

Atf: Fidanboy, N. & Taştekin, E. (2022). Jeanette Winterson's Rewriting of Patriarchal Tales in Her Novels *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *Sexing the Cherry* to Question Gender Roles. *Sosyoloji Dergisi, 44*, 339-358.

Derleme Makale / Review Article

JEANETTE WINTERSON'S REWRITING OF PATRIARCHAL TALES IN HER NOVELS *ORANGES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT AND SEXING THE CHERRY* TO QUESTION GENDER ROLES*

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Abstract

Jeanette Winterson examined the issue of gender by rewriting familiar fairy tales, and biblical stories in her novels *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) and *Sexing the Cherry* (1989). With Winterson's parodic rewriting, the contemporary reader, whose social culture and expectations have changed, moves away from the previous expectation that the woman lying in the glass coffin, representing purity and chastity, will be kissed and brought back to life by the prince. However, in Winterson's works, a woman's gender is far from being a part of her identity. Instead, Winterson points out the hidden messages underlying the tales we used to read before. Such messages have been seen in biblical stories rewritten in *Oranges*. This article aims to analyse these stories and question the existing gender roles. In addition, Winterson's subversion of the Grimm Brothers' tale "Twelve Dancing Princesses" and the main character's narrations in *Sexing the Cherry* is studied for the same purpose.

Keywords: Rewritten fairy tales, Subversion of gender

*Bu makale, birinci yazarın 2017 yılında Dr. Emel Taştekin danışmanlığında tamamladığı yüksek lisans tezinden türetilmiştir.

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Makale Gönderim Tarihi: 10/10/2022, Makale Kabul Tarihi: 21/11/2022

Jeanette Winterson'ın *Vişnenin Cinsiyeti* ve *Tek Meyve Portakal Değildir* Adlı Romanlarında Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerini Sorgulamak İçin Ataerkil Masalların Yeniden Yazımı

Öz

Jeanette Winterson *Tek Meyve Portakal Değildir* (1985) ve *Vişnenin Cinsiyeti* (1989) adlı romanlarında bilindik peri masallarını ve İncil'den hikayeleri yeniden yazarak toplumsal cinsiyet konusunu sorgulamıştır. Winterson'ın parodik yeniden yazımı ile toplumsal kültürü ve beklentileri değişen çağdaş okur, saflığı ve iffeti temsil eden, cam tabutta yatan kadının prens tarafından öpülerek hayata döndürüleceği eski beklentisinden uzaklaşmaktadır. Ancak Winterson'ın eserlerinde kadının cinsiyeti artık kimliğinin bir parçası olmaktan uzaktır. Winterson daha önce okuduğumuz masalların altında yatan gizli mesajlara dikkat çekmektedir. *Tek Meyve Portakal Değildir* romanda yeniden yazılan İncil hikayelerinde de bu tür gizli mesajlar görülmektedir ve bu makalede bu hikayeler toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini sorgulamak için analiz edilmektedir. Ayrıca Winterson'ın Grimm Kardeşler'in "On İki Dans Eden Prenses" adlı masalını çarpıtması ve *Vişnenin Cinsiyeti*'ndeki ana karakterin kendi çarpıtılmış anlatımları da aynı amaçla incelenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeniden yazılmış masallar, Toplumsal cinsiyetin çarpıtılması

Introduction

Recent research about the content of fairy tales has caused women to be perceived as "the other" in society since childhood. In addition, many dissertations and articles have been written about the same issue. Even though the fairy tale genre appears to be written that functions to entertain or distract children, they were initially penned in order to enrich adults' imagination. But in time, the genre got popular among children. Today, fairy tales are works of art that give children an opportunity to fictionalize real life effectively. When the details, symbols, and signs in fairy tales are analysed, "It will turn out that reality and the cleverly established and manipulated messages that penetrate the lower self are much more surprising than dreams the tale creates." (Sezer, 2017, p.9).

In her book *Fairy Tales and Gender* (2015), Sezer points out that messages in fairy tales have been directed and manipulated by the authority, in other words, by the ones who have the power since the beginning of the genre. Hence, from a gender perspective, the man with power maintains his position in fairy tales. In the Grimm Brothers' tale, "The Snow White," the main character

has a dependent female identity that has developed traditionally. The salvation of the princess only "proceeds through the dreams embroidered by the fairy tale. As if those saviour men were the natural right" (Sezer, 2017, p.12); the woman is portrayed as someone unable to stand in the absence of the man. Returned to life with the first kiss, Snow White also gets rid of her stepmother and thus takes a step towards establishing her traditional, patriarchal, and extended family. In other words, Snow White manages to serve the holders of power and promote their ideology. After reading the tale, a child does not question or criticize the passive position of the woman. For the kid, a passive woman comes with a happy ending, whereas the active woman drives men to unhappiness.

When looking at man's position, his heroic traits are generally in the foreground. However, as B. suggests, this kind of masculine domination is seen as the reflection of the body. According to Bourdieu, the system of symbols that identifies men with bodily alertness, watchful gaze, strength, and determination expects women to bend over and lower their eyes (Bourdieu, 2018, p.183). In addition, manhood requires some characteristics such as like fighting, protecting, and coping with violence. Thus, the woman awaits rescue either in a tower, a dungeon, an old castle, or a glass coffin in fairy tales. Meanwhile, the heroic prince must fight another man, a witch, or an evil stepmother. The reward of this struggle is "getting a woman and the rise of social status" (Sezer, 2017, p.17).

