complete realization. In this context, “the lives of the four sisters featured in Alcott’s books stand out for their distinctive feature of offering alternative lifestyles for readers outside of America” (212). This not only reflects Sami’s effort to introduce American life but also highlights the difficulties she faced during the transitional period of the young republic. Sami’s translation gains significance by examining the themes of submissive domesticity and societal expectations for women, particularly focusing on marriage constraints.

Sami’s choice of *Little Women* to translate may not be a coincidence as the 1930s were the times when Türkiye was a very young Republic and there were efforts to modernize the citizens; one of the biggest changes was the acceptance of the Latin alphabet on November 1, 1928. The adoption of the Latin alphabet in Türkiye marked a transformative cultural shift, as emphasized by Şehnaz Tahir Gürçağlar’s observation that the Turkish people had a new identity as a result of the alphabet reform and the purist movement. This identity was brought closer to the philosophical foundations of Western civilization and separated from its Ottoman, Arabic, and Persian ancestry (2008, 59). This monumental change, initiated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the early years of the Republic of Türkiye, aimed to modernize and align the nation with Western values. The translation efforts during this period played a significant role in shaping the cultural landscape. Therefore, the translations of *Little Women* in 1931 and 1953 serve as a case study for the time of their translations, and the depiction of women in these translations reflects the changing role of women in Turkish society.

The widespread use of the Latin alphabet in literary works, whether local or translated, likely contributed to an increase in literacy rates. Therefore, Sami’s choice of *Little Women*, as a significant figure during this period and a graduate of American College for Girls, can be a deliberate preference. Within the pages of *Little Women*, traditional gender roles are questioned, and women’s potential as writers and artists is appreciated. The novel challenges the conventional expectations of women, presenting alternative roles and ambitions. Therefore, Sami’s choosing this specific text indicates a desire for a slower shift of ideas, promoting a

milder approach to the societal changes happening at the time. According to Ayşe Durakbaşa, during the early years of the Republic of Türkiye, women were both excluded and included in the emerging public sphere. The domestic sphere changed as well, with new consumption patterns and the organization of household space and time. Modern housewifery emphasized scientific approaches to hygiene, nutrition, child-rearing, and psychology. These changes played a crucial role in shaping middle-class lifestyles (2011, 462–464). Overall, we can say that Turkish modernization relied on a combination of domestic and public factors. It mainly saw women's gender identity with their roles in organizing and excelling within the household, although it accepted some openness and acceptance in public life. We can observe the effects of a woman's identity and being stuck within the household in the novel *Little Women*. Therefore, we can assume that Sami translated *Little Women* to join conversations about women's roles in 1930s Türkiye. Translating the work would reflect her interest in the modernization era and the Republic's efforts to Westernize and modernize. During this transition, as it will be shown, Sami adopts a more localizing approach when introducing foreign elements or ideas, aiming for a smoother integration. To illustrate how this approach manifests in Sami's translations, descriptive examples are provided in the following sections.

5. Translation in 1953 by Suna Tanyol

In 1953, Suna Tanyol translated the novel *Little Women* by Zaimler Publishing House. *Jo's Boys and Little Men* are also among Tanyol's translations. In the early 1950s, a significant moment unfolded in Turkish political and social history. The turning point was marked by the May 14, 1950 elections, during which the Democratic Party, led by Celal Bayar and Adnan Menderes, ascended to power, relegating the Republican Party, headed by İsmet İnönü, to the opposition. This period of political transition significantly shaped the path of Turkish society (Karpas 1972, 349). Although the ruling party changed in the country, the image of women stayed the same as the domestic but modern. The major thought of the period was that women should be loyal to their families, serve them, and take part in social life. As Çilem Tuğba Akdağ (2010) states in her research, *Kadın Gazetesi* (Women's Newspaper) presented young Republican women as more enlightened women who are well-behaved, raising their children, proficient in all kinds of housework, skillful and well-groomed, but not extravagant. This perspective reflects the tricky balance between traditional values and modern aspirations (215).

