TRANSLATION OF FEMINIST CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: A WRITING PROJECT

Gökçen HASTÜRKOĞLU

Atılım University, Ankara, Turkey

Abstract: *Within the framework of Feminist Translation Studies, translation is considered a writing project to resist misogynistic conventions of patriarchal language and (re)create discourses with womanist perspectives. The aim of this study is to focus on the approaches adopted by a Turkish feminist translator in translating the feminist author Sheri Radford's children's work,* Not Just Another Princess Story, *written from a feminist point of view and published by a Turkish publishing house working with feminist ideology. The language used in children's literature has an impact on children's conceptualization of the world by creating cognitive patterns of gender, race, class, and sexuality. Bearing this in mind, this study aims to reveal the preferences of the translator in translating the fairy tale and modelling a world in which girls have control over their lives. The descriptive analysis demonstrates that when the feminist author, the feminist translator, and the feminist publishing house act together on a writing project, the translator, still somehow visible, tends to use a literal translation strategy dominantly and act faithfully in the translation process. The translator also has the purpose of reflecting the ideology of the writer rather than opting for feminist translation strategies such as subtitling, footnoting, prefacing, hijacking, and italicizing, which are frequently adopted in the translation of the non-feminist works.*

Keywords: *feminist translation, feminist translator, feminist ideology, translation as a writing project, feminist children's literature*

Introduction

The cultural turn in Translation Studies was formally announced with the publication of *Translation, History and Culture* by Bassnett and Lefevere; since then, the linguistic approach to this discipline has been considered to be insufficient for achieving accuracy in the target language, as translation is not a mere copy of the source text. The cultural turn in Translation Studies has provided a very significant and different perspective to translation studies for the inclusion of the social, political, historical, and cultural context during the translation process has paved the way for the transformation of the nature of translation and has turned it into an interdisciplinary field.

With this "process of disciplinary hybridization," as Simon calls it (Simon ix), poststructural, postcolonial, and postmodern approaches have begun to dominate Translation Studies and, relatedly enough, the relationship between language and gender has been studied in this context.

Feminist Translation Studies emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Quebec, Canada where there was the interaction of two different languages and two distinct cultures. Bertacco discusses Canada's need for translation by foregrounding "the contact among its different cultures: native/colonial, English/French, English Canadian/Québécois" (234), and adds that "translation is viewed as a social process that implies the transformation of texts and the values they convey from one context to another, in the Canadian context, translation embodies an act of production, not reproduction, of meaning" (Bertacco 234). The first instances were the translations of French avant-garde literary texts written by the women authors from Quebec into English by the Canadian feminist translators, Barbara Godard, Marlene Wildeman, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, Luise von Flotow, and Howard Scott. The texts were characterized by their "attacks on the misogynistic conventions of patriarchal language and by building up a parallel feminist literary culture, all of which was strongly influenced by the postmodern theories of language" (Castro 3-4).

Being aware of the resemblance of the inferior status of translation in the polysystem of Zohar's and the repressed position of women in society, the feminist theorists and scholars have been working hard to make the womanized language voice to be heard. The feminist translators, on the other hand, have been incorporating this feminist ideology into the translation process to make the texts "womanhandled". In order to represent women as strong, superior, and visible, feminist translators adopt strategies which help them stay visible in the translation process. This tendency questions the long-lasting historical debate on the fidelity of translators towards source texts and authors. Within the context of Feminist Translation Studies, fidelity is to be directed neither toward the author nor toward the reader, but toward the writing project – a project in which both writer and translator participate" (Simon 2). This is a kind of project in which the translator, the author, and even the publishing house have to collaborate, and the translator assumes an active role in the process. It is only through such comprehensive projects that the representation of women in society can be changed and patriarchal discourses can be challenged.