Marriage occurs at the fairy tale's happy end when the woman steps into the dependent home life. For instance, Snow White finds a house in the forest, and the first thing she does is clean it. After that, she is ready to take a step into home life. However, postmodern literature, disturbed by this unequal distribution of roles, has begun to use the retelling of fairy tales to distort traditional roles and oppose hidden messages that attempt to influence children about gender relations. Thus, the message to be given in deconstructive tales analyses these alterations. In today's literature, in alternative fairy tales, trapped in the castle, the man waits for the princess to save him; submissiveness passes from women to men.

It is possible to see alternatives to fairy tales in postmodern author Angela Smith's works. She examined the effect of feminist thought on rewritten fairy tales by observing how two versions of the Rapunzel tale were written in two separate periods. When Smith examined the rewriting of the book *Rapunzel: A Groovy Fairy Tale* (Roberts, 2003, p.426), she stated that the fiction was contemporary compared to the previous version and that the tale did not end with Rapunzel's marriage. The analyst also states that in the 2010 film *Tangled* (Grena ve Howard, 2010), Rapunzel is depicted as a much more intelligent,

active, extrovert woman. Smith seems to imply that in contemporary literature, unlike in previous fairy tales, the rewriting of traditional gender roles will be seen more frequently. (Smith, 2018, p.201). In Türkiye, there is also a project held by Odeabank to rewrite fairy tales under the name of Equal Tales. In the bank's presentation on the website, the company underlines that gender norms are learned at early ages and that the firm has decided to rewrite traditional tales to attract attention to this issue. Rewritten versions of the tales are free to get from the bank desks, or it is possible to listen to them online from the official website, and at the same time, people can download the tales. In the bank's rewritten version, Cinderella is so curious, for instance, and reflected by her keenness to read books and learn about new things. She has a stepsister and a brother. A young couple rules the country and is not good at ruling. So, the couple decides to give a ball and choose the most intelligent person to help them rule the country. Cinderella is locked in the attic by her siblings. Nevertheless, a fairy takes her out of the attic, and Cinderella joins the knowledge contest, wins, and becomes an essential member of the parliament.

Similarly, Rapunzel is rewritten in the bank's project. Here, Rapunzel is grown up by both her mother and the witch because they make an agreement on this before the baby is born. Rapunzel is brought up both by her mother and the witch because they make an agreement on this before the baby is born. Rapunzel lets the witch climb the tower by holding her hair down. The witch has aged due to her capture for long years. Rapunzel is depicted as an intelligent, brave, and outgoing person. She has four sisters who work on a farm to grow vegetables in their free time. One day, a prince hears Rapunzel sing and watches the witch go up the tower by holding Rapunzel's hair. He decides to try to go up like the witch. The next day, the prince acts like the witch changes his voice, and goes up the tower. When Rapunzel realizes this, she gets angry and tells him that it is rude to enter a person's house without permission. The prince defends himself by saying he has the right to do what he wants as he is the authority but his status as a prince is not important to Rapunzel. Later, the prince sees her farm and asks her about it, and she says they are good at planting but need different kinds of seeds. The prince leaves the tower and begins to bring new seeds to Rapunzel as the weeks pass by. In time, the farm gets bigger and bigger, and all the citizens get food from it. After enough food to feed everyone, Rapunzel leaves the tower, has a haircut, and wears a mini skirt. The prince feels shy to ask her out, but Rapunzel holds his hand in nature and asks, "Would you like to green the world together?" (Arslan, 2020, p.12).

These two examples show that the female protagonist differs from what we already know. This time rather than coming into prominence through their

beauty, Cinderella and Rapunzel get what they want through intelligence. Therefore, the princes in these tales are not associated with a woman's picturesque physical appearance. Similarly, by retelling stories, Jeanette Winterson defines gender outside traditional norms.

Parodic Rewriting

Post-modern feminist authors use language well by developing new theoretical concepts in their questioning of gender. One of these writers, Julia Kristeva, put forth a new term named intertextuality, derived from the Latin word *intertexto*. In this method of writing, we see a text within another to convey messages. In her essay, "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (Kristeva, 1986, p.85), Kristeva suggests that texts are not independent forms of descriptions. Instead, they provide writers with an opportunity to create different voices. Winterson uses intertextuality well as a subversive method.

Within intertextual uses, novelists can use irony, parody, and pastiche. Through these conventions self-aware, confrontational ideas can be put into literature. In this study, the novels studied include parodic rewriting of tales, so this article intends to pay special attention to this method. Furthermore, this style highlights defamiliarization, that "means to change our mode of perception from the automatic and practical to the artistic" (Selden, 1993, p.31). When we relate this statement to Winterson's style, it is possible to say that the two novels analysed let the reader stay away from "the automatic" perceptions of gender and use the power of penning to destabilize traditional discourses.

In conclusion, parodic rewriting of tales and stories helps Winterson to convey infinite meanings in her novels and allows her to create new meanings out of fixed gender representations. As a parodist, her stories function to subvert and challenge conventional forms of love and marriage, too.

