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Dancing Beyond Heteronormative Boundaries: Jeanette Winterson's *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*

Heteronormatif Sınırların Ötesinde Dans: Jeanette Winterson'ın *On İki Dans Eden Prenses'i*

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Abstract

The Twelve Dancing Princesses, written by the Grimm Brothers, is one of the well-known fairy tales that has been adapted and rewritten several times in different languages, cultures, and texts. Among those works is Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), which incorporates the post-modern retelling of this fairy tale. In the second chapter of the novel, Winterson retells the story of the twelve princesses using intertextual allusions to the traditional fairy tale that embodies androcentric biases and gender constraints submerged within the patriarchal system. However, in this new recreation, the writer, initially, challenges the heteronormativity and its phallocentrically constructed gender roles, then, she demonstrates to the passivized

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and tamed princesses, ways of violating male-assigned gender roles and identities by creating an all-encompassing space in which there is no othering and violence. Thus, considering the issues regarding heteronormativity and its boundaries and grounding its argument in feminist and queer literary critical theory, in this study, I have aimed to display how the fluid dynamics of gender construction can be revealed by transgressing the heteronormative boundaries and phallocentric dictations, and how wo/men can live happily ever after in accordance with 'their own tastes'.

Keywords: *heteronormativity, fluid identities, assigned sex and gender roles, phallocentrism, feminist and queer studies*

Öz

Jacob ve Wilhelm Grimm Kardeşler tarafından yazılan ve dünyaca tanınmış peri masallarından biri olarak kabul edilen *On İki Dans Eden Prenses*, pek çok farklı dile çevrilmiş ve değişik kültürlerce birçok kez uyarlanmıştır. Günümüzde ise, bu peri masalının orjinalinden farklı olarak yeniden yazımları/yaratımları gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu yeniden yazılan/yaratılan yapıtlar arasında, *on iki dans eden prensesin* hikâyesini post-modern anlatım kurgusu içerisinde, kapsayıcı bir bakış açısı ve yenilikçi bir dil ile yeniden hayat veren Jeanette Winterson'a ait *Vişnenin Cinsiyeti* (1989) başlıklı roman en dikkat çekenlerden biridir. Jeanette Winterson, bahsi geçen eserinin ikinci bölümünde, on iki prensesin hikâyesini ataerkil ideolojiler ve eril yaptırımlara uygun olarak yazılmış geleneksel peri masalına metinlerarası *göndermeler yaparak yeniden kaleme alır ve bu süreçte, ataerkil sistemin* androsentrik önyargılarını ve bu sistemin cinsiyet kısıtlamalarını somutlaştıran söylemleri gözler önüne serer. Diğer bir deyişle, bu yeniden yaratımda yazar, ilk olarak heteronormatif ve fallus-merkezci olarak inşa ve dikte edilmiş cinsiyet rollerine meydan okur. Bu meydan okumanın sonrasında okuyucuya, eril zihniyet ve egemen ideolojilerce zaman içerisinde edilgenleştirilen ve ehlileştirilen prenseslerin kendilerine dayatılan heteronormatif cinsiyet rollerini, bastırılmış ve silikleştirilmiş kimliklerini reddetmeleri, kendi istek ve iradeleri doğrultusunda yeni bir yaşam kurmaları gösterilmeye çalışılır. Jeanette Winterson'ın bu yeni yaratımında, on iki prenses en sonunda içinde yaptırımların, ötekileştir(il)menin ve şiddetin olmadığı, kapsayıcı ve bütünleştiren bir boyuta ulaşırlar. Bir bakıma kendilerini yeniden yaratırlar. Bütün bu tespitler doğrultusunda bu çalışmada, cinsiyet inşasının akışkan dinamiklerinin heteronormatif *sınırlar ve* fallosentrik dikteleri aşarak nasıl ortaya çıkabildiğini ve bireylerin 'kendi seçim ve yönelimleri' doğrultusunda nasıl sonsuza kadar mutlu yaşayabildiklerini feminist ve queer edebiyat eleştirisi teorileri bağlamında göstermeyi amaçladım.

