


A History of the Feminist Translation Movement in the 1980s' Turkey: The Case of 'Kadın Çevresi Publishing'

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I. Introduction

This chapter investigates the history of “Kadın Çevresi Publishing”¹ in the Turkish context in the 1980s and the roles of both translations and translators under this roof within this context. In this regard, underlining the act of translation and translators as active agents in the process of cultural transmission, this chapter puts forward that the practical, theoretical, and conceptual development of the feminist movement in Turkey in the 1980s found solid grounds by virtue of translations of the key texts of the Western feminism, and the efforts of translators engaging in translation in accordance with a feminism-led activist agenda.

The operational definition of feminism adopted for the scope of this chapter belongs to Bell Hooks (2000, p. 9): “feminism is a movement aiming to eradicate sexism and sexist exploitation and suppression in society”. Therefore, from now on, what this chapter means by the term “feminism” will mean the movement fighting the long-established sexism and gender-based secondariness of women in society; here “gender” refers to the identity and role socially and normatively determined in culture as opposed to biologic

¹ (Women's Circle Publishing)

determinations. Feminism can, hence, be argued to be an awareness-increasing sociocultural movement. The academic discussions of this broad concept are performed in the discipline of Women Studies, which can be defined in “Türkiye Kadın Thesaurusu”² (Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Vakfı³; 2009) as “studies aiming to contribute to the discovery of the history and system of suppressive practices towards women, to the fight against those practices, and to the accumulation of systemic knowledge thereabout” (p. 82; author’s translation). Such feminism-based academic discussion finds reflection also in Translation Studies as they are both embedded in cultural practices and culturally changing dynamics. The specific perspective in Translation Studies focusing on the interaction between feminism and translation is the area of feminist translation. It bases upon the secondary nature, unfortunately, applying for both women and translation. It departs from the suppression of women even in the level of language with the aim of contributing to the visibility of women translators, feminist translation theories and strategies, and feminist discussion in general through feminist translations (Schaeffner, 2013). In other words, it aims to uncover and re-write alternative women-centred histories to the ones mainly written and read from masculine perspectives.

Following such a trajectory, this chapter sets out to find answers to the following questions: “What are the guiding conditions, aims, and difficulties underlying the selection and translation of the first works commissioned and published by the “Kadın Çevresi Publishing”?, and “What kind of socio-cultural and socio-political repercussions did these translations and more specifically translators have regarding the feminist movement in this period, and how did they achieve it through translation?”. At the end of this search, this chapter claims to reveal that selection, themes, and translation of texts by the

² (The Women’s Thesaurus in Turkey)

³ (The Women’s Library and Information Centre Foundation)

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IV. Conclusion

Looking into the “Kadın Çevresi Publishing” (Women’s Circle Publishing) as a micro-history study in the Turkish context in the 1980s, this chapter has tried to present some of the key socio-cultural and historical roles both translations and translators played under this collective. It has emphasized that translators were active agents and the act of translation was a strategic tool in the process of feminist cultural repertoire formation in the 1980’s Turkish context. This practical, theoretical, and conceptual development of the feminist movement in Turkey in the 1980s was made possible thanks to the translations of the seminal texts spreading Western feminist discussion along with a feminism-led activist agenda.

When considered in unity, all these aforementioned contributions and functions of the “Kadın Çevresi Publishing” and the translation of the *Women’s Estate* (Kadınlık Durumu) point at the formation of a new narrative in the context of 1980s’ Turkey. These women translators began to write a history of women and initiated the development of the field in the Turkish context by both promoting follow-up studies based on the ground they created and revisiting the earlier feminist discussions in a theoretical and structural method (Tekeli, 2011). Moreover, they constructed a different and activist narrative of the translator act in which women translators became more visible in this context as both women and translators. In other words, they rewrote the history of women, a history of feminist translation, and a history of activist translation in the Turkish context by challenging the male-dominated historiography as well through translation.

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