Retold Stories to Question Gender in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*

As it has been stated above, there is a way of criticizing what old fairy tales told us in childhood; this way is rewriting fairy tales so that readers get the new message and begin to question gender roles. Winterson is a writer who is good at challenging fixed definitions of male-female identity and gender discrimination.

In *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, there is a subversion of biblical stories and Winterson's revision of fairy tales that are worth studying since they function to exceed the limits of gender. In this novel, "The meaning of love is dependent on its ability to transcend sexual barriers and gender. It should be limitless."

(Ellam, 2010, p.13) Thus, in her writing of love, Winterson exceeds the limits of gender, marriage, and the laws of human society. She questions the familiar. We see her combination of fantasy and reality that argues against the absolute truth of gender roles.

In *Oranges*, the protagonist Jeanette is a little child and becomes a young woman by the end of the novel. She is adopted by the Missionary Secretary, who wants to grow her daughter with religious education. This religious pressure from her mother results in not sending her to public school until the government forces the parent to do so. Before she starts school, Jeanette reads the Bible and studies the lives of the saints. Therefore, her first education is shaped by religious literature and poetry. Unfortunately, these forms of literature depend upon the heterosexual bias of the Bible and on dominant social norms of gender. Thus, the child is in-between what is taught at school and in religious books, and her school life is unhappy because of her mother's evangelist obsessions.

We see Jeanette's quest for someone to love, not for a man but a woman. This search for love through Jeanette's fantasies, dreams, and real-life experiences is quite different from society's traditional expectations. Traditionally, a woman can love a man, yet Jeanette falls in love with someone of the same sex instead of a prince. Her name is Melanie, and she works at a fish stall. Melanie loves her as well. Subverting all norms of heterosexuality of the traditional society and the church, they start a love relationship. Their challenge that relies on the subversive criticism of the Bible is displayed within the general framework of *Oranges*. Here Winterson immerses the reader in a storyline they have never seen before. The question "Where is the prince whom the young woman is looking for" turns into the question "Where is the princess whom the young woman is searching for?"

The chapters of *Oranges* take their names from the Old Testament. The first Chapter, "Genesis" means creation. Here there is an implication to the concept of creation in the Bible. God creates humanity, shapes people's lives, and sets rules. Similarly, the evangelist mother metaphorically creates the adopted child Jeanette, tries to shape her, and wants her to obey the rules. However, the rules set by God work for the norms of a traditional society such as women should depend on men and be passive and subordinate. With their bodies, from birth women are responsible for this subordination of their status in society to men. The rules of Christianity mentioned above can also be seen in Judaism and Islam. As Berktaş suggests, monotheistic religions see the woman's body as the embodiment of sin and evil. Similarly, in this novel, the principles of the Bible are used to "preach strict gender roles to divide men and women in an

absolute and hierarchical way as a result of the interaction with the birth and institutionalization of the patriarchal system and to celebrate the patriarchal family relationships based on male supremacy” (Berkday, 1996, p.26). As an outbreak, Jeanette disappoints her mother by breaking out of the patriarchal system and rejecting the teachings of the Old Testament.

In the same chapter, we read a fairy tale made up by the author. The princess here is different from the ideal one who is expected to be helpless, at stake, looking for a prince to survive. On the contrary, she is pictured to have such “great energy and resourcefulness” that she is “in danger of being burned by [her] own flame.” (Winterson, 1985, p.9) Moreover, there is no heterosexual coupling in this tale. The tale is against gender divisions, and the rewritten form exceeds the social limits of love.

Introducing the princess’s diligence, the fairy tale goes on with her bravery, responsibility, and power to live her own life in the forest without needing to be rescued by a prince. One day, the princess meets an old hunchback who no longer wants to live. However, the hunchback must find someone else to transfer her duties before she dies. The transfer may be symbolic; it looks as if it is from one person to another, yet it symbolizes the princess’s perpetual power to stand on her own feet without a prince. Thus, the princess accepts the transfer and volunteers to take on the hunchback’s tasks:

- (1) To milk the goats
- (2) To educate the people
- (3) To compose songs for their festival (Winterson, 1985, p.9)

As it is seen, Winterson’s princess overcomes the difficulties of living in the woods herself and does not need a man to stay alive. Especially educating the people and composing songs are not similar to the main tasks that ought to be completed by a princess in conventional fairy tales. The heroine here rejects to look for a prince to marry, and her motive turns into a search for happiness without patriarchal boundaries like motherhood or wifehood.

“Exodus” is the next chapter of *Oranges*. The word “exodus” means leaving or going away, and the chapter is about Jeanette’s school life. Thus, there is a departure from home to school. This is the first time Jeanette meets the outside world in which she can question the church’s teachings and her mother’s conventional way of thinking. Influenced by her mother’s absolute instructions, Jeanette used to make precise comments and explain things by focusing on binaries: “I discovered that everything in the natural world was a symbol of the Great Struggle between good and evil” (Winterson, 1985, p.16). Thus, for

Jeanette, if something is doubtful, ambiguous, questionable, or unpredictable, it is then unnatural. This line of vision is taught to Jeanette at an early age so that she has to “make [herself] as ordinary as possible” (Winterson, 1985, p.39) to meet the expectations of a traditional society, the church and her mother. It is what we already see in fairy tales. The princess is on the good side and there is always a bad side, a contrasting relationship between characters, Cinderella versus her stepmother and sisters, Snow White versus her stepmother, Rapunzel versus the witch. Like Jeanette, Cinderella, Snow White and, Rapunzel are expected not to be on the uncertain, unnatural side. Cinderella, for example, stands on the natural side by cleaning the house and obeying the authority; her stepsisters, and her mother, and in the end, she conquers the prince’s heart with her beauty rather than her intelligence. In Winterson’s parodic rewriting, Jeanette rejects such certainty and breaks single, reductive truths of patriarchy.

