

ONCE UPON A REWRITING: TRANSLATING FEMINIST FAIRY TALES

IN JEANETTE WINTERSON'S *SEXING THE CHERRY*

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“...as it says lived happily ever after. We did, but not with our husbands.”

(Jeanette Winterson)

Abstract

*Traditional fairy tales are a subject to feminist discussions because of their gender-based narratives. With a view to removing gendered norms from these narratives, numerous feminist rewriting efforts have been carried out. This is exemplified by Jeanette Winterson's novel *Sexing the Cherry*, which includes a chapter titled “The Story of the Twelve Dancing Princesses” retelling the tale by the Brothers Grimm in feminist terms. This rewriting is of significance concerning mainstreaming gender equality through the translation of fairy tales. Based on this perspective, the Turkish translation of this rewritten fairy tale by Pınar Kür is taken as the case study for this research. From the analysis of translation, it has been detected that the concepts of ‘marriage’, ‘heteronormativity’, and ‘revenge narratives’ are the themes in which the translation interventions are most prominent. Accordingly, each theme has been determined as a category to classify the examples to be examined from a feminist perspective. Within this framework, the translation criticism within the study has concluded that the translation, compared to the source text, foregrounds gender equality and feminist ideas to a greater extent, thereby highlighting the importance of the translation as a feminist interlingual rewriting.*

Keywords: *Feminist fairy tales, gender, intertextuality, rewriting, The Twelve Dancing Princesses*

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EVVEL ZAMAN İÇİNDE BİR YENİDEN YAZIMDA: JEANETTE WINTERSON'IN

VİŞNENİN CİNSİYETİ ESERİNDEKİ FEMİNİST PERİ MASALLARININ ÇEVİRİSİ

Öz

Geleneksel peri masalları, toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı anlatıları nedeniyle feminist tartışmaların konu başlıklarından biri halini almıştır. Bu anlatıların toplumsal cinsiyet normlarından arındırılması amacıyla birçok yeniden yazım çalışması hayata geçirilmiştir. Söz konusu yeniden yazımların örneklerinden biri de Jeanette Winterson'ın Vişnenin Cinsiyeti (Sexing the Cherry) adlı romanıdır. Winterson, bu romanının "Dans Eden On İki Prenses" adlı bölümünde, Grimm Kardeşlerin bu masalını feminist bir bakış açısı benimseyerek yeniden anlatmaktadır. Bu yeniden yazım örneği, özellikle peri masallarının çeviri yoluyla anaakımlaştırılması açısından büyük bir öneme sahiptir. Bahsi geçen düşüncelerden yola çıkılarak, Winterson'ın yeniden yazdığı bu peri masalının Pınar Kür tarafından yapılan Türkçe çevirisi, bu çalışmanın örnekleme olarak ele alınmıştır. Çeviri üzerinde yapılan incelemeler sonucunda 'evlilik', 'heteronormatiflik' ve 'intikam anlatıları' kavramlarının çeviri müdahalelerinin en çok öne çıktığı temalar olduğu görülmüştür. Buna istinaden, belirtilen her bir tema, feminist bir bakış açısıyla değerlendirilecek olan çeviri örneklerinin sınıflandırılması için kullanılacak birer kategori olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu çerçevede dahilinde, çalışmada gerçekleştirilen çeviri eleştirisi sonucunda, çevirinin kaynak metne kıyasla, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği fikrini ve feminist düşünceleri daha büyük ölçekte ön plana çıkarttığı tespit edilmiş ve dillerarası bir feminist yeniden yazım olarak çevirinin önemi ortaya koyulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Feminist peri masalları, toplumsal cinsiyet, metinlerarasılık, yeniden yazım, Dans Eden On İki Prenses

1. Introduction

Sexing the Cherry (2001), authored by Jeanette Winterson, is one of the foremost representatives of postmodern fiction. The story in the novel is centered primarily on two characters: Dog Woman and her adopted/rescued son, Jordan. The narratives of Dog Woman, a non-stereotypical female figure, and Jordan, a traveler engaged in existential reflection, shape the plot structure of the novel. Challenging the perception of reality (see Erkan, 2010; Arargüç, 2016) and traditional gender expectations (see Langland, 1997; Kintzele, 2010; Alkan Genca, 2015), *Sexing the Cherry* (2001) constructs meaning through intertextual interplays employing specific references to history, politics, religions, mythology, and fairy tales.

Among the aforementioned references, fairy tales occupy a central position resulting from Winterson's feminist retelling, which separates these tales from gender normativity and situates them within feminist ideology. This is exemplified by "The Twelve Dancing Princesses" of the Brothers Grimm, which was rewritten in *Sexing the Cherry* (2001) according to feminist values. This feminist rewriting, which is intertextually embedded in the narrative, not only contributes to the gender-conscious reinterpretations of fairy tales but also strengthens the feminist discourse traced throughout the novel. Thus, bearing considerable significance, these feminist rewritings also draw attention to their interlingual transference, which constitutes another form of rewriting.

With due consideration to all these points, this study focuses on the rewritten narratives of *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* and adopts a two-step methodology. Initially, the intralingual rewriting of the tale in the novel is compared with its traditional narrative, and the feminism-oriented textual transformation carried out through this rewriting is presented. In the study's second stage, the Turkish translation of this rewritten tale is assessed from the perspective of the feminist translation approach, with particular emphasis on the interlingual rewriting of the tale.