One of the reasons behind the dilemma of the Turkish women in the 1950s could be considered as the time's being a turning point in Türkiye's democratization progress. The developments that the Democrat Party experienced enabled Türkiye to take significant steps towards becoming a democratic country. In terms of women's rights during this period, it can be said that opportunities for education, employment, and political participation for women increased. A contributing factor to the growing participation of women in the workforce can be attributed to the growing relations between Türkiye and the United States, as well as the expansion and demand in the private sector, which led women to play a more active role in the professional sphere. According to Abdullah Aydın and Murat Yıldız, a changing workforce landscape, coupled with government backing from the Democrat Party, has paved the way for organizations aimed at integrating women into the economy. These initiatives prioritize cultivating connections between American and Turkish women, fostering international solidarity, protecting women's rights, and addressing their social and economic needs. Founded under the guiding principle of protection and collaboration, organizations like Türk-Amerikan Kadınları Kültür Derneği (the Turkish-American Women's Cultural Association-1950), Kadınları Koruma Derneği (the Women's Protection Association-1954), and Kadınlar Dayanışma Derneği (the Women's Solidarity Union-1959) enshrined this approach in their constitutions and actively pursued policies aligned with it (Aydın and Yıldız 2016 quoted in Abdal 2022, 100–101). Promoting connections between women in the United States and Türkiye, and building networks of support reflect a progressive and comprehensive approach. The commitment of organizations to these principles is evident in their founding statutes and policies. This dedication represents a positive step in addressing social and economic challenges for women in both countries. Therefore, it can be stated that creating these associations (see Appendix) goes beyond simple cultural interaction, highlighting a deeper dedication to common values and objectives. As highlighted by Dilara Nergishan Koçer, in 1949 the U.S. sent Professor Max Thornburg to assess the Turkish market. His report on Türkiye's economic situation and resources, submitted to the American government, was also exploring opportunities for cultural diffusion. This report shows that improving the accessibility of carefully chosen American books and magazines, especially novels, addresses a noteworthy requirement, creating a platform for the introduction of fresh and national ideas and fostering a strong community where solid concepts flourish (Thornburg 1950 quoted in Koçer 2009, 125–126). This collaborative effort between the U.S. and Türkiye not only served economic interests

but also laid the foundation for cultural exchange and mutual understanding. The focus on making American literature, particularly novels, more accessible shows a deliberate effort to shape perspectives and create a strong sense of community. Furthermore, it is clear that these groups had the potential to influence women's lives, helping them in adapting to major changes. This learning process is likely to contribute to transforming their lives and has a lasting impact. Women who have access to American novels are introduced to new ideas, expanding their horizons and showing them that a different life is achievable. Aydın and Yıldız described the objectives of the Turkish-American Women's Cultural Association as aiming to foster familiarity and closeness between Turkish and American women. They also emphasized the association's role in strengthening cultural relations within the framework of the existing friendship between the two countries. Additionally, the association seeks to provide insights into the mentalities, social customs, and traditions of women from both nations (2016, 60).

The goals and plans of American-Turkish associations, especially the Turkish-American Women's Cultural Association, were closely connected to the evolving path of women's rights and changing gender roles. This close relationship is more than just the organizations; it aligns with the shared ambitions of women in both Türkiye and the United States. The dedication to promoting understanding and cultural exchange, emphasized by Aydın and Yıldız, shows a purposeful effort to fight the social and economic challenges that women encounter. Through these strategic objectives, the associations play a crucial role in the ongoing process of redefining gender roles and creating a more inclusive societal landscape. The translation of American novels, such as *Little Women*, into the Turkish context emerges as an important channel in this transformative process. Hence, literary works function as cultural artifacts that transcend borders and capture changing ideologies. *Little Women*, in this context, is an excellent example of redefining gender roles, showing female characters challenging societal expectations and pursuing goals apart from traditional roles.