Marriage is a woman’s principal goal in fairy tales. In *Oranges*, Jeanette first hears a statement that includes marriage when an aged gypsy woman tells her, “You’ll never marry, not you, and you’ll never be still” (Winterson, 1985, p.7). Thus, from the very first moment, it looks like Jeanette will not achieve what is expected from a typical princess in a tale. She is not mature enough to understand the old woman’s comment and gets confused but not disturbed because she never dreams about marriage. She only looks for someone to love. When she grows up, she falls in love with a girl, is excluded from home and church, and is locked to her room by her mother. Her lesbian love is punished, and she is forced to live a heterosexual love. When expectations of the society are not met, it looks like people commit a social crime. To keep children away from committing such a crime, they are educated to search for a happy ending marriage at an early age. However, Winterson’s character Jeanette subverts such a search for conventional love.

Furthermore, Jeanette observes married couples around her. She watches the traditional ways of behaviour of husbands and wives attentively. One day, on the way home from the church, one of her mother’s friends, Mrs. Finch speaks of her husband: “I lagged behind, thinking about Pastor Finch and how horrible he was. His teeth stuck out, and his voice was squeaky” (Winterson, 1985, p.13). Thus, Mr. Finch’s horrible image subconsciously makes Jeanette feel negative about the husband stereotype. Moreover, this image differs from the traditional image of a princess’s muscular body with broad shoulders. After hearing Mrs. Finch’s comments on her husband, Jeanette remarks that not getting married “might not be such a bad thing after all” (Winterson, 1985, p.13). So, Winterson creates a character whose feelings about marriage grow outside of conventional cliches from the early moments of her upbringing.

Jeanette's interrogation of traditional marriage goes on in the chapter named "Numbers". We read the Biblical story of Jews wandering to find land to settle, the Promised Land. This hints at Jeanette's wanderings into the nature of marriage outside of social conventions. There are some speeches about marriage through the end of this chapter. In one of those speeches, an ideal husband is the topic of the conversation:

Everyone always said you find the right man

My mother said it, which was confusing

My auntie said it, which was even more confusing. (Winterson, 1985, p.72)

As this is a typical daily talk, Jeanette is influenced by her family and dreams about the ideal husband. Her husband is "blind, sometimes a pig, sometimes [her] mother, sometimes the man from the post office, and once, just a suit of clothes with nothing inside" (Winterson, 1985, p.71). As it is seen conventional images of husbands in fairy tales are once more subverted by Winterson since it violates the fixed and accepted norms of men's etiquette. In addition, it draws attention to the distinction between marriage and happiness and disappointment. Jeanette also notices that women around her often liken their husbands to beasts, not princes. Curious about marriages, she asks her mother and her auntie questions to find out the reason why a woman prefers to marry a beast: "There were a lot of women, and most of them got married. If they couldn't marry each other, and I didn't think they could [...] some of them would inevitably have to marry beasts" (Winterson, 1985, p.73). Thence, Jeanette figures out the dominance of hierarchical systems force women to marry men without their own will, to fit into social life. But when Jeanette grows up, she transgresses limits of the society and does not look for a beast or a prince to marry. Nevertheless, marriage is not her only goal to achieve.

In the following chapter, "Joshua" there is a war of Israelites to conquer the city of Jericho. Similarly, Jeanette fights against the church by rejecting the restrictions of her gender. The church has strict rules, guidelines, and solid boundaries when it comes to relationships "a love reserved for man and wife" (Winterson, 1985, p.105) is only acceptable by the church. For Jeanette whom you love cannot be determined by the church's rules. What matters is the power of pure love: "To the pure all things are pure" she cries out to the pastor and adds "It is you [who are unnatural] not us" (Winterson, 1985, p.105). Here, there is a kinship between Jeanette's challenge against the walls of traditional sexed hierarchies and the battle of Jericho: "Walls protect and walls limit. It is in the

nature of walls that they should fall. That walls should fall is the consequence of blowing your own trumpet” (Winterson, 1985, p.112). Therefore, Jeanette blows her own trumpet and collapses the walls of the church with her love choice.