Regarding the study's sample, three different translations are taken into account. The novel was translated into Turkish by Pınar Kür, who is a well-known translator, author, and academician, and her translation has been published by three publishing houses: *İletişim Yayınları* (1995), *Sel Yayıncılık* (2015 – first edition), and *Kafka Kitap* (2021), which are followed by the re-editions of the book. A comparative examination of the editions indicates that they do not present any significant differences. Therefore, when using page numbers and other details in the sample analyses, the translation in 2019 (ninth edition) published by Sel Yayıncılık,¹ one of the leading publishing houses in Türkiye, which releases feminist and queer books, is taken under review.

Within this framework, each version released by a different publisher is examined with respect to the characters' feminist representation and associated discourse in the Turkish context. Accordingly, the narratives in which the princesses recount the events of their lives in the source text has been analyzed and through close readings, the key themes constituting the turning points of their lives were identified as the most prominent: *unmaking matrimony*, *challenging heteronormative norms*, and *revenge*. Each identified

¹ For further details, see:

https://www.selyayincilik.com/kitaplar/kadin-kitapligi/?bolum=kitap&h=1&t=1&b=0&sayfa=1&srsltid=AfmBOordlkFowbvtbSjFz_zTAT80IIIsyO9SFQQWHqztoEWZY2NkCIHYU
<https://www.selyayincilik.com/kitaplar/queer-dusun-serisi/?srsltid=AfmBOooXAPRirmR4lqTfMODPqSKBQrTyNV1XR73JONZEhQ6BjzigF3pO>

theme has been established as a category of analysis, and the notable translation examples occurring in passages related to these themes have been categorized accordingly.

Given its scope and methodology, this study aims to uncover an intra- and interlingually rewritten feminist fairy tale embedded within a novel, awaiting scholarly attention, by concentrating on the role and decisions of its translator. From this perspective, the study seeks to address questions concerning the role of translation in conveying feminist themes and rebellious female narrative, as well as maintaining feminist language use, in the particular instance of a feminist fairy tale as presented in *Sexing the Cherry* (2001).

2. Feminist Translation Approach as a Framework for Rewriting, Intervention, and Textual Transformation

Feminist theory and Translation Studies are two fields that, as Simon notes, began to interpret the common points that bring them together, particularly from the 1970s onward (1996: 8). The framework of the feminist translation approach, which was established by creating a ground of relationality between feminism and translation praxis in both theory and practice, has also been delineated through a set of translation strategies. The feminist translation approach, shaped around the three fundamental strategies (*supplementing*, *hijacking*, and *footnoting and prefacing*) identified by von Flotow with her article titled “Feminist Translation: Contexts, Practices and Theories” in 1991, has over time been enriched by additional perspectives and strategies (see Wallmach, 2006). This continuity of the debates on feminist translation approach reaffirms the assertion of von Flotow, suggesting that “This topic will not go away. It is ongoing, and profoundly interesting: how does gender – the way humans live out their sexuality – affect the way they think, write, translate, create?” (2013: 163).

Widely addressed across different countries, including the academic context of Türkiye (see Bozkurt, 2014; Çelik, 2022; Başer & Oral, 2024), the broadly disseminated approach of feminist translation is especially notable for its interpretation as “Translation as a Rewriting in the Feminine” (Saint-Martin, 1992), which is clarified by von Flotow as follows: “Translation in an era of feminism is thus also a rewriting of former heroines, a rewriting of those gendered qualities and attitudes ascribed to women of other eras. Gender awareness has its censorious as well as its celebratory aspects.” (1997: 34). Thus, by applying feminist interventions to the texts (see Eshelman, 2007), the visibility of women and translators is enhanced through intralingual and interlingual rewritings as well as through the adoption of a feminist language.

Among the fields distinguished by feminist interventionist rewritings is children’s literature (Demirhan, 2020: 530-531), including the rewritings of fairy tales. Considering the common patriarchal content of traditional fairy tales, the textual transformation produced by the feminist translation approach is

explained by Hastürkoğlu as “While reading feminist translations which include strong and superior female characters, they can reshape or remodel their already existing thinking patterns. By challenging the stereotypes of gender, the subversion of traditional fairy tales may lead to the representation of women with authority and self-control.” (2021: 106-107). The very aspect that situates the writings of fairy tales is that, as Sezer and Tarakcioğlu (2024) suggest, involves the intensive use of “intralingual hijacking”, along with interlingual hijacking, one of the feminist translation strategies, which transforms not only the linguistic dimensions of texts but also their overall content.

In this context, both intralingual and interlingual translation occupy an interesting position within the framework of feminist translation approaches. Within this framework, the next section will examine *Twelve Dancing Princesses* fairy tale, first through intralingual translation and subsequently through the interlingual rendition of this rewriting, in terms of feminist ideology and language use.

3. Rewriting the Rebellious Princesses through a Feminist Thematic Lens

The stories of ‘rebellious’ princesses are categorized under three themes in this study: unmaking the *matrimony*, *challenging heteronormative norms*, and *revenge narratives*. Under these themes, the Turkish translations for the narratives of *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* are examined in order to reveal the translation decisions within the interlingual transfer of the fairy tale, which is rewritten from a feminist perspective.