For challenging the patriarchal discourse in literature, some effective strategies were provided by the feminist theoreticians and translators. Godard, for example, emphasizes the dominant role of the translator, calling it "womanhandling" the text; she has proposed strategies of feminist translation such as translating in italics, providing footnotes, and writing a preface (Godard 50). Relatedly enough, Von Flotov has suggested the strategies of supplementing, prefacing/footnoting, and hijacking the text, all of which help the translator assume a visible role in the project. Briefly put, as von Flotov explains, "it is becoming almost routine for feminist translators to reflect on

their work in a preface, and to stress their active presence in the text in footnote" (Von Flotov 76). For describing hijacking, Von Flotov quotes from Homel:

> The translator (...) is so intrusive at times that she all but hijacks the author's work. In the introduction she tells us she intends to make her presence felt (...) to this end she frequently breaks into Gauvin's work explaining what Gauvin really meant and sometimes offering the French equivalent for the English on the page. (qtd. in Von Flotov 78)

Supplementing, the last strategy the feminist translators tend to adopt, is defined by Von Flotov as an act of compensating "for the differences between languages, or constitutes 'voluntarist action' on the text" (Von Flotov 75). The feminist translator "recoups certain losses by intervening in, and supplementing another part of the text" (Von Flotov 75). By using these strategies, feminist translators can act creatively in the process and gain the power to make their voices heard.

In such a framework, children's works, which are also in the secondary position in the polysystem, require special attention by feminist translators in order to free their language from the misogynistic point of view. Children's literature is very powerful as "it often models thinking patterns by showing particular representations of gender, race, class, or sexuality. These processes of thinking about the world and the tools that we give children to process information early on can be instrumental to the ways that they view the world" (Koslowsky 8). Taking into account the pragmatic nature of children's literature, the translation of each work must be carefully conducted. As Zipes agreed, the tales children read and listen to can affect the way they see the world later as adults. There is much literature emphasizing that "fairy tales are powerful stories, and as tools and productive technologies of control, they can shape the discourses of childhoods" (Zipes 1997).

It is clearly for this reason that rewriting fairy tales and translating them have captured the attention of many feminist researchers since the 1970s, with the second women's liberation movement. As traditional fairy tales tend to impose dominant values of societies and more specifically foreground gender stereotypes such as women's submissiveness, fragility, and beauty; accordingly, feminist writers have been trying to revise the genre. As Wu describes it: "Feminist fairy tale rewriting thereby is not only a writing practice but serves political aims as well, which criticizes the patriarchal representation and promotes feminist consciousness" (Wu 55). At this point, the translation of children's works from a feminist point of view is thought to contribute to provide children with an alternative cognitive pattern and make them conceptualize a different world, not the world they are imposed to. 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.

There is still much work to be done in Turkey in terms of feminist translation studies, although there are important studies conducted in this context. For instance, Bozkurt (2014) tries to demonstrate how the feminist translators of *SCUM Manifesto* and *Virgin: The Untouched History* have "womanhandled" the texts translated into Turkish by analysing the translation strategies preferred by these translators. Demirel and Tarakçıoğlu (2019) analyse the usage of paratextual feminist translation strategies during the translation of the articles published on two different Turkish feminist websites. Pirpir (2018) has also contributed to the feminist studies in Turkey by presenting an overview of feminist translation approaches and feminist translator's identity in Turkey, through the interviews conducted with the translators working in two feminist publishing houses, Ayizi Books Publishing House and Güldünya Publishing House. This study has reemphasized the importance of the ideology of publishing houses, translators, and also editors in the translation process.

The situation becomes more delicate when it comes to the translation of children's literature. As children learn through what they are reading, the translator, the author, and the publishing house would better work together to achieve success in the feminist writing project for children. Sometimes, a feminist translator, a feminist author, and a publishing house with feminist ideology act together for this, as is the case examined in this article. The present study aims to demonstrate the ways in which the feminist translator, Arzu Karacanlar, translated into Turkish a work of children's literature, *Not Just Another Princess Story*, written by the feminist author Sheri Radford, which Karacanlar published with the Güldünya Publishing House, a publisher with declared feminist ideology.