The next chapter, titled “Judges” implicates the judgments of Jeanette’s homosexual love by her mother:

She didn't believe in Determinism and Neglect, she believed that you made "people and yourself what you wanted. Anyone could be saved and anyone could fall to the Devil, it was their choice." While some of our church forgave me on the admittedly dubious grounds that I couldn't help it [...] my mother saw it as a wilful act on my part to sell my soul. (Winterson, 1985, p.131)

We see her mother’s harsh criticism of her love affair, holding the view that her daughter cooperates with the demon, and sells her soul by breaking the laws of the church. She not only betrays the hidden messages taught to her in Biblical stories, just like the ones in fairy tales but also goes ahead with her own decision. For her mother, nonetheless, has “taken on a man’s world in other ways; she had flouted God’s law and tried to do it sexually” (Winterson, 1985, p.133-134). Even though Jeanette’s mother assigns a different meaning to her love claiming it is only a sexual entanglement, Jeanette’s love is as romantic as in fairy tales. In her own words, we read the lovesome: “She stroked my head for a long time, and then we hugged, and it felt like drowning. Then I couldn’t stop. There was something crawling in my belly. I had an octopus inside me” (Winterson, 1985, p.89). Yet her mother’s marriage is not romantic, she lives a dog’s life by performing a ritual of habits, and the parents do not spend much time together. When her father is asleep, her mother is awake, and her mother keeps herself active, whereas the male parent sleeps all day, and he is an old stick in the mud. There is no desire, enthusiasm, or passion between the couple. They just keep on the rails. However, after she opens her eyes to the reality that romantic love in fairy tales is not the same as the one in her small town, Jeanette goes off the rails, which requires much more courage than in a prominent place. By doing so, she prefers to escape from gender categories rather than live her life within boundaries. In addition, she leaves her home, the church, and her family. Normally, the female character in a fairy tale would rather stay in safe places like home or a palace, but Jeanette does not unite safety with home or the church.

We see judgement in the following lines of this chapter, too. When Pastor Spratt hears of Jeanette’s love affair with her own sex, he asserts that the young

girl “was the victim of a great evil. That [she] was afflicted and oppressed, that [she] had deceived the flock (Winterson, 1985, p.131). In the church’s eyes, she is directed by the demon. Her love is communicated with affliction, oppression, and deception. However, after these accusations, Jeanette says “It all seemed to hinge around the fact that I loved the wrong sort of people [...] Romantic love for another woman was a sin” (Winterson, 1985, p.127). Here, we see Winterson’s subversion of romantic love once more. Jeanette breaks the laws of traditional love in fairy tales with her attitude that is far from gender norms, roles, and values. For men, Jeanette says, “As far as I am concerned, men were something you had around the place” (Winterson, 1985, p.127). Her understanding of men undermines the hegemonic status of male identity. When it comes to Jeanette making a judgment, she states, “I knew my mother hoped I would blame myself, but I didn’t. I knew now where the blame lays. If there’s such a thing as spiritual adultery, my mother was a whore” (Winterson, 1985, p.134). This time Jeanette puts the blame on her mother as she sells her soul to wrong judgments. At the end of the chapter, the protagonist walks out on her own way pronouncing “It was not a judgment day, but another morning” (Winterson, 1985, p.135).

The last chapter is “Ruth” which on the one hand reminds readers of a biblical story in which the character Ruth abandons her people and religion to be “side [by side] for ever and ever” to her widowed mother-in-law Naomi (Travis,2015, p. 79). Ruth’s loyalty to Naomi is akin to Jeanette’s loyalty to her lover. What Jeanette expects from love is seen in her own words:

I want someone who is fierce and will love me until death and know that love is as strong as death and be on my side for ever and ever. I want someone who will destroy and be destroyed by me. There are many forms of love and affection, some people can spend their whole lives together without knowing each other’s names [...] Romantic love has been diluted into paperback form and has sold thousands and millions of copies [...] I would cross seas and suffer sunstroke and give away all I have, but not for a man because they want to be the destroyer and never be destroyed. That is why they are unfit for romantic love. (Winterson, 1985, p.170)

These words of Jeanette are far from what we know as romantic love in fairies. Firstly, she does not focus on marriage. Secondly, she draws attention to different forms of love. Thirdly, she criticizes men as not being destroyed, men always get, take advantage of in relationships, and are served, looked after, and taken care of because of their gender. Such reasons make them unfit for romanticism.

There is another made-up story by Jeanette in this last chapter. The protagonist in this tale is Winnet. Winnet was adopted by a sorcerer. She was trained well by her sorcerer's father. She lives happily with her dad until she falls in love with someone whom the sorcerer disapproves of. Although she is approved and loved by all members of her society, her father's disapproval makes her a woman who rebels against a man, her father. Such an unexpected attitude also makes her a woman who disobeys the rules of a traditional society. In the end, Winnet is expelled from her home:

'Daughter, you disgraced me,' said the sorcerer, 'and I have no more use for you. You must leave.' Winnet could not ask for forgiveness when she was innocent, but she did not ask to stay. (Winterson, 1985, p.147)

This ending is like a warning to female readers of fairy tales: if you transgress the boundaries of gender, you will be punished, and a woman's happiness is only possible with the laws of traditions. Such a strict threat must be a big burden on a woman's shoulders. To lose a parent, friends, and others around is a big price to pay. Yet again we read the protagonist taking a decisive stance that her own decision is more important than the values of social norms. Rather than staying, she prefers to leave. Here Winterson subverts gender roles once more.