3.1. ‘The Twelve Dancing Princesses’ in Winterson’s Retelling

The fairy tale, *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*, was constructed as two fundamentally contrasting narratives in the versions of the Brothers Grimm and Winterson’s rewriting. The differences between the two texts primarily cover the modes of character representation, thematic structures, and storylines, as well as their approaches toward gender.

An initial point of discussion is the third-person narrative in the Brothers Grimm’s text, which is a typical feature of traditional fairy tales. Within this mode of storytelling, a king is depicted as following the trail of a mystery created by his twelve daughters, who are under suspicion for leaving the palace every night to dance. He summons the men around his kingdom, who are willing to shed light on the mystery, and if one succeeds, he is ‘awarded’ with one of the princesses, whom “he liked best for his wife” (The Brothers Grimm, n.d.: 49). In this context, even if the princesses escape their room to dance as they wish, according to Thomas, they “cannot entirely subvert the Grimms’ heteronormative prescriptions for female life.” (1999: 172). The patriarchal oppression imposed upon them, symbolized by the king/father figure, tries to control

their every movement and perceives them not as autonomous individuals but as “property of their father” (McMonagle, 2006: 96).

The dialogues of the princesses among themselves also conform to the patriarchal expectations that idealize interfemale conflicts and disputes. Although the princesses act together, they face inner conflicts and mutual verbal abuse, such as “You simpleton” (The Brothers Grimm, n.d.: 50) and “You silly creature!” (The Brothers Grimm, n.d.: 50). Thus, the text is completely opposed to the ideas of ‘sisterhood’, one of the defining principles of feminist ideology (see Hooks, 1996; Hollinger, 1997; Gardiner, 2016; Brubaker, 1993; hooks & McKinnon, 1996).

Despite all their attempts, the princes fail to discover the princesses’ secret, yet in the continuation of the tale, a former soldier appears, intending to uncover the princesses’ mystery. On his way to the king’s palace, he coincides with an “old woman” (The Brothers Grimm, n.d.: 49), and she helps him and explains how the mystery can be revealed. At the end of the tale, with the assistance of this old woman, the soldier ‘succeeds’ in revealing the mystery of the princesses, who escape by crossing the river to dance with the princes they have chosen, and marries one of the princesses. On this basis, one significant point affecting the tale’s end is the ‘help’ of the old woman, who is positioned against the princesses. This underlines the missing sense of female solidarity, a common archetype in the fairy tales, which turns women into women. Additionally, the narrative demonstrates the absence of the princesses’ rights to choose a partner. Instead, as mentioned by McMonagle, they are ‘given’ to men as an award through marriage, a stereotypical ‘happy ending’ notion commonly found in fairy tales (2006: 97).

On the contrary, Winterson’s rewriting is narrated by the princesses themselves, unlike traditional fairy tales. Although this text also starts with the mystery of the princesses’ escaping to dance, the plot deviates from the traditional path. In this context, the princesses leave their room to dance with a crowd of people in a flying city named “silver city” in the novel (Winterson, 2001: 48), rather than the princes. One day, “a clever prince” (Winterson, 2001: 48) catches them, instead of a former soldier getting help from an old woman. Subsequently, all twelve princesses are betrothed to the “clever prince” and his eleven brothers, and except for one princess named Fortunata, all of them marry the princes. Yet, the marriage is not a ‘happy ending’ in their stories, as expressed by the first princess: “...I discovered that we had all, in one way or another, parted from the glorious princes and were living scattered, according to our tastes.” (Winterson, 2001: 48). This creates a new narrative for each princess.

The first princess, for instance, walks out of the marriage and starts to live with a mermaid, with whom she falls in love. The marriages of other princesses also come to an end, but with tragic finales. An instance of such tragic conclusions can be seen in the marriage of the second princess, who is keen to “collect

religious items” (Winterson, 2001: 49) that are eventually burnt by her husband. In response to this last disrespectful act of her husband, she ends her marriage by killing him. Likewise, the third princess, who actually admires the ‘beauty’ of her husband, also terminates her marriage by killing him upon discovering his affair with “a boy he loved” (Winterson, 2001: 50).

Another marriage full of disrespect, betrayal, and disappointment belongs to the fourth princess, who initially endeavors to reconcile herself with the marriage. Upon finding out that her husband is a sadist who assaults women under the guise of “mock-marriages” (Winterson, 2001: 51), she leaves him, and some time later, he is found dead.

Intertwined with other fairy tale characters, the story of the fifth princess is another notable aspect in the novel. She lives with Rapunzel, until a prince until a prince violently forces them apart. Her own marriage continues, unlike those of the other princesses; however, after she kisses him, her husband turns into a frog.

Differently from the others, the sixth princess silently walks away from her ‘home’ and marriage, with a longing for her free and peaceful past. Yet another marriage that does not end quietly is seen in the case of the seventh princess. As a notable example, she is married to a woman, who is assumed to be a man. After people become aware of their relationship and intend to kill her, the princess kills her lover.

A further example of loveless marriages is that of the eighth princess, who is observed to be restricted to housework. In the end, she poisons her husband and reunites with her sisters. Similarly, the ninth princess kills her husband, who sees her as “his falcon” (Winterson, 2001: 56) and chains her.