Methodology

The corpus drawn upon in this study is a children's work of Sheri Radford, *Not Just Another Princess Story* (2015), and its Turkish translation *Bu Senin Bildiğin Peri Masallarından Değil* (2016). The work tells the story of a math-loving princess who wants to take the control of her life rather than leaving it to her father. When her father announces that it is time for her marriage, she decides to find her would-be groom on her own by referring to fairy tales. After the adoption of each method she has read in fairy tales such as slaying monsters, kissing a frog, finding magic, etc., she comes to the conclusion that it is impossible to find her husband through fairy tales, and that it is too early

for her to get married. It is clear from the plot that the novel subverts the traditional and stereotypical princess/prince and queen/king stories.

The main reason for selecting *Not Just Another Princess Story* to study is that it can be regarded as a clear example of Simon's writing project, as the author of the work, the translator, and the publishing house share feminist ideology. The author's feminist discourse in the story was translated for the Turkish children readers by a feminist translator who has translated many feminist works up to now and is still working at Güldünya Publishing House, itself founded with a feminist ideology. Although other Turkish publishing houses can also publish feminist works, only three publishing houses work with feminist ideology in Turkey. Whereas two of them, Kadın Çevresi and Ayizi Publishing House, have been closed down, Güldünya Publishing House is still acting for the women's voices to be heard. It was named after Güldünya Tören, one of the victims of "honor" crime, murdered by her brothers in 2004. Güldünya Publishing House

> publishes not only books on feminist theory and politics but also about the experiences feminist movements and different feminist organizations around the world, women's biographies and experiences, works of women writers, and books about women artists. ("Güldünya Yayınları")

In order to analyse such a writing project, this study has adopted a descriptive and a qualitative approach within the framework of feminist translation studies. For examining the target text, initially, a detailed reading of the source text is conducted to find the elements written from a feminist point of view. Some of the sentences thought to be representative are shown side by side in the source and target texts in order to reveal the translation strategies adopted by the translator.

Results and Discussion

Although it is generally the main text which is analyzed in terms of the translation strategies, it is an undeniable fact that a literary work consists not only the main text but also other elements called paratexts which surround it and which have an effect on the texts' reception by the target audience (Genette 1). Within the frame of paratextuality, the author's and the translator's names are important issues to discuss. While the name of the author exists on the title page and the cover, the name of the translator can also be seen both on the title page and on the front cover, which fulfils a significant function, that is foregrounding the visibility of the translator of the work.

The translation of the feminist *Not Just Another Princess Story* can be depicted as an instance of a writing project when the back cover blurb is investigated. In the translation of the blurb, one can observe the cooperation of the translator, the editor (Ayşe Düzkan, who is also a feminist translator and an author), and the publishing house with a feminist ideology. The blurb of the source text reads:

> Princess Candi is no ordinary princess. She loves to do math problems, her mother has been turned into a pickle, and she knows that not just any old prince is good enough for her. So when the king declares it's time for Princess Candi to get married, she decides to carry out a husband search on her own. Not knowing how to find such a creature, she turns to fairy tales for inspiration. But can she really find her Prince Charming by kissing frogs, hosting dragon slaying competitions, and summoning a fairy godmother? (Radford, *Not Just Another Princess Story*, henceforth *NJAPS*)

It is clear that the original blurb provides a summary of the novel and presents the representative image of Princess Candi. However, the blurb in the target text is completely different. In the Turkish version, however, it reads:

> Herkesin çok güzel, çok iyi, çok mutlu ya da çok çirkin, çok kötü olduğu peri masallarından bıkmadınız mı?.. Eğer bıktım usandım diyorsanız bu kitap tam size göre. Prenses Candi'nin başına gelenler özgür büyümek veya hayatını bir masal olarak gözden geçirmek isteyen her yaştan kız için... (Radford, *Bu Senin Bildiğin Peri Masallarından Değil*, henceforth *BSBPMD*)

The literal translation of the blurb on the target text cover is:

> Aren't you fed up with fairy tales where everyone is either very beautiful, very good, very happy, or very ugly, very evil? If you say you are tired of them, then this book is just for you. Princess Candi's adventures are for girls of all ages who want to grow up free or reconsider their lives as a fairy tale. (my trans.)