As will be depicted in the following sections of the article, the way of looking at women in society can be seen in the translations of *Little Women*. Both translations from different translators, during a period of political transition, reflect the ongoing societal discourse. The novel's characters, navigating their roles within the domestic and social spheres, depict the expectations placed on women during this transformative era. The characters in the story, dealing with their roles at home and in society, match what people expect from women during this important time. This connection between books and real life shows how culture, politics,

and the way we see men and women are all tied together, giving us a good picture of Türkiye's journey to becoming more modern. Throughout this journey, it can be said that the effects of the reforms, particularly the adoption of the Latin alphabet, play a transformative role in modernization. In light of what has been presented, the primary goal of this article is to examine the translations of *Little Women* in 1931 and 1953 as illustrative examples. The analysis will be carried out within the context of the existing understanding of the time, considering the historical developmental process, and guided by Venuti's (1995) concepts of domestication and foreignization to depict the position of women in society as reflected in the translations.

6. Information about the Novel and the Corpus

First published in 1868, *Little Women* narrates the coming-of-age journey of the four March sisters against the turbulent backdrop of the American Civil War. Alcott crafts a narrative that not only echoes her own semi-autobiographical experiences but also challenges the existing gender norms of Victorian America. The novel centers around Jo March, a character representing Alcott's rebellious spirit, who challenges societal expectations for women. Jo, aspiring to be a writer, rejects traditional roles of marriage and motherhood, breaking free from rigid gender expectations. Her strong independence and chase of literary dreams serve as inspiration for women to overcome societal limits and follow their passions.

In contrast to Jo's unconventional wishes, her sisters, Meg, Beth, and Amy, embrace traditional gender roles of the era. Meg, the eldest, dreams of a comfortable life and a happy marriage. Beth, the gentle and kind-hearted sister, finds peace in music and domesticity, embodying the virtues of compassion and tenderness. Amy, the youngest, desires a social status, valuing beauty and charm. Sarah Elbert argues that beyond her literary fame, Alcott played a key role in promoting feminist ideals that championed equality both within the home and beyond, through self-expression, work, and political participation. (1984 quoted in Rudin 2014, 116). Alcott's aspiration, as depicted in *Little Women*, aimed to establish an equal household where individuals of all genders could break free from traditional gender roles. This proposed setting would enable women to engage in employment and political activities, while men would collaboratively contribute to household responsibilities and join women in the upbringing and education of children (Rudin 2016, 116). Therefore, it can be said that through the March sisters' diverse journeys, Alcott challenges gender norms. While Meg, Beth, and Amy find

fulfillment in traditional roles, Jo’s pursuit of dreams questions the idea that women can only be happy at home. Alcott’s portrayal of the sisters shows us that women can find success and happiness in many ways.

The translation choices made by Sami in 1931 and Tanyol in 1953 reflect the socio-political contexts of their respective eras, providing a lens through which we can perceive the changing gender roles in Türkiye. Since the early Republic underwent significant changes with the adoption of the Latin alphabet and a push for Westernization, Sami’s translation can be regarded as aiming for a gradual shift in societal norms without completely disrupting traditional views. The 1953 translation by Tanyol, coinciding with the Democrat Party’s rising to power and close relations with the United States, can be said to signify a clearer representation of cultural and gender role changes. In this period, a potentially foreignized approach will be observed with foreign terms kept and women depicted more strongly. As I start on a comparative analysis of these translations using Venuti’s concepts, I will examine the linguistic choices and cultural adaptations, explaining translation strategies and the dynamic socio-political landscapes of their times.

7. Comparative Analysis

7.1 Gender Roles in 1931 and 1953 Translations

The following samples are taken from Chapter 1 “Playing Pilgrims” which is translated as “Hacılık Oyunu” in Target Text 1 (TT1) and “Hüzünlü Bir Noel” in Target Text 2 (TT2). It can be said that Sami (TT1) added a culturally familiar reference aiming to expand accessibility for Turkish readers. Using the word “oyunu” (game) strengthens a more accessible and relatable version, in line with the principles of domestication. However, in contrast, Tanyol (TT2) takes a foreignizing approach in its title, “Hüzünlü Bir Noel” (A Melancholic Christmas). The decision to use “Noel” without direct translation assumes a certain level of cultural familiarity with Christmas among the target audience. This foreignizing strategy adds aspects of the original culture. It assumes that readers will understand the importance of Christmas without directly translating, keeping the cultural richness in the title.