The tenth princess is yet another woman who is betrayed in her marriage. She wants her husband to leave, but he does not have the courage. Therefore, she leaves him considering her ‘dignity’ and ‘hope’ for the future (see Winterson, 2001: 58). Lastly, the eleventh princess’s marriage also concludes with her killing her husband. Yet this time it is the husband himself who desires to be killed, as he perceives his body as a form of entrapment. Therefore, the princess ends his life as an act of release for them both.

The twelfth princess, Fornunata, whose name is the only one revealed among the princesses, flees from her wedding ceremony. Thus, she never marries and experiences no dissolved marital relationship. Instead, she travels and dances, while all the other princesses start to live together by the end of the tale.

Given the stories of each princess, as Fidanboy and Taştekin suggest, “Winterson’s princesses have willpower, independent choice, and the right to choose. They are women who make their own decisions about their lives.” (2022: 355). They all subvert the institution of marriage, depriving it of the title of ‘happy

ending' and determining their own life paths, since they are “not content to live through and for others within the limiting patriarchal stereotypes.” (Nazlıpınar Subaşı, 2022: 435).

An examination of both versions of *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* reveals that Winterson has substantially transformed the tale. This textual transformation, which subverts conventional gender norms, foregrounds the female figure at both the linguistic and narrative levels. In this respect, the rewriting can be considered aligned with feminist ideals, and its representation in translation is significant for the cross-linguistic circulation of the feminist ideas it constructs. Accordingly, the following section begins by placing the Turkish translation of the tale under scrutiny.

3.2. Unmaking Matrimony

A contested issue in the feminist sphere, marriage, in the words of Brook, “remains a social and mostly heteronormative expectation; weddings are still a source of heavily gendered pleasure.” (2015: 156). In Winterson’s rewriting, the concept of “marriage as hell” (Sroczyński, 2014) is remarkable, particularly in the narratives of the princesses.

Example 1.

The following script from the novel belongs to the first princess, who is telling the destiny bestowed upon her and her sisters. Marking the end of the story, the translation of this narrative presents critical points open to evaluation from a feminist perspective.

ST	You know that eventually a clever prince caught us flying through the window. We had given him a sleeping draught but he only pretended to drink it. He had eleven brothers and we were all given in marriage , one to each brother, and as it says lived happily ever after . We did, but not with our husbands . (Winterson, 2001: 48).
TT	Öyküyü biliyorsun, günün birinde akıllı bir prens bizi pencereden uçarken yakaladı. Ona uyku ilacı vermiştik ama içmemiş, içme numarası yapmış. On bir tane erkek kardeşi vardı, hepimiz kardeşlerden birine gelin gittik . Öyküye göre o gün bu gündür mutlu yaşıyoruz . Doğrudur. Ama kocalarımızla birlikte değil. (Kür, 2019: 58).

The initial point to consider in the example is the phrase “we were all given in marriage”, which signals gendered social customs. As one of the feminists highlighting this matter, De Beauvoir explains that women are “given in marriage by certain males to other males.”, by emphasizing the position imposed on them “as slave or vassal” (1956: 416). This gendered phrase, mirroring societal norms, was translated into Turkish as “gelin gittik”,² which is, similarly, a manifestation of sexist language. In Turkish, as Çakır Kılıçarslan emphasizes, phrases such as “gelin gitmek” and “gelin almak”³ are gender-specific expressions that objectify women, which do not have any equivalent for men (2023: 119). From this standpoint, the Turkish translation retains the nuances of the patriarchal context in the source text by employing comparable sexist expressions. Thus, it represents the prevailing patriarchal oppression and the objectification of women, which are endured by the princesses.

Another notable aspect in this example is the word “husband”, the usage of which is a subject of debate in terms of gendered language use in English,⁴ also constitutes a contentious subject in translation. That word can be conveyed in Turkish either as “eş” or “koca”. While the word “eş”⁵ functions as a gender-neutral term, “koca”⁶ constitutes a gendered and sexist expression in Turkish. Kalkan (2022) states that since “koca”, as a homophonous word, refers to a name meaning “husband”, as well as an adjective meaning “great, majestic”, it reproduces the patriarchal notion of ‘male-centered supremacy’. Considering all these factors, both the source text and the target text are observed to employ gendered words. Although “spouse” and “eş” are favored in feminist discourse, “husband” and “koca” retain significant relevance in this context. The presence and continuous repetition of this word in both texts draw attention to an element of patriarchy and a constituent of heteronormative marriage, which are eventually destroyed in the story. Therefore, the emphasis on the male ultimately symbolizes the ‘feminist win’ over patriarchy.

This example introduces a translation that criticizes patriarchy with its own discourse, chiefly concerning marriage-related terminology framed by male-centered social norms. Still, the discourse of marriage in the story exposes further matters for consideration in terms of translation.

Example 2.

² En. *to go to their husband's household as a bride.*

³ En. *to take a bride into the family.*

⁴ For further details, see:

<https://universalenglish.org/gender-neutral-husband-and-wife-terms/>

<https://thecontentauthority.com/blog/husband-vs-spouse>

<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/terms-husband-wife-cancelled-under-new-proposal-bullsht-says-one-lawmaker>

⁵ En. *Spouse.*

⁶ En. *Husband.*

The narrative of the fourth princess below shows the reasons for the dissolution of her marriage. The way she describes her husband, in contrast, generates variations between the source and the target texts.