As it can be observed, upon the decision of the translator and the editor, the blurb of the translated work becomes very different from the source one. It reads like a preface and it is written with the second personal pronoun directly targeting the reader, which tends to attract more attention. The blurb of the Turkish version of *Not Just Another Princess Story* clearly reveals that the story is a feminist discourse written for the girls who are fed up with the fairy

worlds they have been raised with and want to achieve their own goals in their lives without the illusion the fairy tales create for them. Thus, the Turkish blurb can be considered an example of "translation as a rewriting process."

When it comes to the analysis of the main text, throughout the work, the author emphasizes the intelligence of the princess. For instance, "Candi was at least smart enough to know that not just any old prince was good enough for her, and certainly not any old prince that her father (the king, of course) chose for her. What did her father know about choosing princes?" (Radford, *NJAPS* 4), was translated as "Candi en azından yaşlı bir prensin, hele de (tabii ki kral olan) babasının onun için seçtiği herhangi bir şeyin ona uygun olmadığını bilecek kadar akıllıydı" (Radford, *BSBPMD* 6). The translator opted for adopting the literal translation strategy while explaining the intelligence of the princess, which is a characteristic rarely seen in traditional fairy tales.

The princess' strong personality is also frequently foregrounded in the narration. For example, Candi tries not to cry while talking with her father after she learns that the first strategy for finding a husband does not work. "Father my plan did not work," she said. She blinked back the tears that threaten to spill down her cheeks" (Radford, *NJAPS* 22-23). This was translated as: "'Baba, planım işe yaramadı,' dedi. Gözyaşlarının süzülmeye başlayacağını hissediyordu, onları tutmak için gözlerini kırpıştırdı" (Radford, *BSBPMD* 26). The translator did not need to use any other translation strategies adopted by the feminist translators, as the literal translation strategy works well in order to reflect the nature of the princess and also the whole work.

Furthermore, Candi's extraordinary personality can be suggested while describing her way of staying calm in her daily life. "Candi grabbed a math book and spent a few hours doing mathematical problems, until she felt calm and relaxed" (Radford, *NJAPS* 38) was translated again by using the literal translation strategy as "Candi bir matematik kitabı kaptı ve sakinleşip rahatlayana dek birkaç saat boyunca matematik problemlerini çözdü" (Radford, *BSBPMD* 40).

The literal translation strategy obviously works when it comes to reflecting the source text's feminist ideology in the target text, as seen in the description of the 'husband'. The man who is going to be the husband of the princess is frequently objectified as 'a thing' that can be bought, chosen, taken, ordered, etc. both in the source and the target text. For instance, the translation of "'Send all the princes in the area off to slay a dragon or a giant,' Candi read from the list. 'Whoever slays it is definitely husband material. You can count on it'" (Radford, *NJAPS* 13) is "'Tüm prensleri bir ejderha ya da devi doğramaya gönderin,' Candi listeden okuyordu. 'Kim başarırsa onda kesinlikle koca kumaşı vardır. Onu alabilirsiniz'" (Radford, *BSBPMD* 15). Another related example can be "'You mean you can just order one up for me? Right

here and now?' 'Sure can. Just tell me what you want, and make it snappy'" (Radford, *NJAPS* 52); the exchange was translated again literally as "'Prensini nasıl istersin? Uzun boylu? Esmer? Yakışıklı? Görünür yara izleri olmasın mı? Yani, benim için hemen, öylece ısmarlayabiliyor musun? Şimdi, tam burada?" (Radford, *BSBPMD* 54).