Table 1. Chapter 1: “Playing Pilgrims” (ST) / “Hacılık Oyunu” (TT1) / “Hüzünlü Bir Noel” (TT2)

ST (1989)	Jo does use such slang words! observed Amy. (4)
TT1 (1931)	Co, daima böyle çapkın sözler kullanır, dedi. (8)
TT2 (1953)	Jo, öyle argo kelimeler kullanır ki! fikrini yürüttü. (5)

Table 1 exemplifies a domesticating approach with the translated line in TT1, “Co, daima böyle çapkın sözler kullanır, dedi” (Well, Jo always uses such flirtatious words, said).¹ Choosing the word “çapkın” (flirtatious) tends to lessen the impact of slang and portrays it more as flirtatious or playful expressions rather than explicit “argo” (slang). This choice aligns to make the language more culturally and socially acceptable within the Turkish context. On the other hand, in TT2, the term “argo” keeps the cultural use of “slang” from the source text. By emphasizing Jo’s unconventional and potentially inappropriate language through a foreignizing approach, the translation maintains her boldness in TT2.

Another point that needs to be mentioned is the way names are written. In Sami’s 1931 translation (TT1), names are generally written as they are pronounced. For instance, Jo’s name is written as “Co.” This choice might reflect Sami’s effort to improve accessibility for readers of the young Republic era, who were adapting to the transition to the Latin alphabet. In the transition to the Turkish alphabet, the choice to depict names based on their pronunciation could be interpreted as Sami’s effort to create ease of reading. As stated by Venuti, editors, publishers, and reviewers require highly readable translations that are marketable. This promotes their commercial success while sidelining foreign texts and complex discussions on English-language translations (1995, 16). Considering this, it can be claimed that the approach adopted by Sami might be to impact the readability and marketability of translated works. On the other hand, in Tanyol’s 1953 translation (TT2), names are preserved as they are. Jo’s name is kept as “Jo.” This decision might signify Tanyol’s commitment to maintaining the original forms of names, perhaps expecting Turkish readers to become more familiar with foreign names.

Table 2. Chapter 1: “Playing Pilgrims” (ST) / “Hacılık Oyunu” (TT1) / “Hüzünlü Bir Noel” (TT2)

ST (1989)	Don’t, Jo, it’s so boyish ! (4)
TT1 (1931)	Yapma Co, bu hal pek oğlan gibi! (8)

¹ All back-translations of target texts into English are mine.

TT2 (1953)	Yapma Jo, bu çok erkekçe bir hareket! (5)
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Table 2 shows that the use of the term “boyish” in the source text conveys a certain tomboyish or youthful quality in Jo’s behavior. In TT1 (1931), “oğlan gibi,” maintains the essence of “boyish” and leans towards domestication. However, it aims to make the expression more accessible to readers by softening the impact and presenting Jo’s behavior in a more innocent light. In contrast, TT2 (1953) takes a different approach by translating “boyish” as “erkekçe bir hareket” (manly behavior) explicitly emphasizing the masculine aspect of Jo’s action. This translation choice might be seen as a more direct challenge to traditional gender norms, highlighting how Jo’s actions go against conventional expectations. It can be said that TT2 introduces a more assertive language, possibly reflecting a shift in societal attitudes towards gender roles during the 1950s.