Anahtar sözcükler: *heteronormativite, akışkan kimlikler, atanmış cinsiyet ve cinsiyet rolleri, fallosentrizm, feminist ve queer çalışmaları*

Introduction

Having ancient roots, fairy tales have been generated as transformations of myths, legends, epics and sagas told around the fire by one male member of the tribe who generally tries to explain the visible world by imbedding his individual experiences. That tale becomes valid and accepted if other men listen and feel relief in what has been shared. That is, through these fairy tales, the unsettled fantasies, fears and ideologies of the male members in societies have been transformed across generations and, as Ulivieri (1999) clarifies, have constituted a kind of 'consensus' that goes through the space by keeping its character of transmission of knowledge, emotions and visions of the world. During the ages, this consensus becomes deeply internalized with the transformation of tales from popular oral narration to written literary genre, as the written materials have created more global interconnections by reaching the most remote parts of the world. However, these far-reaching fairy tales, transcribing moral and social messages mostly with respect to androcentric ideologies, perpetuate the self-admiring, self-stimulating and self-congratulatory masculine point of view and push women to the side of the HIStory by keeping them on the kitchen side and/or the bedside. In this sense, the listeners/readers of those male-oriented tales adopt a number of gender codes and have 'performative characters', as put forward by Judith Butler, a social theorist, claiming that "the expressions of gender; […] identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be the results" (2007: 25). In accordance with that, male narrators tend to describe women from the masculine point of view and assign some certain female roles to them as innocent and desperate maidens or obedient and faithful (house) wives created to serve the interests of men. Even when the narrators or the storytellers are women, like the archetypal 'Mother Goose', they cannot articulate their inner 'female voice' and have to remain in the shadows since they have difficulties in subverting the patriarchal order establishing the male supremacy. Having that superiority, male narrators, ranging from Perrault to the Grimm Brothers and/or to Andersen, hold those fairy tales over women to validate and perpetuate the phallocentric concepts that maintain the gender hierarchy, in which women are passive and submissive, while men are portrayed as active and formidable. This unequal portrayal of female versus male characters in fairy tales gradually constructs patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes against women, as Andrea Dworkin exemplifies in *Woman Hating*: "... the bad woman [who] must be destroyed, …, killed or punished [and] ... the good woman [who] must be possessed" (1974: 48).

Based on the striking exemplifications by Dworkin, many scholars and writers have started to question those androcentric representations of women in fairy tales that are generally portrayed as malleable objects for male desires and subvert the dominating masculine values by creating a new world for wo/men where they can articulate their unspoken desires and feelings. Within this scope, the number of the feminist/queer criticisms and re-writings of fairy tales has accelerated since 1960s and the male-constructed image of "passive, victimized, destroyed, or asleep" (Dworkin, 1974: 49) woman, who waits for her Prince Charming to come, has been de(con)structed. In those subverted fairy tales, here and now, future generations witness the rebirth of a 'self-assertive woman', who is conscious of

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her own value, capable of deciding her own destiny and making her own choices rather than being "the troph[y] that men are rewarded with on their heroic quests" (2014: 385), as Marcia K. Lieberman has stated in her significant study titled Some Day My Prince Will Come.

Among those modern reinterpretations of old narratives, including mythology, folklore and fairy tale, Jeanette Winterson's novel *Sexing the Cherry*, which incorporates the well-known fairy tale of *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* by the Grimm Brothers, offers important details and different perspectives for those desiring to question the phallocentric destinies and heteronormative norms constructed for women and men, as well. Deviating from the original story, Winterson gives voice to the princesses through Jordan, the male character seeking the youngest of the princesses, Fortunata, and depicts alternative endings and ways to the original story instead of repeating the androcentric ones, in which the heterosexual couple lives happily ever after. Taking those issues into consideration, this study aims to put forward how Jeanette Winterson de(con)structs the phallo-narcissistic vision and patriarchal structure of the Grimm Brothers' fairy tale and creates a new world for those princesses, where they build home together in an all-encompassing fe/male community rather than living happily ever after in marital bliss.