Furthermore, marriage is an indispensable part of all fairy tales. As Bettelheim argues, "Details may differ, but the basic plot is always the same: the unlikely hero proves himself through slaying dragons, solving riddles, and living by his wits and goodness until eventually he frees the beautiful princess, marries her, and lives happily ever after" (Bettelheim 208). While marrying a prince is a must for the female protagonist of the traditional fairy tale, and each tale ends with the formula "they lived happily ever after," Radford subverts the conventional fairy-tale ending: "They were married a year later. Everyone lived happily ever after, for as long as they could" (Radford, *NJAPS* 59). The ending was translated literally as "Bir yıl sonra evlendiler. Herkes, becerebildiği kadar uzun süre mutlu yaşadı" (Radford, *BSBPMD* 61).

By the same token, the institution of marriage is depicted as negative in the original text and translated identically. The sentence "'If I must get involved in this obtuse marriage business, I want at least to choose my future pickle for myself,' Candi said" (Radford, *NJAPS* 9) was translated as "'Eğer bu sıkıcı evlilik kurumuna girmek zorundaysam en azından müstakbel turşumu kendim seçmek istiyorum,' dedi Candi" (Radford, *BSBPMD* 11) by adopting the literal translation strategy. Also, in terms of marriage, in the end the characters in the work agree that one should be mature enough to get married. The sentence "… all agreed that Candi was too young to get married, so Candi went off to university on a math scholarship" (Radford 58) was translated literally as "… hep birlikte Candi'nin evlenmek için çok küçük olduğuna karar verdirler, böylece Candi bir matematik bursu alıp üniversiteye gitti" (Radford 60), again by adopting the literal translation strategy.

Getting married at a very young age is frequently depicted as nonsense, unlike in the traditional fairy tales, which, on the contrary, insist on always doing what one's parents want, without deciding on one's own whether they are logical or not. Such is the parenthetical comment "(*Remember, this was once upon a time, which was a long time ago. It was a time when people did silly things such as obey their parents, get married really young, and eat Brussels sprouts as bedtime snacks.*)" (Radford, *NJAPS* 7). This paragraph is written in parenthesis and in italics in the original text; the translation retains the parenthesis, but not in italics as well: "(Hatırlayın, "bir zamanlar" demiştik, bu uzun zaman önce demektir. İnsanların ana babalarının dediklerine uymak, çok genç yaşta evlenmek ve yatmadan önce brüksel lahanası atıştırmak gibi aptalca şeyler yaptıkları zamanlardı.)" (Radford, *BSBPMD* 9). It is obvious that

the literal translation strategy directly reflects the ideology of the author in this example.

As observed in the previous example, a very crucial element of the publisher's peritext and one of the outstanding strategies adopted by the feminist translators is translating in italics, as a different typesetting can easily attract the attention of the reader. However, the translator does not use this strategy; she even does not italicize the parts which are written in italics in the source text. For instance, the author uses italics when she gives extra information about a situation; she sometimes italicizes the parenthetical comments. In the target text, such comments retain only the parenthesis, but not the italics too. For instance:

> The King shook his head and wondered to himself for the billionth time (*or hundredth time, at least*) why he had a daughter instead of a dog, a nice cocker spaniel maybe, that would bring him his slippers and his pipe. (*if he smoked a pipe, that is.*). (Radford, *NJAPS* 8)

This part is translated as:

> Kral kafasını salladı ve bir milyonuncu kez (en azından yüzüncü kez) neden bir köpeği, ona terliklerini ve piposunu getirecek şöyle güzel bir İspanyol cocker olacağına bir kızı olduğuna hayıflandı. (Eğer pipo içseydi, yani.). (Radford, *BSBPMD* 10)

It can be seen that there is not a word in italics in the Turkish translation, despite the fact that there are many italicized parts in the original text.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that the number of such feminist works for children is still limited in Turkey, feminist discourses for children can constitute a place through the act of translation. As is the case in the data of this study, it is with the help of translation that children can have the chance to learn alternative conceptualizations in terms of gender roles.