Table 3. Chapter 2: “A Merry Christmas” (ST) / “Mes’ut Krismis” (TT1) / “Neş’eli Bir Noel” (TT2)

ST (1989)	The girls had never been called angel children before, and thought it very agreeable, especially Jo, who had been considered a « Sancho » ever since she was born. (16)
TT1 (1931)	Kızlara şimdiki kadar kimse melek çocuklar dememişti; onlar bu hatayı pek hoş buldular bilhassa doğduğu günden beri herkesin afacan telakki ettiği Co, ... (31)
TT2 (1953)	Bu evvelce hiç melek çocuklar denmemiş olan kızların, bilhassa doğduğu gündenberi « Sancho » adını alan Jo’nun pek hoşuna gitti. (17)

In the source text, Jo is called a “Sancho,” introducing ambiguity in its meaning as shown in table 3. The term carries various connotations, including “lover, pig, hog, or orphan animal.”² Sami (TT1) interprets “Sancho” as “afacan,” trying to soften Jo’s unconventional characterization. “Afacan” means a playful child in Turkish, emphasizing a more innocent interpretation. On the contrary, Tanyol (TT2) keeps the foreignness of the term by directly using the word “Sancho,” emphasizing cultural reference. Labeling Jo as “Sancho” challenges conventional gender norms, associating her with various possible meanings like a “lover, or an orphan animal.” The foreignized approach adds complexity to Jo’s characterization, leaving space for multiple interpretations within the cultural context of the original text.

² Collins Online, s.v. “sancho,” accessed January 16, 2023, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/spanish-english/sancho>.

Table 4. Chapter 16: “Letters” (ST) / “Mektuplar” (TT1) / “Mektuplar” (TT2)

ST (1989)	... and as the head of the family , Meg insisted on reading the dispatches.. (158)
TT1 (1931)	... bu mektupları Meg ailenin en büyüğü olmak hesabına kendi okumakta ısrar ediyordu. (286)
TT2 (1953)	Meg, aile reisi olarak haftalar geçtikçe daha neş’eli olmağa.. (178)

In the translation of the phrase in table 4 “Meg, ailenin en büyüğü” (Meg, the eldest of the family), the translator in TT1 (1931) appears to adopt a domesticating approach. The choice of “ailenin en büyüğü” is more gender-neutral, avoiding explicitly stating Meg’s role as the head or leader of the family. However, TT2 (1953), by retaining the term “aile reisi” (head of the family), takes a foreignizing stance. This deliberate choice keeps the gender-specific aspect from the source text, emphasizing Jo’s role as more clearly male-oriented.

Table 5. Chapter 16: “Letters” (ST) / “Mektuplar” (TT1) / “Mektuplar” (TT2)

ST (1989)	The girls is clever and fly round right smart . (162)
TT1 (1931)	Kızlar pek akıllı, hamaratlıklarına hiç diyecek yok. (292)
TT2 (1953)	Kızlar akıllıdır, iyi çalışıyorlar . (181)

In TT1, the translation introduces a gendered connotation with “hamaratlıklarına hiç diyecek yok,” (The girls are very clever, and there is no denying their skillfulness.) emphasizing certain traditionally feminine skills as demonstrated in table 5. This can be interpreted as reflecting specific gendered expectations present in the target culture. Unlike TT1, TT2 avoids adding any feminine implications to the translation of the skill description. It sticks to the general and neutral wording of the source text.

7.2 Cultural Adaptations in 1931 and 1953 Translations

Table 6. Chapter 1: “Playing Pilgrims” (ST) / “Hacılık Oyunu” (TT1) / “Hüzünlü Bir Noel” (TT2)

ST (1989)	«You are a dear, and nothing else,» Answered Meg warmly; and no one contradicted her, for the « Mouse » was the pet of the family. (5)
TT1 (1931)	Meg hararetle «Sen bir sevgilisin, başka bir şey değil,» diye cevap verdi, ve hiç biri buna itiraz etmediler, çünkü bu « mini mini kuzucuk » bütün ailenin kıymetlisiydi. (10)
TT2 (1953)	Meg samimiyetle, «sen bir sevgiliden başka bir şey değilsin,» dedi; kimse buna itiraz etmedi, çünkü « Fare » bütün ailenin sevgilisiydi. (6)