King Arthur's knight Sir Perceval's story is also rewritten by Winterson. Sir Perceval is King Arthur's favourite knight and is reliable and loyal to the king. He must leave the court to be a better knight by improving his survival skills, taking responsibility, and traveling alone to some unknown places to maintain his goal. In Winterson's penning, Sir Perceval has some difficulties after leaving his home and King Arthur behind: "Tonight, bitten and bruised, he dreams of Arthur's court, where he was the darling, the favourite. He dreams of his hounds and his falcon, his stable, and his faithful friends. His friends are dead now. Dead or dying" (Winterson, 1985, p.135). Here, there is a reference to Jeanette's dismissal from the church, home, and society. Like Jeanette, Sir Perceval is excluded and left alone, not being able to see her friends again. Yet neither Sir Perceval nor Jeanette changes their mind; they do not accept domination.

Struggling against the traditional fairy tale genre, Winterson invents her own tale in the chapter "Leviticus." Different from the anticipated plot in which the princess's biggest drive is to find a husband, this tale subverts female roles. The storyteller named Jeanette introduces a very beautiful princess, an expected pictorial representation of the female identity. The princess lives in the forest so beauty is not the only quality that she has. In other words, she has the ability to

live alone in the woods, which requires manual work. Additionally, "she was very wise too, being well acquainted with the laws of physics and the nature of the universe" (Winterson, 1985, p.61). Therefore, by underlining how brilliant the princess is, Jeanette creates an unexpected representation of a woman this time. This new female version is akin to the recently created Rapunzel character in the movie *Tangled* (Grena and Howard, 2010).

The prince, on the other hand, is described as a man who "was considered by many to be a good prince, and a valuable leader. He was also quite pretty, though a little petulant at times" (Winterson, 1985, p.61). The pretty prince is analogous to the pretty princess. It is well known that prettiness is connected to being soft, innocent, and goodhearted in many societies. So, the imperfect, active, muscular, fearless man image is subverted with the use of the adjective "pretty" rather than handsome. The prince's mockery depiction is used well by Winterson to fight against women's submissive and secondary position in society.

In the following lines, we read the prince's search for a female "without blemish inside or out, flawless in every respect" (Winterson, 1985, p.61). It is interesting that the prince is imperfect with his "petulant" manners but looks for a perfect princess. Eventually, the prince endeavours to find the flawless princess in the forest. The perfect woman is courageous, smart, and self-supporting. This representation of the female reminds the one at the beginning of the tale. She is far from the terrain of the traditional fairy tale women; her beauty or other physical advantages are not praised, instead, the social emphasis is on her independence, intelligence, and bravery. To exemplify, she is not keen to speak to the prince's advisor:

'Fair maid,' he began.

'If you want to chat,' she said, 'you'll have to come back later, I'm working to a deadline.'

The adviser was very shocked.

'But I am royal,' he told her.

'And I'm working to a deadline.' She told him. (Winterson, 1985, p.63)

Her deadline is more important than the prince's wish. A woman's priority shifts from looking for a husband to take her own responsibilities. The princess does not depend on male dominance, turning down automatic discourses of ownership. The perfect woman can live merrily without the existence of a husband. At the same time, she challenges authority. Particularly the ending

when she refuses the prince's proposal is of great importance as it is quite different from what we expect to read. It is also similar to the ending of the movie *Tangled* again since Rapunzel does not get married at the end of the film. I think the perfect woman's challenging attitude and life expectations destabilize traditional fairy tale endings. Winterson does this through parodic rewriting and the contemporary film industry does the same, too. In one way or another, children of today are exposed to rewritten versions of fairy tales.

Winterson's novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* includes subversive fairy tales that function to reinforce the argument against gender. At the beginning of *Oranges*, Winterson writes "Storytelling [...] enables children to adapt, edit and invent life stories of their own" (Winterson, 1985, p.6). Therefore, after reading Jeanette and Minnet's stories that invert rules, children may be affected and create their own life stories. Children can learn not to rely on their gender while doing a task. For example, a boy may not define cleaning as a woman's job anymore.

To conclude, Winterson uses biblical stories to subvert traditional love in *Oranges*. In the Bible, there is a focus on binaries. Humanity faces good and evil, black and white, right and wrong. Jeanette is taught to choose between one of these. As a good Christian, she must make the right choice. For example, there is a binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality in the Bible. Jeanette had better find an ideal man like in fairy tales so that she can meet the requests of religious norms. Having learned to perceive everything in its binary form at an early age, Jeanette finds it difficult to understand the school's rules and remarks "at school there was confusion" (Winterson, 1985, p.41). A small child is puzzled by new interpretations of things that cannot be defined as opposites. "Dualities and parallel categories such as normal/abnormal or pathological, moral/immoral, honest/dishonest, dirty/clean, disabled/healthy are created through the body" (Saygılıgil, 2016, p.11) in the male dominant system. In contrast to the expectations of her mother, she disrupts binaries associated with gender.

Effective Use of Subversion of Gender in *Sexing the Cherry*

Winterson challenges the gender elements defined with boundaries and manages to drag the reader far beyond the expected social norms of gender in *Sexing the Cherry* (Winterson, 1989). This work tells the life story of the main character Jordan and his mother Dog-woman. Jordan is an unusually delicate male figure, while his mother is a tough, strong, frightening woman. On the one hand, these two characters help us to question gender roles in general; on the other hand, "Twelve Dancing Princesses", written by Brothers Grimm, within the main story of Jordan will be analysed since Winterson rewrites this tale in the

novel. This technique is called intertextuality, a term put forth by the French philosopher Julia Kristeva. Intertextuality refers to a text within a text and Winterson uses it so well to subvert gender in fairy tales.