De(con)struction of heteronormativity in *Sexing the Cherry*

Since ancient times, old narratives from mythology to fairy tales have served as fortification of phallocentric, binary and oppositional way of thinking that extends into compulsory heteropatriarchy "enforc[ing] women's total emotional, erotic loyalty and subservience to [heterosexual] men" (Rich, 1980: 17). This male-dominated socio-political practice, through with its heteronormative assumptions which have been considered natural and moral order for family, imprisons women into heterosexual marriages, or in other words, into "condition[s] of arrested sexual development … *in which they* internaliz[e] the values of the colonizer and actively participat[e] in carrying out the colonization of one's self and one's sex" (1984: 202) (emphasis mine), as Kathleen Barry stated in her book *Female Sexual Slavery.* That colonization process starts in 'the father's house', and then continues with 'the husband's, whereby she learns to internalize and surrender to male desires. To get male approval and/or to protect herself against male violence, she has to conform, as Andrea Dworkin exemplifies below:

> "She conforms, in order to be as safe as she can be. Sometimes it is a lethargic conformity, in which case male demands slowly close in on her, as if she were a character buried alive in an Edgar Allan Poe story. Sometimes it is a militant conformity. She will save herself by proving that she is loyal, obedient, useful, even fanatic in the service of men around her. She is the happy hooker, the happy homemaker, the exemplary Christian, the pure academic, the perfect comrade, the terrorist par excellence. Whatever the values [of the males in authority], she will embody them with a perfect fidelity." (1983: 14)

Due to those imposed values, women have no choice but to accept to be 'male-identified' in patriarchal marriages, in which they are trained to view themselves as inferior to men. Thus, unlike fairy tales that end with the standard phrase '[...] and they lived happily ever after', these heterosexual marriages full of false and misleading dichotomous diminish the diversity and sexual fluidity of women. Personally advocating the subversion of the power relations

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in heterosexual coupling, in her re-writing of the Grimm Brothers' *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* in *Sexing the Cherry*, Jeanette Winterson challenges the patriarchal viewpoint and provides more tolerant and fluid conclusions for the princesses. Unlike the original tale generating phallocentric discourses and presenting them as 'natural', Winterson creates a different 'happy ending' for the dancing princesses in *Sexing the Cherry* (*STC,* henceforth), which is "not with their husbands" *(STC*: 48). Thus, she celebrates the fluid aspects of nature and refuses to repeat the patriarchal lies concerning sex and gender roles. In accordance with that and depending its argument on feminist and queer theories, Winterson provides readers with the alternative sequels of the dancing princesses through Jordan's narratives. Unlike the other male-identified female characters entrapped in androcentric stories, Winterson's princesses manage to challenge the heteronormative ideologies of the patriarchy in their acts of self-assertion, as Pauline Palmer puts in:

> "Winterson portrays the princesses as liberating themselves, in some cases by violent means, from their husbands' control. Instead of living happily ever after in marital bliss, as convention dictates, they set up home together in a female community. The various narratives assigned to them highlight the social and economic power which men wield and the brutal punishments which they inflict on women if they dare to transgress the conventional role of object of exchange by forming sexual relationships with one another." (1993: 104-105)

As clearly expressed in the above quotation, the chief reason for all these tensions and atrocities is the compulsory heteronormativity, causing women to experience male oppression and aggression. This idea is reinforced by phallocentric definitions of 'gender' and 'sexuality', which constructs a hierarchical relationship between 'man and woman - husband and wife'. However, Winterson's interpretation of *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* illustrates a new way of thinking where one does not have to be labeled as the 'One' or the 'Other', but s/he can enjoy being represented as simply two, or more. In other words, the most important thing is to be defined on its own terms. In accordance with that, through the individual stories of the twelve princesses, Winterson de(con)structs the dichotomous conceptualization of gender as male and female that "reduce[s] the richness and complexity in the interest of logical neatness" (Sherwin, 1998: 25) and clarifies the possibilities of more fluid, multiple, diverse and nonhierarchical state of gender that unravels the double-bind of the phallocentric patriarchy. Unlike the Grimms' version, in which the eldest princess gets married and the others are left to unknown fate, the twelve princesses in *Sexing the Cherry* "lived happily ever after, but not with their husbands" (*STC*: 48). Despite the phallocentric sanctions imposed by the androcentric discourse, Jeanette Winterson, through the voices of the princesses, proves that there are many other veracities to be unveiled, not just one enforced by the heterosexist ideologies. Therefore, opposing the constructedness of patriarchal binaries, in her re-writing of the fairy tale, Winterson "focuses particularly on 'refusing' lies related to sex and gender roles [and] attacks various artificial sources of sexism which disseminate and perpetuate lies about what is 'natural' behavior for men and women, religion and scripture, androcentric political, economic, familial hegemony, romance novels; and scientific discourses about bodies" (Rubinson, 2005: 115). That is, Winterson undermines the phallocentrically constructed fallacies concerning sex and gender

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through the princesses in *Sexing the Cherry* and challenges the conformist and conventional assumptions of heteronormativity.