ST	My husband married me so that his liaisons with other women, being forbidden , would be more exciting. Danger was an aphrodisiac to him... (Winterson, 2001: 51).
TT	Kocam benimle evlendi çünkü böylece başka kadınlarla olan ilişkileri “yasak” kapsamına gireceğinden daha heyecanlı olacaktı. Tehlike onun cinsel dürtülerini artıran bir ögeydi... (Kür, 2019: 61).

As mentioned earlier in this study, the “liaisons” of the fourth princess’s husband are among the instances in which “the male victimizes objects/women who have no voices.” (Smith, 1999: 56). These “liaisons” (later understood as assaulting women) are defined as “forbidden” in the source text. Its Turkish translation uses the word “yasak”⁷ enclosed in quotation marks, thereby emphasizing the expression, and this emphasis in translation also has the potential to problematize its ‘so-called forbiddenness’ attributed by society, as male characters continue to engage in their actions.

In connection with this, the princess states that “Danger was an aphrodisiac to him”, which was translated as “Tehlike onun cinsel dürtülerini artıran bir ögeydi”⁸. The translation renders the term “aphrodisiac” as “cinsel dürtülerini artıran bir öge”⁹. This “paraphrasing the author’s words” from an interpretive perspective (Federici, 2011: 364) foregrounds the reference to male sexual intentions in the target text. The focus on male sexual impulses is significant, as it constitutes another aspect of women’s objectification and reduction to mere sexual objects in the patriarchal system of thought.

Especially addressing the issues of social morality, sexual abuse, and marriage, the translation decisions observed in this example point out the patriarchal mindset concerning sexuality. Along with each subject like these addressed in the novel, the translation decisions become increasingly varied.

Example 3.

⁷ En. *Forbidden*.

⁸ En. *Danger was a factor that heightened his sexual urges*.

⁹ En. *A factor that heightened his sexual urges*.

The following narrative of the tenth princess illustrates the dialogue of the princess with her unfaithful husband. Surrounded by intertextual mythical and literary references, this example constitutes a manifestation of imperative patriarchal discourse.

ST	<p>Very patiently he asked me to remember that the house was his home, that he couldn't be expected to make himself homeless because he was in love.</p> <p>'Medea did,' I said, 'and Romeo and Juliet, and Cressida, and Ruth in the Bible.'</p> <p>He asked me to shut up. He wasn't a hero.</p> <p>"Then why should I be a heroine?" (Winterson, 2001: 58).</p>
TT	<p>Bu evin kendi yuvası olduğunu ve sırf âşık olduğu için yerini yurdunu terketmesini bekleyemeyeceğimi sabırla açıkladı.</p> <p>"Neden?" dedim. "Medea yapmış bunu, Romeo ile Juliet de, Cressida da, İncil'deki Ruth da yapmış."</p> <p>"Saçmalama, ben kitap kahramanı değilim."</p> <p>"O zaman ben neden kitap kahramanı olayım?" (Kür, 2019: 69).</p>

After the tenth princess finds out about the betrayal of her husband, she asks him to leave the house. Upon this, the dialogue progresses as told by the princess: "Very patiently, he asked me to remember that the house was his home...". The crucial aspect in this part of the dialogue is the phrase "he asked me to remember", which was translated as "açıkladı"¹⁰ into Turkish. The phrase "he asked me to remember" in the source text indicates a situation expressed by her husband as a 'fact' that the princess is expected to know already within the marriage, whereas the Turkish translation suggests an explanation offered at that moment, without any specific background references. The absence of this reference, in some respects, leads to the exclusion of references to the expectations imposed on women in the context of the institution of marriage.

In response to her husband's refusal to leave the house, the princess gives intertextual references in the source text to the characters from literature and religion, who could turn away and leave. While preserving these intertextual patterns of the source text, the translation makes an addition to the dialogue

¹⁰ En. *He explained*.

with the phrase “‘Neden?’ dedim”.¹¹ This addition in the translation appears to strengthen the princess’s discourse, which questions and resists the matrimony, alongside the pre-existing intertextual allusions (see Öztemel Akbay & Tarakçıoğlu, 2019; Atay, 2022).

The dialogue continues with her telling that “He asked me to shut up. He wasn’t a hero.”, in which her husband attempts to ‘silence’ her, and she notes that he was no hero. The translation of the sentence, on the other hand, differs from the source text. The wording “‘Saçmalama, ben kitap kahramanı değilim.”¹² featured in the translation is voiced by the princess’s husband as part of the dialogue. The translation herein, in the first place, portrays the husband as one who does not dare to silence the princess, despite considering her statements nonsense, which is a behavior that can be interpreted as mansplaining. Later in the dialogue, her husband’s direct admission that he was no hero also underlines his lack of courage to turn away from matrimony for any cause, in his own words. These translational choices, directly through the male voice, expose male aggression within marriage in the dialogue.