In table 6, TT 1 (1931) uses the phrase “mini mini kuzucuk” as a translation for “Mouse,” displaying a domestication strategy. The term “kuzucuk” is a diminutive form, and it means “little lamb” in Turkish which carries an affectionate and gentle connotation. This domestication strategy introduces a culturally familiar and emotionally impactful term in Turkish which softens the gendered stereotype. It highlights a traditional way of expressing affection that brings a feeling of innocence and warmth, which might be more culturally appealing. In contrast, TT2 keeps the word “Mouse” as “Fare,” as a foreignization strategy emphasizing the cultural other. This choice adds a layer of uniqueness to the text by keeping the original term. Meg’s endearment as a “Mouse” challenges traditional gender roles by emphasizing a non-human characterization, aligning with a foreignizing approach.

Table 7. Chapter 3: “The Laurance Boy” (ST) / “Lorens Çocuk” (TT1) / “Komşunun Oğlu” (TT2)

ST (1989)	Jo finished her story, her four apples, and had a game of romps with Scrabble . (24)
TT1 (1931)	Bu esnada Co da hikayesini elmalarını bitirdi, fare ile de bir oyun oynadı. (45)
TT2 (1953)	.. Jo da hikayesini ve dört elmasını bitirdikten sonra Scrabble ile bir oyun oynadı. (26)

As can be seen in table 7, TT1 introduces a linguistic adaptation by using the term “fare” for “Scrabble,” which aims for familiarity with the Turkish audience. Sami tends to avoid using foreign names or terms in general, preferring to make them culturally more understandable for her readers. In contrast, TT2 leans towards a foreignization strategy by keeping the specific name “Scrabble,” preserving a distinct cultural signal from the source text. This choice may contribute to a sense of foreignization, emphasizing the unique linguistic and cultural features present in the original content. The decision between the two translations reflects a balance between making the text more accessible and maintaining specific cultural references in the target language.

Table 8. Chapter 16: “Letters” (ST) / “Mektuplar” (TT1) / “Mektuplar” (TT2)

ST (1989)	... and the girls christened him « Mr. Goodhearth » on the spot. (157)
TT1 (1931)	... kızlar hemen oracıkta ona « büyük yürek » ismini verdiler. (282)
TT2 (1953)	... kızlar o anda « Mr. İyikalp » adını taktılar. (176)

In Table 8, Sami employs a linguistic adaptation by translating “Goodhearth” as “büyük yürek” (big-hearted) which provides a descriptive equivalent that can be immediately understood within the target culture. As can be noticed, Sami tends to favor translations that are culturally understandable and recognizable to her readers. However, TT2, translated by Tanyol, again leans towards foreignization by directly translating “Goodhearth” as “Mr. İyikalp.” Tanyol by keeping the title “Mr.” assumes a certain level of cultural familiarity and emphasizes the unique linguistic features of the source material.

Table 9. Chapter 16: “Letters” (ST) / “Mektuplar” (TT1) / “Mektuplar” (TT2)

ST (1989)	Ma Chere Mamma (Greeting of the letter) (161)
TT1 (1931)	Aziz annem , (291)
TT2 (1953)	Ma Chere Mamma , (181)

Table 9 shows that, in TT1 (1931), Sami tried to match the language style by translating the French words “Ma Chere Mamma” into “Aziz annem.” This translation shows a good match with Turkish culture and the way people talk. “Aziz annem” is a culturally recognized phrase that integrates into the target language which shows Sami’s tendency to prioritize cultural understandability. On the contrary, in TT2 (1953), Tanyol introduces a foreign linguistic element intentionally, assuming a certain level of familiarity or acceptance of French terms within the target culture. By keeping the French expression, Tanyol improves the text's cultural uniqueness, emphasizing the foreign origin of the greeting and maintaining a degree of linguistic foreignization.