The ambiguous gender of the 'fallen' princesses

In the original story, Grimms' Brothers propagate the highly coded patriarchal conventions that reinforce the expected and normalized gender behavior, which is the unquestioned submission of women to male authority. In accordance with that, the story begins as in the following:

> "Once upon a time there was a king who had twelve daughters, each one more beautiful than the next. They slept together in a large room with their beds lined up in a row, and at night, after they had gone to bed, the king locked and bolted the door. But when he opened the door in the morning, he saw that their shoes were all worn out from dancing, and nobody could discover how this happened. The king issued a proclamation that whoever could find out where they went dancing at night could choose one of them for his wife and become king after his death. However, anyone who attempted this, but failed to make the discovery after three days and nights, would forfeit his life." (Grimm, 1964: 23)

Thus, from the very beginning, the king is presented as a resolute decision maker and a threatening authority for his people and daughters as well. The princesses, however, are merely portrayed as beautiful virgins that have been locked in their rooms so as not to be involved in any kind of contact with men. What the king fears is not to protect his daughters, but to lose his authority and reputation among his people, because losing virginity before marriage would not only bring social isolation for the royal family, but it would also pose an obstacle for the king to find appropriate suitors for his lineage. That is why, upon discovering the princesses' worn-out shoes in the morning, the king rages at his daughters, mostly because of the fact that they have violated the Father's law and followed their own desires. For a time, their underground world where they meet twelve princes of their own choice remains inviolable to the king and to the "many [suitors] who came to try their luck" (Grimm, 1992: 470). Nevertheless, in order to punish his defiant daughters, the king appoints an old soldier and puts the princesses under patriarchal surveillance again. Soon after, the old soldier reveals the secret of the princesses and as a reward for his courage, the soldier is allowed to get married to the eldest princess. At the end of the story, what happens to other princesses is not revealed; however, children reading or listening to this story, especially little girls, internalize the patriarchally coded behavior and feel obliged to adopt the Father's law. According to Hayley S. Thomas, the story is also about 'punishing independence and female sexuality', as clarified in the following lines:

> "These narratives advocate dependence (not-independence) and punish independence (not-dependence) by generating two oppositional and dialogic categories. They reward the good/natural woman (i.e., nature within reason; nature mediated by the social, that is, by men) and punish the evil/unnatural woman (i.e., nature in excess; nature unmediated, that is, controlled solely by women who fortify its "nature-ness"). In choosing to actively resist the good and "natural" joys of being wife, mother and martyr, the princesses … are the most "fallen" of women." (1999: 172)

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Therefore, within the patriarchal paradigm, the behavior of the dancing princesses is considered disruptive and deadly; that is why, the princesses have to be put under control and punished if they resist the patriarchal values instilling the proper and ideal femininity. If considered from this point of view, it is evident that there is no way to escape for the princesses, but to accept their fate, as denying would not help. Nevertheless, Jeanette Winterson subverts the Grimms' heteronormative prescriptions for female life and offers a new and unconstrained way of reading.

As a form of resistance, first, Winterson narrates the story through the princesses' voice, rather than a male voice that writes/speaks in "the oppressor's language", as Adrienne Rich has articulated in her poem titled *The Burning of Paper instead of Children* (1985: 117). Keeping Rich's considerations in her mind, Winterson provides an all-encompassing solution to a continuing problem of wo/men under oppression. They do not have to use or protest in the language of the oppressor. They do not have to fit in the patriarchally constructed conventions and behavior patterns. On the contrary, they can cut loose from any kind of gender expectation and de(con)struct those dictated codes in order to pass beyond gender barriers. It is clear that such an uprising end with alienation, angst and mental dissolution for most wo/men. However, being free from all the boundaries of the patriarchal dictations would also create an alternative and a welcoming world where there is no othering, denial and ignorance. It would be a place for wo/men where different voices can be heard and different choices are accepted without questioning. Thus, it is a matter of choice, and as Winterson confesses in the introduction of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, "everyone, at sometime in their life, must choose whether to stay with a ready-made world that may be safe but which is also limiting, or to push forward, often past the frontiers of commonsense, into a personal space, unknown and untried" (1991: xiv). In accordance with that assumption, Winterson, instead of accepting the 'ready-made world', subverts the long-established patriarchal order by denying the hegemonic heterosexuality, on which the patriarchy is based. In this new and illimitable rewriting/retelling, the princesses create their own version in *Sexing the Cherry* that privileges free-will, lust and desire:

> "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*.
>
> […]
>
> For some years I did not hear from my sisters, and then, by strange eventuality, I discovered that we had all, in one way or another, parted from the glorious princes and were living scattered, *according to our tastes* (*STC:* 48)" (emphasis mine).

Unlike the Grimms' story ending with reconciliation, which is the heterosexual marriage, in Winterson's version, the princesses go beyond the dominant and conventional categorizations of heteronormative discourses and unveil "the arbitrary unnaturalness of normal gender relations" (Makinen, 2005: 91). It is true that they all have been married off to princes; however, none of the princesses in *Sexing the Cherry* conform to traditional

gender roles of wo/men expected within marriage. On the contrary, they challenge patriarchal binaries as a universal category and choose to conduct their relationships in non-traditional ways, and most importantly, in accordance with their 'own tastes'. Thus, one meets "a mermaid combing her hair" while swimming, "[falls] in love with her at once" (*STC*: 48) and then, she runs away to be with her. Now, the princess and the mermaid "live *happily* in the well" (*STC*: 48) (emphasis mine). The second princess, who "[has not] minded her husband much more than any wife does" (*STC*: 49), kills him as he has tried to stop her hobby, which is "collect[ing] religious items" (*STC*: 49). The third has "never [been] touched" (*STC*: 50) by her husband as he loves a boy while the fourth leaves her husband upon learning of his extramarital affairs with virgins in a lunatic asylum. The next princess turns her husband, Anton, into a frog with her first kiss, and the other remembers her past "when she [has been] free to fly … before this gracious landing and a houseful of things" (*STC*: 53), thereby turning her back on the house. The seventh princess has lived in harmony with her husband, 'a woman', for eighteen years till someone has found them. The eighth one poisons her husband, who "eats one cow followed by one pig everyday" (*STC*: 57). Along the lines of her sisters, the ninth princess also kills her husband, who has trained her as a wild falcon. One night, she "[flies] off his wrist and [tears] his liver from his body, and [bites her] chain in pieces and [leaves] him on the bed with his eyes open" (*STC*: 59). The tenth princess stays in her marriage despite her husband's several affairs until she realizes "[she has been] worn and grey like an old sweater [one] can't throw out but won't put on" (*STC*: 60). Then, she considers her choices:

> I could stay here and be unhappy and humiliated.
>
> I could leave and be unhappy and dignified.
>
> I could beg him to touch me again.
>
> I could live in hope and die in bitterness. (*STC*: 61)

Finally, the princess subverts patriarchal expectations of how proper princesses should behave in traditional marriage and leaves her husband. The next princess, upon the request of her husband, who finds life suffering, "smash[es] his skull with a silver candlestick" (*STC*: 62). After reading/listening the stories of eleven princesses, one can easily recognize that Jeanette Winterson entirely de(con)structs the Grimms' heteronormative dictations and provides princesses with an alternative of resistance, which is deciding on their own destinies rather than accepting the phallocentric concerns and joys of being a wife/mother. This new way of life will consequently lead to the freedom and jouissance of the princesses.

What about the last princess, the youngest sister of all? The missing princess, Fortunata, who turns out to be the woman that Jordan is looking for through his journey, is the poetic epitome of the desire that Winterson wants to achieve in her writings: 'going beyond the constructedness of gendered and heteronormative assumptions'. That is, through Fortunata, the only named princess, Winterson creates a third space of possibilities for new understandings, as she puts in:

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> "The alchemists have a saying, *'Tertium non data*': the third is not given. That is, the transformation from one element to another, from waste matter into best gold, is a process that cannot be documented. It is fully mysterious. No one really knows what effects the change. And so it is with the mind that moves from its prison to a vast plain without any movement at all." (*STC*: 152)