Like Jeanette in *Oranges*, Jordan is an adopted child. He is abandoned and his mother, the Dog-woman finds him near a river bank in London. Jordan was a gentle boy whereas his mother was the opposite. Jordan's words to describe his mother function to disrupt the traditional image of a woman's body "When I think of her, or dream about her, she is always huge, and I am always tiny. I am sitting on her hand, the way she holds her puppies" (Winterson, 1989, s.86). From these statements it is seen that a woman is presented as strong and the man as weak in contrast to gender. A physically strong mother is the opposite of what we expect to see in a tale. Stereotypically, the societies that we live in, through gender roles, enforce us to believe that mothers are usually weak and emotional. The binary of strong-weak is subverted here. Moreover, the son's feelings for his mother are not shaped by her image, his love is beyond appearance; but in fairy tales, beauty takes the lead to be loved and ugliness is associated with sin or evil. However, the dog-woman knows that the love bond between them is beyond conventional notions "For myself, the love I've known has come from my dogs, who care nothing for how I look and, from Jordan who says that though I am as wide and muddy as the river that is his namesake, so am I too his kin" (Winterson, 1989, p.32) because love "is probably one of the few things in life that rises above all those kinds of oppositions" (Winterson, 1989, p.65).

When Jordan grows up, he is employed by the gardener of king Tradescant. He works as an assistant in the gardens, he takes his mother and her dogs with him to Wimbledon. He had his routine until he met a mysterious woman called Fortunata at a party one day, this woman ruined his routine because Fortunata disappears and so "Free spirited dancer Fortunata also introduces us to the hard-to-confront aspects of being a woman, and sometimes to insanity" (Sezer, 2017, p.207). Jordan fell in love with her at first sight and started to run after her. This quest of him lasts a long time and during this period, he goes to extraordinary places and transgresses boundaries of time, space, and love to meet Fortunata again. Jordan challenges binaries throughout his search. We see such binary oppositions from the beginning to the end of the novel. For instance, in his dream, Jordan observes the residents of a town who "have reconciled two discordant desires: to remain in one place or to leave it behind forever" (Winterson, 1989, p.43). the town is not stable, it moves and moves. Thus, there is a staying-leaving binary here. This might hint at a transgression of the borders of a place. Provided that the inhabitants intend to stay in the town

rather than leave, they are not going to break boundaries. Similarly, in fairy tales, whenever a princess is out of her town, city, or castle, in other words, out of the place where she lives, she feels insecure, but Winterson is against such limitations and so in her rewritten piece, the town looks mobile. Stable perceptions, gender roles, divisions, and conventional ideas are not formed in a prison-like place.

Another binary is presented in the following pages. The earth is depicted as “round and flat at the same time” (Winterson, 1989, p.87). In addition, there is this binary of the inner and the physical worlds of Jordan. The Dog-woman names him after a river. As Jordan flourishes, the mother begins to regret giving this name, like the river Jordan steams, it gets more and more difficult to keep him by her side. Jordan is “not bound to anything just as the waters aren’t bound to anything” so that he is “obsessed with [...] the thought of discovery” (Winterson, 1989, p.3-4). In one way, he lives in his inner world and appreciates this: “To escape from the weight of the world, I leave my body where it is, in conversation or at dinner and walk through a series of winding streets to a house standing back from the road” (Winterson, 1989, p.11). This breakaway is towards fictional places called the city of Words and the city of Love. On the other hand, he likes adventure and lives in the outer world. Therefore, Jordan is put into a world of imagination and fantasy where there are no binaries, boundaries, limitations, or divisions. This placement is a way to deconstruct the inner-outer binary. In addition, while judging his decision to leave England, Jordan remarks “running away was a running towards” (Winterson, 1989, p.87) and here we see Winterson’s presentation of the away-towards binary. When it comes to mentioning the nature of time, it is written “Thinking about time is to acknowledge two contradictory certainties: our outward lives are governed by the seasons and the clock; that our inward lives are governed by [...] an imaginative impulse cutting through the dictates of daily time, leaving us free to ignore boundaries” (Winterson, 1989, p.99). There is a similarity between this nature of time and Jordan’s love which is “governed by [...] an imaginative impulse” that allows him to ignore boundaries of any kind.

His feminine tendencies make Jordan dress like a woman when he works at a fish stall. During his work life, he begins to realize the material division of the sexes more. For him, cross-dressing is not only particular to one sex. According to him, both men and women cross-dress “to be free of the burdens of their gender” (Winterson, 1989, p.28). This burden is socially constructed, and we can see it well in fairy tales. Cinderella’s sisters, for example, try to wear small shoes to marry the prince. Even though the shoes do not fit, and they hurt their feet, these stepsisters struggle rather than free themselves from “the burdens of their

gender" (Winterson, 1989, p.28). In contrast to these characters, Winterson's characters refuse such constructions and traditional sexed hierarchies.