In feminist translation theory, the translation process is considered to be a writing project achieved with the collaboration of the author and the translator, and also of the publishing house, as demonstrated in this article. Although there are many studies dealing with the subversion of the traditional fairy tales this study is significant in the sense that the three parties (the author and the translator, and also the publishing house) share the same ideology for fulfilling the feminist aim.

In terms of the translator's strategies adopted in the translation process, after the analysis of the translation of *Not Just Another Princess Story* into

Turkish, it is revealed that the translator may not be in need of finding different and creative strategies for translation such as subtitling, footnoting, prefacing, hijacking, and italicizing, which are adopted by feminist translators while translating the works of non-feminist authors. The translator can stay invisible during the translation of the main text, as the author can also speak for herself, but may only become visible on the cover, which can be regarded as her fingerprint.

Thus, this study confirms the findings of Pirpir, who conducted interviews with some of the translators of Ayizi and Güldünya Publishing Houses. As it was revealed through the answers they gave to the question of the strategies they use in the translation process, although they attach importance to changing the patriarchal discourse of the source texts if any, they generally do not interrupt the source language and the style of the source text author, as they are predominantly asked to translate the feminist works of the feminist authors (Pirpir 92).

There is still much work to be done in Turkey in terms of feminist translation studies. There should be more publishing houses publishing original feminist works and doing translation of such works for both adults and children. Further research can be done especially within the field of translation of children's literature, and the strategies adopted by translators should be clarified together with the reasons behind them which can contribute to the feminist translation practices and influence the feminist literary system in Turkey.

Works Cited

Bassnett, Susan, Andre Lefevere. *Translation, History, Culture*. London: Routledge, 1990.

Bertacco, Simona. "The Canadian Feminists' Translation Project: Between Feminism and Postcolonialism." *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series – Themes in Translation Studies* 2 (2003): 233-245.

Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. New York: Knopf, 1976.

Bozkurt, Sinem. "Touched Translations in Turkey: A Feminist Translation Approach." *Moment Journal* 1 (2014), 104–124.

Castro, Olga. "(Re-)Examining Horizons in Feminist Translation Studies: Towards a Third Wave." *MONTI* 1 (2009): 59-86.

Genette, Gerard. *Paratexts: Thresholds to Interpretation*. Trans. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Godard, Barbara. "Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation." *Tessera* 6 (1989): 42-53.

Koslowsky, Julie. "Josephine, Josie, Jo." Unpublished PhD Dissertation. Depaul University College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences, 2011.

Pirpir, Yeşim. "An Overview of Feminist Translation Approaches and Feminist Translator's Identity in Turkey in the Light of Feminist Publishing Houses Ayizi Books Publishing House and Güldünya Publishing". Unpublished PhD Dissertation. Istanbul University, 2018.

Radford, Sheri. *Not Just Another Princess Story*. Simply Read Books, 2015.

Radford, Sheri. *Bu Senin Bildiğin Peri Masallarından Değil* (*Not Just Another Princess Story*). Trans. Arzu Karacanlar. İstanbul: Güldünya Publishing, 2016.

Demirel, A. S., Tarakcıoğlu, A. Ö. "Feminist Translation Practices in Turkey: The Case of the Feminist Websites 5Harfliler and Çatlak Zemin." *RumeliDE: Journal of Language and Literature Studies* 15 (2019): 295-312.

Simon, Sherry. *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Von Flotow, L. "Feminism in Translation: The Canadian Factor." *Quaderns. Reviste de Traducció* 13 (2006): 11-20.

Wu, Jie. "Carter's Feminist Revision of Fairytale: The Narrative Strategies of the Company of Wolves." *Fudan J. Hum. Soc. Sci.* 10 (2017): 53–67.

Zipes, Jack. *Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children, and the Culture Industry*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

"Güldünya Yayınları About Us." 14 June 2021.