Thus, Fortunata is Winterson's 'third', a door to a new consciousness through which one can learn to get rid of the patriarchally constructed distinctions and fixation of heteronormativity. In other words, through Fortunata, who dances and "dart[s] in a figure of eight" (*STC*: 106) symbolizing infinity and eternity, Winterson destroys the traditional dictations, and creates the 'subject-in-process', a Kristevan term that has been established on an egalitarian basis, in which 'self/Other', 'subject/object', 'men/women' and mind/body' dualism is accepted as fluidly interchangeable with the promising potential to dissolve phallocentrically constructed binaries. Thus, this flowing, fluctuating and fluid subject, rather than arriving at a fixed identity shaped by the laws of Father, becomes "free of the burdens of gender" (*STC*: 29) and develops non-phallocentric, nonbinary and non-oppositional way of thinking. Through this new way of thinking, the non-symbolizable and non-rational area of fantasy that allows the subversion of patriarchal order has been achieved, and most importantly, the ultimate feeling of jouissance has been re-formulated, as Susana Gonzalez clarifies: "Winterson's fantasy opens up for consideration many aspects: women's strength, the real meaning of motherhood, lesbian relationships, sisterhood, and, above all, women's voice and its implied potential" (1996: 292). Within this regard, Fortunata's dancing body forbids the fixation of meaning derived from heteronormative discourses and "let[s] the world mate of its own accord" (*STC*: 94); thereby creating one capable of dissolving similarities and differences in the body to create fluid identities. Having that consciousness, Fortunata keeps on "spin[ning] … until all features are blurred, until the human being most resembles a freed spirit from a darkened jar" (*STC*: 78). In a similar way, modelling her writing style on Fortunata's spinning in harmony, Winterson acquires an open, multiple and plural language by breaking away from the rigid boundaries or dichotomies of phallocentrism. That is, she begins to speak and write through a more fluid language, which is "a [private] language not dependent on the constructions of men" (*STC*: 29). This fluid language resembles to the multiple, diverse and nonhierarchical female body and sexuality, unlike the one defined and portrayed by patriarchy as something "veiled in an impenetrable obscurity owing to their conventional secretiveness and insincerity" (Freud, 1971: 63). In a similar way, this language also functions as many parts of a woman combined into one woman and passes out of the boundaries. It cannot be pinned down, controlled and possessed since it is continually becoming, forever fluid. This linguistic and physical fluidity as well encourages the fe/male subject to explore and perform different identities beyond the confinement of a socially inscribed body. Knowing that fact, Winterson creates characters who eventually begin to speak in the all-encompassing force of feminine voices, like the many serpents of *Medusa*, rebelling against the "libidinal and cultural- hence political, typically masculine- economy", as Helene Cixous asserts in her famous work, The Laugh of the Medusa (1976: 879).

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Consequently, Jeanette Winterson, by de(con)structing the phallo-narcissistic vision and patriarchal structure of the Grimm Brothers' fairy tale, disturbs the hierarchal and final signified meaning of the text that has been established by the "Author-God" (1992: 117), as Rolande Barthes calls it. Unlike the androcentric original, Winterson's off-centered and fluid rewriting of *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* constantly produces new meanings through the play of signifiers. In other words, Winterson demands her readers not to be content with the man-made texts and heteronormative discourses providing short and limited pleasure, but rather to free themselves from the chains of the idea of an author-God and the constructions of his message, thereby from any fixed meaning and identity. This new version created by the collaboration of the reader(s), according to Barthes, "makes the reader no longer a consumer but a producer of the text" (1990: 4). This collaborative reader understands that there is no prescribed rhetoric and no fixed economy at work for anybody, thereby, s/he denies the socio-culturally constructed boundaries and dichotomies and obtains the fluidity along with openness and multiplicity. This new awareness eventually creates 'the one' capable of dissolving similarities and differences in the body, and hereby, de(con)structing all kinds of binary mechanisms to create fluid identities, like Fortunata. This princess, for Winterson, represents her artistic process and purpose. That is, by creating a character named 'Fortunata', first, she reminds her reader(s) about the possibilities of unforeseen contingencies as opposed to patriarchally determined destiny. Then, putting emphasis on the dancing body of Fortunata, Winterson alludes to the 'moebius strip', a three-dimensional figure seeming to have two sides but having just one. In fact, if one traverses the whole strip, s/he clearly sees that it is continuous, which means it is possible to cross over from inside to outside, or "traverse the fundamental fantasy", as Lacan first explained in *Seminar XXI* (1977: 273). For him, that traversing or going beyond process has the potential to create new configurations of language, signification, and desire, thereby subverting the heteronormativity and contemporary genders based on patriarchal binary oppositions, through which all identities have been defined. In this respect, this new identity dismantles the domination of phallocentrism and transcends into an all-encompassing state where the ones build their own non-normative peculiar existence depending on the queer-feminist principle, and eventually achieves 'wholeness'. From now on, there are only multiple meanings and fluid identities, like Fortunata and her spinning body, which makes the reader(s) realize that "whatever is inside that *Body*, is outside it; and whatever is outside it, is inside it. So [they] have all the riches of the world in that leetle *Body!*" (Carroll, 1996: 523) (emphasis mine).