The examples discussed here illustrate the diverse translational approaches that contribute to a feminist reinterpretation (see Eshelman, 2007) of matrimony. In this regard, they constitute one pillar in the deconstruction of traditional fairy tales in this novel, supported by the translations in other thematic areas outlined in the ensuing sections.

3.3. Challenging Heteronormative Norms

The stories of *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*, as Orme claims, showcase “multiple desires” (2012: 144). This is observed in queer identities and same-sex relationships, which deconstruct the heteronormativity embraced by conventional fairy tales. Therefore, the translation of this feminist rewriting also necessitates a queer interpretative approach.

Example 4.

The narrative of the first princess presented below discloses her romantic relationship with a mermaid, which led her to leave behind her forced marriage and begin a new life, as told by herself.

ST	I came to a coral cave and saw a mermaid combing her hair. I fell in love with her at once, and after a few months of illicit meetings, my husband complaining all the time that I
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¹¹ En. “‘Why?’ I said.

¹² En. “‘Don’t be ridiculous, I’m not a fictional hero.’”

	stank of fish, I ran away and began housekeeping with her in perfect salty bliss. (Winterson, 2001: 48).
TT	Günün birinde, derin sularda yüzerken bir mercan mağarasına daldım, orada saçlarımı tarayan bir deniz kızına rastladım. Görür görmez âşık oldum ona. Birkaç ay süren gizli buluşmalardan sonra (bu arada kocam hep pis pis balık koktuğumdan yakınırdı) evimden kaçtım, deniz kızıyla tuzlu bir mutluluk içinde yaşamaya başladım . (Kür, 2019: 58).

The sentence “I ran away and began housekeeping with her in perfect salty bliss” in this context is significant, with its depiction of love, as well as the interpretation of marriage. The initial point of analysis here concerns the phrase “run away,” translated into Turkish as “evimden kaçtım”.¹³ The inclusion of “home” in the Turkish translation indicates a specific place of escape, which may symbolically refer to the institution of marriage.

After escaping from this concrete form of matrimony, the princess states that she “began housekeeping” at their new home, which is a well. At this point, it should be noted that the mentioned concept of “housekeeping” is typically an act expected to be performed by female characters in fairy tales. On the other hand, it was translated into Turkish as “yaşamaya başladım”,¹⁴ which omits any mention of housework. Within this scope, the translation eliminates gender-specific expectations from the text, thereby strengthening the interlingual feminist reinterpretation of the fairy tale.

Lastly, the feminine pronoun in the phrase “began housekeeping with her” from the source text is expressed as “deniz kızı”¹⁵ in Turkish, since Turkish pronouns are not gendered and rendering it as a pronoun would eliminate the feminine in the text. This decision in translation both highlights “the textual visibility of the feminine” (Castro & Ergun, 2018: 130) and embraces the very nature of a mermaid, which turns a figure monstrified in traditional narratives and myths (see Robertson, 2013) into “a passionate lesbian lover” (McMonagle, 2006: 100).

The observations in the translation in this instance show the role of translation in deconstructing gender roles and the traditional concepts of fairy tales, as well as highlighting the feminine. Similar aspects are noted in different parts of the text, with the translation decisions leading to diverse areas of analysis.

¹³ En. *I ran away from my home*.

¹⁴ En. *I started to live*.

¹⁵ En. *Mermaid*.

Example 5.

The case of the seventh princess embodies a different story. Although her marriage, unlike those of her other sisters, is not devoid of love, it contradicts the heteronormative norms of society. The princess explains that her “husband” is actually a woman in the narrative below.

ST	The man I had married was a woman. They came to burn her. I killed her with a single blow to the head before they reached the gates... (Winterson, 2001: 54).
TT	Evlendiğim erkek bir kadındı. Onu yakmaya geldiler. Onlar bahçe kapılarına ulaşmadan ben kadınımı kafasına tek darbe vurarak öldürdüm. (Kür, 2019: 65).

When the underlying reality of their marriage comes to light, the public reacts by attempting to “burn” the princess’s spouse, and the princess states that she “killed her” to protect her from the crowd. Its Turkish version, formulated as “kadınımı...öldürdüm”,¹⁶ is quite remarkable, as the translation here also avoids using any pronouns and instead employs the phrase “my woman,” which makes queer identities visible (see Palekar, 2017; Epstein, 2017) and emphasizes the relationship they embrace that challenges heteronormative norms, as well as implying a coerced act resulting from an oppressive society.

The example is among the most illustrative cases, wherein the theme of “queer love” becomes even more pronounced in translation. This theme is addressed across different contexts and using diverse translation approaches, as shown in the following example.

Example 6.

Also framed within the theme of ‘queer love’, the narrative of the fifth princess, as indicated by Latham, constructs an intertextual feminist retelling through the fusion of the fairy tales of *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* and *Rapunzel* (and also *The Frog Prince*, which is not included in this example) (2010: 115-116), as shown in the passage below.

ST	You may have heard of Rapunzel .
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¹⁶ En. *I killed my woman*.

	Against the wishes of her family, who can best be described by their passion for collecting miniature dolls, she went to live in a tower with an older woman. (Winterson, 2001: 52).
TT	Rapunzel'in öyküsünü duymuşsunuzdur. Ailesinin (ki bu ailenin en dikkate değer özelliği minyatür bebek koleksiyonu yapma tutkusuydu) isteklerini hiçe sayarak, kendinden yaşlı bir kadınla bir kulede yaşamayı seçmişti . (Kür, 2019: 62).