In *Sexing the Cherry*, Winterson rewrites the tale "The Twelve Dancing Princesses" by the Brothers Grimm. She starts by changing the name of the tale to "The Story of the Twelve Dancing Princesses." In the original text, every night the twelve princesses leave the rooms where they are imprisoned by their father. Without the king's permission, they go to a magical city. They dance until the morning and return home without getting caught by their father. However, the king suspects his daughters because of their tired faces and worn shoes. Believing that his daughters have a secret, he promises to marry one of his daughters to the prince who will reveal their secret. As a matter of fact, a cunning young man solves the secret and wants to marry the eldest daughter. Women's own will, independent preferences, and right to choose are not questioned. Whether these women want to marry these candidates is not asked. Whether a king or not, women are often expected to marry the men their fathers choose, in a way their fathers decide (Winterson, 1989, s.108). "At the end of the tale, princesses who do not comply with the conditions are restrained, [in place of their father], again tamed by a man" (Karataş, 2020, p.71).

Winterson, on the other hand, rewrites this tale completely differently. First of all, the cunning prince chooses not the youngest, but the eldest princess to marry. The underlying reason for this is to oppose associating princesses with beauty and youth. Even though the oldest princess is not young and beautiful, that does not mean she cannot be happy. In these tales, each princess tells her own story, and fairy tales with expected happy endings are deconstructed, and the identities of men and women are questioned because no princess in these tales waits to be rescued. As well as being desperate, Winterson's princesses have willpower, independent choice, and the right to choose. They are women who make their own decisions about their lives. Especially at the end of most of these rewritten fairy tales, the princess finds happiness, not in marriage, but in loneliness. With this writing technique, Winterson takes a step to change the reader's expectations.

In Winterson's "Twelve Dancing Princesses", princesses all lead an unhappy marriage. No princess spends her day washing up, cleaning the windows, cooking, or doing any other housework. Instead, in their spare time, they make plans to end their unhappy marriage and get rid of their husbands. After all, some of the princesses kick their husbands out of the house or kill them. For example, the eighth princess is abused and insulted by her husband. Thus, she hates her husband and poisons him to death. The ninth princess was

persecuted and chained by her husband for years. She commits a brutal murder by removing her husband's liver. Similarly, the eleventh princess is very unhappy in her marriage and kills her husband. Apart from these examples, all other princesses have problems in their marriage. None of them lives happily ever after like in the fairy tales:

You know the story, one day a wise prince caught us flying out the window. We gave him sleeping pills, but he didn't drink, he pretended to drink. He had eleven brothers, we all married to one of them. According to the story, we have lived happily since then. We did, but not with our husbands (Winterson, 1989, p.48).

The first sentence of the first tale begins with "You know". This sentence implies that Jordan is familiar with the fairy tale genre and its constructed messages. Then as "You know" in this fairy tale, the princess will traditionally wait to be rescued in her room, after that marry her saviour and live happily ever after, and a male-dominated narrative will continue. Jordan asks whether they were happy at the end of the tale or not. The oldest princess responds, "we did, but not with our husbands" (Winterson, 1989:48). Thus, Winterson subverts the perception that "[marriage] is the end of all suffering" (Karataş, 2020, p.160).

Conclusion

Today gender studies exist in many areas of life, from music to art, from literature to sports and likewise, children's literature attracts the attention of many writers who want to question gender roles. Childhood is a period when awareness is formed; stories and fairy tales indirectly affect children's perceptions of how they should behave in the future. When we look at the past, we see that in popular fairy tales such as Snow White and Rapunzel, patriarchal thought is dominant. Children of the period tend to choose a gender role by reading these tales. Children are thought at an early age that men and women should act according to these assigned roles.

When we look at postmodern literature, we come across alternative tales of writers such as Jeanette Winterson, Angela Smith, in whose productions gender is reflected in a different way. We see such postmodern effects in the film industry, in bank projects, advertisements, company policies, art and facilities, and in similar institutional structures all over the world that draw attention to this issue.

Jeanette Winterson focused on this issue long before today and wrote postmodern novels on it. In this respect, it is important to examine the novels

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit and *Sexing the Cherry*. In her novel *Oranges*, we see that she rewrites both biblical stories and well-known fairies. We read from the first chapter of the bible "Genesis" to the last chapter "Ruth" that the main character Jeanette does not apply the usual female behaviour patterns. Similarly, Jeanette's escape from the bonds of her gender by leaving everything behind is rewritten in the story of the knight Sir Perceval who is also brave enough not to look back and survive despite society's expectations. In addition, in this novel, Winterson refers to dualities a lot and her main purpose is to criticize these dualities, especially gender.

In *Sexing the Cherry*, there is a more intense description of the protagonist Jordan and Dog-woman as his mother. When the character in this story is analysed, it is obvious that the male character Jordan is naïve, calm, introverted, and obedient as a man whereas his mother seems to be tougher and stronger both physically and mentally as a woman. With such character construction, Winterson once again subverts gender. Apart from this, we read another rewritten fairy tale in *Sexing*; Brothers Grimm's "Twelve Dancing Princesses". In this version, today's children witness a very different gender role than the gender role assigned to women in a patriarchal society and this tale teaches them to question gender.

What makes Winterson's work special and close to being the subject of this research is its unique postmodern feminist approach and effective use of rewriting. With this analysed parodic rewriting, Winterson sets an example for today's writers who make products for the questioning of gender from a different perspective.

Çıkar Çatışması Bildirimi: Yazarlar, çıkar çatışması bildirmemiştir.

Ek Beyan: Çalışmaya 1. yazar %90, 2. yazar %10 oranında katkı sağlamıştır.

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