Table 10. Chapter 16: “Letters” (ST) / “Mektuplar” (TT1) / “Mektuplar” (TT2)

ST (1989)	Adieu , I send heaps of love to Papa. (162)
TT1 (1931)	Allahaismarladık , babama yığınlarla muhabbetler. (292)
TT2 (1953)	Adiyo , babama yığınla sevgiler. (181)

The translation of the French word “Adieu” in table 10 as “Allahaismarladık” in TT1 (1931) to say goodbye aligns well with the Turkish culture of the readers. The Turkish translation “Allahaismarladık” fits in with the local language, making the transition between cultures smooth and connecting better with the readers. In TT2 (1953), Tanyol keeps the French word “Adiyo” as pronounced when saying goodbye. Keeping this foreign term links back to

the original language. By holding onto “Adieu,” the translator assumes that people in the target culture can recognize or accept the French word, making it sound a bit foreign.

8. Conclusion

Two Turkish translations of Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*, in 1931 and 1953, offer insights beyond the novel itself. Both translations reveal changing ideas about gender and societal expectations of Turkish culture.

The translation undertaken by Belkıs Sami in 1931 coincided with the establishment of the new Turkish Republic. It is evident that Sami adjusted the narrative to enhance its appeal to Turkish readers, aiming for cultural familiarity by modifying language and tempering Jo March’s rebellious character. This approach reflects Türkiye’s changes at the time, as it transitioned from the Ottoman Empire to the young Republic. However, by 1953, it is clear that Türkiye was regarded as welcoming cultural exchange and political engagement by Tanyol and her translation actively embraced foreignizing strategies in this respect. This involved keeping foreign terms, even if they seemed unfamiliar to Turkish readers. This decision went beyond linguistic precision; it was a conscious choice to depict the whole complexity of the female characters, showcasing all their strengths. This assertiveness reflects the shifting atmosphere in 1950s Türkiye, where women were increasingly moving beyond traditional roles to pursue their ambitions.

Different portrayals of female characters in the novel such as Meg’s domesticity and Jo’s fierce independence show a society with its evolving ideals for womanhood. In this respect, we can say that the translators’ choices not only reflect their personal styles but also the hopes and struggles within the eras when these translations were born.

Analyzing these translations can help us understand how American novels were received in Turkish society in different periods. Did Jo’s rebellious spirit inspire Turkish women to challenge traditional gender roles? Could Turkish women see themselves in Meg’s role as a devoted wife and mother? Answering these questions can help us better understand the complex relationship between culture, literature, and gender and suggest new areas for future research.

Appendix

Women's associations/societies established after the DP (Demokrat Parti) government are as follows:

Türk-Amerikan Kadınları Kültür Derneği (1950) (Turkish-American Women's Cultural Association),

Yoksullara Yardım Derneği (1952) (Aid to the Poor Association),

Ankara Çocuk Sağlığı Derneği (1955) (Ankara Child Health Association),

Ankara Çocuk Dostları Derneği (1957) (Ankara Friends of Children Association),

Çocuk Hakları Müdafaa Derneği (1958) (Children's Rights Defense Association),

Çocuk Zekasını Koruma ve Geliştirme Derneği (1958) (Child Intelligence Protection and Development Association),

Çocuk Sevenler Derneği (1958) (Child Lovers Association),

Türk El Sanatları Tanıtma Derneği (1959) (Turkish Handicrafts Promotion Association),

Türk Kadınlar Konseyi Derneği (1959) (Turkish Women's Council Association),

Türk Anneler Derneği (1959) (Turkish Mothers Association). (Ardıç 1983, 183–201 quoted in Koçer 2009, 71)

These are mostly charitable and socially oriented associations. In addition to these, a few associations have emerged that work towards elevating the status of women, educating them, and raising awareness. These were:

on May 14, 1951, Soroptimist Klübü (the Soroptimist Club),

on January 29, 1953, Kadının Sosyal Hayatını Tetkik Kurumu (the Institute for the Study of Women's Social Life),

on November 23, 1954, Kadınları Koruma Derneği (the Women's Protection Association),

on September 7, 1955, Kadınları Kalkındırma Cemiyeti, (the Women's Development Society),

in 1959, Kadınları Dayanıştırma Derneği (the Women's Solidarity Association) (Koçer 2009, 71).

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