Briefly, through the twelfth princess 'Fortunata', Winterson achieves her purpose and creates her rebellious and queer body, "sealed off from social consequences, secure from interruption or invasion", as Hite puts in (2000: 6). She subverts the heteronormative formations and succeeds to de(con)struct patriarchal dictations and androcentric discourses that imprison and enslave all individuals. Most importantly, demonstrating the poisonous

and harmful effects of heteronormative dictations that constitute and regulate the notions of sex, gender and sexuality, Winterson paves the way for wo/men to transform their patriarchal 'docile bodies' into the 'fluid bodies', which cannot be controlled or shaped by phallocentric heteronormativity.

Conclusion

Traditional androcentric thought dictates hegemonic dichotomous notions of gender and confines individuals into man/woman, male/female and masculine/feminine binaries. However, in this limiting dichotomous gender order, women are more often faced with oppression and 'no-choice choice' situations, where they are judged against a masculine standard. Since women are assessed by that standard, they are obliged to lose, whether they claim difference or similarity. Realizing that hypocrisy, critics, scholars and writers adopting feminist and queer theories have struggled to end the power of long-established gender hierarchies by emphasizing the fact that gender is a cultural construct that shapes all individuals, not just women. That is why, they advocate it is possible to de(con)struct the process and transcend the male-female dichotomy and its limitations. Being one of those critics and writers, Jeanette Winterson also believes that phallocentric discourses should be challenged to be able to create more fluid and diversified identities, especially in a new hybridized world, where individuals must synthesize and build on elements from many cultures to create all-encompassing identities. For her, if gender is a phallocultural construct which controls and limits individual, then, it is possible to de(con)struct the process and pave the way for possible alternatives. This is what she aims to realize in *Sexing the Cherry.* Through her poetic creation out of the rewriting of Grimms' tale, Winterson subverts the androcentric notions and concepts in such a way to draw attention to the possibility of a less contoured and more fluid sense of gender. She disintegrates and then reconciles the long-established binary oppositions by means of Fortunata, who undermines the phallocentric expectations and heteronormative dictations based on sex assigned at birth. That is, through Winterson's Fortunata, a key to gain awareness and a new consciousness about redefined sexualities and gender roles, wo/man readers begin to question those constructed concepts and categories to perform fluid identities. They, in accordance with the concerns of Winterson, have realized that everything is in a constant flux, including images, bodies, identities and gender roles.

Thus, phallocentric dichotomies undeniably having a crucial role in the construction of the gender order and the split between male and female have been dismantled in Winterson's re-writing of *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*. Creating alternative endings for the princesses, who are not content to live through and for others within the limitating patriarchal stereotypes, she encourages her readers to understand and accept the possibility of a non-binarized or genderqueer system where wo/men live in peace and harmony without any kind of restrictions. Obviously, Fortunata and her sisters challenge and disrupt the social norms and heteronormative discourses surrounding sexual identities.

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Bu makale tamamıyla özgün bir araştırma olarak planlanmış, yürütülmüş ve sonuçları ile raporlaştırıldıktan sonra ilgili dergiye gönderilmiştir. Araştırma herhangi bir sempozyum, kongre vb. sunulmamış ya da başka bir dergiye değerlendirilmek üzere gönderilmemiştir.

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This is a research article, containing original data, and it has not been previously published or submitted to any other outlet for publication. The authors followed ethical principles and rules during the research process. In the study, informed consent was obtained from the volunteer participants and the privacy of the participants was protected.

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