The reference to *Rapunzel*, one of the tales written by the Brothers Grimm, lies at the heart of the fifth princess's narrative, because she is the “older woman” with whom Rapunzel lives. In translation, this reference becomes “Rapunzel'in öyküsü”,¹⁷ which points out Rapunzel's story itself to be retold afterward. Therefore, the translation alludes to the traditionally known story of Rapunzel at first instance, which enhances the intertextual nature of the novel. Within this framework, this direct literary reference also evokes the heteronormative relationship in the conventional text, which is subsequently deconstructed by both the author and the translator.

As a second point, the expression “she went to live” in the source text appears as “yaşamayı seçti”¹⁸ in Turkish translation. The alteration in the translation foregrounds the free will of the princess, accompanied by the notion of “consent” embedded in feminist thought. As a result, it can be argued that the translation rewrites the source text in parallel with feminist discourse, thereby centering female autonomy.

As shown through the evaluations discussed, heteronormativity is challenged in the source text with intertextual literary references and established concepts in the fairy tales. On the other hand, it is observed that the translation transcends the source text by simultaneously constructing language and discourse while reinforcing intertextual references, thereby amplifying the subversive elements inherent in the source text. This exemplifies how interlingual rewriting can substantively augment rewriting within a feminist framework.

3.4. Revenge Narratives

¹⁷ En. *Rapunzel's story*.

¹⁸ En. *She choose to live*.

Winterson’s rewriting of *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* surpasses the stereotypes of the traditional fairy tales, which categorize girls and women according to socially constructed gender-appropriate behaviors. (see Koehler, 2015; Brown, 2017). In connection with this, the princesses mostly appear to exact vengeance upon the people, particularly their husbands, who disappoint them and/or compel them into an undesired fate, rather than remaining passive and acquiescent. They seek retribution sometimes just by leaving those or radically, committing suicide. They seek retribution either merely by leaving them or, in more extreme cases, by committing suicide. With particular emphasis on the latter, the concept of “women who kill” (Morrissey, 2003) emerges in the narratives, which will be illustrated by the following examples.

Example 7.

The third princess, as mentioned earlier, appreciates her husband's physical beauty; however, she cannot receive the attention she seeks from him due to his preference for men. She eventually catches him with his lover and reacts intensely, an outburst that ultimately culminates in murder. The language she uses to narrate these events is noteworthy both in the source text and from a translational perspective.

ST	‘But he never touched me. It was a boy he loved. I pierced them with a single arrow where they lay . ‘I still think it was poetic.’ (Winterson, 2001: 50).
TT	“Ama bana hiçbir zaman dokunmadı. Bir oğlan çocuğunu seviyordu. Birbirlerine dolanmış yatarlarken tek bir okla deldim ikisini de. Bunun şiirsel bir şey olduğunu düşünüyorum hâlâ” (Kür, 2019: 60).

The primary aspect to be examined in this example is the translation of the word “boy” rendered as “oğlan çocuğu”¹⁹ into Turkish. Although this translation appears to be the direct equivalent of 'boy', the word also carries colloquial connotation, which refers to “homosexual man”. Defined as “serving the sexual pleasure of men” by the Turkish Language Society (Türk Dil Kurumu, n.d.), the word also has roots in the “homosocial places” (Yılmazlı, 2020) during the times of the Ottoman Empire (see Oksaçan, 2015). Taking into account the historical background of the word, this translation decision can be evaluated through the

¹⁹ En. *Boy*.

words of Alan, who states that “the word *oğlan* is spotlighted with its archaic meaning.” (2024: 195), particularly and in this context where a homosexual relationship is foregrounded.

Secondly, the phrase “where they lay” in the source text was conveyed into Turkish as “birbirlerine dolanmış yatarlarken”.²⁰ Also addressing this example in her research, Öztürk Baydere stresses that the Turkish translation demonstrates a situation where “the people hugging or more intimately contacting with each other on the bed.”, which symbolizes “a kind of resistance against the social norms” (2015: 82). Accordingly, the translation challenges heteronormativity by making the queerness even more visible than in the source text.

In addition to the expressions taken under analysis, the overall narrative tone of the princess is significant, as she tells her actions with composure, which is most evident in her depiction of her act as “poetic” and “*şiirsel*”²¹ in Turkish translation. Therefore, when evaluated in terms of overall style, it is noticeable that the princess’s calm yet vengeful narration is preserved both in the source text and in the translation.

Example 8.

The eighth princess is also one of the princesses who kill their husbands. Tired of being compelled to undertake domestic chores, the princess devises her liberation plan, woven with revenge. She enacts the first step of this plan, as illustrated in the example below.

ST	‘What was it you wanted?’ he asked. ‘Poison...’ ‘Yes, for the rats.’ ‘No, for my husband.’ He seemed unsurprised by my intention to murder and opened the other bag. (Winterson, 2001: 55).
TT	“Ne istemiştiniz?” diye sordu. “Zehir...”

²⁰ En. *While lying entwined with each other.*

²¹ En. *Poetic.*

	<p>“Ha, evet, fareler için.”</p> <p>“Hayır, kocam için.”</p> <p>Kötü niyetim karşısında hiç şaşırılmamış gibi öteki çantayı açtı. (Kür, 2019: 66).</p>
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The dialogue above, through which the princess purchases poison “for her husband”, is noteworthy because the composure of both parties in the dialogue is reflected in their respective styles. The overall composure in style can also be traced at the micro level through specific expressions. Her utterance “my intention to murder” clearly articulates her intention in the source text. Its Turkish translation, on the other hand, was expressed as “kötü niyetim”²² and this, in turn, generates a new portrayal for the princess. In the translation, she does not conceptualize her act as ‘murder,’ nor does she perceive herself as a ‘murderess’; although she acknowledges her intention is ‘bad’. By overgeneralizing and trivializing the act, the translation does not depict a female ‘criminal’, but a female liberator (as shown in the following example) whose sense of righteousness is clearly recognized even by the salesman.

Example 9.

The continuation of the story of the eighth princess depicts the poisoning of her husband and the liberation of the animals he had swallowed. She saves the animals and sets out to live with her sisters. His prospective life decisions, on the other hand, remain critical from a translational perspective.

ST	<p>Out of his belly came a herd of cattle and a fleet of pigs, all blinking in the light and covered in milk.</p> <p>He had always complained about his digestion.</p> <p>I rounded them up and set off to find my sisters. I prefer farming to cookery. (Winterson, 2001: 5).</p>
TT	<p>Karnından bir inek sürüsü ile bir dolu domuz fırladı. Üstlerinden başlarından süt akıyordu, hepsi ışığa çıkınca gözlerini kırıştırmaya koyuldular.</p> <p>Kocam hep hazımsızlıktan şikâyet etmişti.</p>

²² En. *My ill intention.*

	Hayvanların hepsini toparlayıp kızkardeşlerimi bulmak üzere yola çıktım. Çiftçiliği aşçılığa tercih ederim. (Kür, 2019: 66).
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Her words concluding the story are that “I prefer farming to cookery.”. This sentence in the source text indicates the ‘acts’ of ‘farming’ and ‘cooking’. Contrarily, the Turkish version of this sentence reads as “Çiftçiliği aşçılığa tercih ederim.”²³ which employs the words “çiftçi”²⁴ and “aşçı”²⁵ as professions. Whether it is used in the source text to indicate an action or in the translation in the sense of a profession, it can be argued that the underlying text reflects a relationship between women and nature. In this context, the princess here prefers to nurture the animals rather than preparing them for the man, which demonstrates that the ecofeminist subtext presented in the source text is also preserved in the translation (see Çelik, 2025).

This last example, in line with the other examples, preserves the princess’s composed narrative of revenge. While the princesses follow different life paths and eventually reunite (all but one), their narratives in both the source text and the translation exhibit similarity and consistency, especially in their revenge narratives. Additionally, these narratives in translation also highlight queer identities and women’s individuality, as well as challenging gendered norms.

Conclusion

In this study, which is based on a feminist translation approach, the tale *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*, rewritten using the hijacking strategy from a gender equality perspective, was examined first intralingually and then in its Turkish–English translation/rewriting. The analysis reveals that, in addition to the author who rewrote the tale, the translator who rendered the text into Turkish also made significant textual decisions.

Given the gender-based traditional fairy tale narrative of *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* of the Brothers Grimm, it is apparent that Jeanette Winterson’s rewriting shifts the narrative towards a perspective detached from gender norms, bringing the female aspect and individuality to the forefront. Representing a compelling example of feminist rewriting, Winterson’s *Twelve Dancing Princesses* tell their own stories, make decisions act upon them regardless of the stereotypical expectations imposed by society, and write

²³ En. *I prefer being a farmer rather than a cook.*

²⁴ En. *Farmer.*

²⁵ En. *Cook.*

their own destiny instead of conforming to the destiny designated by the patriarchal system. As a result, these women in the fairy tale accentuate, criticize, and challenge gender from many angles.

Its Turkish translation by Pınar Kür, in a parallel way, emerges as a remarkable feminist interlingual rewriting. While retaining and in some parts, further strengthening the 'strong and independent' female narrative of the source text, the translation also enhances the feminist discourse through word-level interventions. Observed chiefly in three central themes comprising marriage, heteronormativity, and the concept of revenge, these interventions serve to bring further focus to feminist concepts and ideas. Within this framework, interventions in the translation can sometimes be observed through critique and emphasis conveyed using masculine discourse (e.g., the constant repetition of "koca"); at other times, they are reflected in additional emphasis introduced through punctuation in the translated text (as seen in the word "yasak") and in the completion of the translation with gender-specific words aimed at foregrounding the female element (such as the addition of expressions like "kadınım" to the translation). Accordingly, it is inferred that the translation by Pınar Kür brings a new interpretation to this rewritten tale.

From the analyses conducted, this study shows that the translation occupies a key position in the interlingual rendition of feminist fairy tale rewritings. This is largely due to the fact that, just as traditional fairy tales once moved across territories, shaping and strengthening social norms, feminist narratives, through their translingual circulation thanks to translation activities, are capable of dismantling oppressive norms targeting women and girls and of instituting new norms. Such translation activities, which go beyond mere language use to question dominant narratives, reveal their power to steer social consciousness.

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