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DISCUSSION



Erendiz Atasü: subverting the boundaries between authorship and originality

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ABSTRACT

This interview explores the gendered dynamics of authorship and translation through Erendiz Atasü's *The Other Side of the Mountain* (2000), a seminal work in which Atasü occupies the dual roles of author and co-translator. Drawing on feminist translation studies and an interview with Atasü, the analysis challenges hierarchical binaries relegate translation to a derivative, secondary status. Atasü's collaborative approach reframes translation as an act of creative authorship – a dynamic process of reinterpretation, discursive negotiation, and agency. By destabilizing the ontological divide between original and translation, her collaborative practice offers an egalitarian paradigm that not only subverts masculinist literary conventions but also reasserts women's epistemic authority within transnational literary production.

KEYWORDS

Collaborative translation; authorship and originality; women writers and translators; gender and translation; resistance

Introduction

The entangled relationship between authorship and translation has long been discussed in binary terms: “the author as the original creator” and “the translator as the interpreter and/or imitator of that original work”. This established and internalized hierarchy reinforcing the notion that translation is a derivative and a secondary act to the original creative process becomes more complex when considering these roles through the lens of gender. Historically expected to conform to gendered norms in their creative expression, women occupying the dual roles of writer and translator have been marginalized and silenced in a male-dominated literary world. Finding themselves in a double bind – being faithful to the original text and adhering to patriarchal dictations of servility – women writers and translators scrutinize ways of subverting and redefining the binaries between writing and translation to be able to assert their author(ity) and creativity. One of these ways is collaborative translation, through which they can reclaim agency and resist being subsumed by the male-dominated literary and translation canon. Collaborative translation allows for a rethinking of creative labor as dialogic and relational rather than individualistic and hierarchical. Thus, by engaging in collaborative translation, women can reclaim their agency and challenge the dominant narratives that have silenced their voice by allowing for a multiplicity of perspectives to emerge in the translated text. As Harriet Hulme argues, “translation is always a dialogue: between two

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languages – source and target; two people – author and translator; and two different, but connected texts – the, ‘original’ and the ‘copy.’”¹ This dialogic nature of translation is particularly empowering for women, who have historically been denied full participation in both authorship and translation. In this light, the intersection of gender, authorship, and translation becomes not only a site of tension but also of possibility and reimagination.

This conversation with Erendiz Atasü explores these issues. An influential figure in contemporary Turkish literature, known for her feminist voice, philosophical depth, and political engagement, Atasü has an academic background in science.² This education brings a distinctive analytical precision and intellectual rigour to her literary work, enriching her exploration of gender, identity, and modernity. Emerging as a significant literary figure in the late twentieth century, her oeuvre,³ encompassing novels, short stories, essays, and autobiographical reflections, interrogates the patriarchal structures of Turkish society, the legacy of Kemalism, the ambivalent outcomes of the Turkish Republic’s modernization reforms, and the complex experiences of women navigating modernity and tradition.

One of her most celebrated works, *Dağın Öteki Yüzü* (1995) exemplifies her ability to weave historical narratives with contemporary feminist concerns.⁴ The novel delves into the lives of women in Türkiye during the early decades of the Republic, uncovering the tensions between traditional gender roles and the new possibilities opened up by modernity. Through this narrative, Atasü not only gives voice to the silenced experiences of women but also critiques the patriarchal underpinnings of national identity. She decided to co-translate *Dağın Öteki Yüzü* into English as *The Other Side of the Mountain* (2000) with literary scholar Elizabeth Maslen. This collaborative experience adds another layer of complexity to this work. It is also significant practice since it challenges the traditional hierarchy that often places the translator in a subordinate role to the author. However, Patrick Hersant cautions that without genuine dialogue, such collaboration risks reducing the translator to a mere linguistic technician, and reinforces authorial authority, particularly when the author intervenes to safeguard their intention across languages.⁵ By emphasizing these complexities inherent in collaborative translation, Hersant notes the balance of authority and agency between authors and translators.⁶

The collaborative translation process between Erendiz Atasü and Elizabeth Maslen exemplifies this intricate interplay. Their joint effort in translating Atasü’s novel *The Other Side of the Mountain* reflects a deep engagement where both authorial intent and translational creativity converge and offers valuable insights into the dynamics of co-creative translation processes. By collaborating on the translation, therefore, Atasü asserts her authority over the reinterpretation of her text for an international audience, blending the roles of creator and mediator. This dual role as both author and translator places Atasü in a powerful position that challenges the conventions of originality and fidelity often defining translation practice.

The interview with Atasü was held on 10th February 2025 via Zoom and transcribed and translated into English by me.⁷ The interview mainly focused on how Atasü negotiates the complex space between writing and translation. This conversation sheds light on her reflections about language, gender, authorship, and agency. Atasü discusses her motivations for participating in the translation of her own work, the challenges she faced in preserving the nuances of the Turkish original, and the gendered expectations

that continue to shape literary production and reception. She also reflects on her broader translation philosophy, revealing a deliberate feminist stance in resisting conventional hierarchies and affirming the creative power of translation. By situating Atasü's experience within the broader discourse on feminist translation studies and collaborative translation and authorship, the aim of the conversation was to reveal how her dual roles destabilize traditional binaries and offer new possibilities for women working at the intersection of writing and translation. Thus, this interview contributes to the ongoing re-evaluation of authorship, originality, and agency within a literary landscape where gender continues to mediate perceptions of creative legitimacy.

Ultimately, Atasü's collaborative approach promotes a more egalitarian understanding of literary production and aligns with contemporary scholarly discussions on the subversion of gendered binaries in literary production, where women writers and translators can reclaim authority over their creative work. Her assertion that translation is a form of creative authorship emphasizes the transformative potential of collaborative translation as a tool for challenging traditional hierarchies in literary fields dominated by masculinist perspectives. Through such collaborative efforts, the boundaries between authorship and translation become fluid, allowing for the emergence of new, inclusive narratives that reflect the multiplicity of voices often marginalized in canonical literary traditions.

Part 1: exploring collaborative translation: an author's journey

Muzaffer Derya Nazlıpınar Subaşı (MDNS): For you, a writer's greatest reward is to reach a wide audience, and to ensure their message resonate with others. Do you think this belief underpins your personal involvement in the translation of *Dağın Öteki Yüzü*? Do you think being one of the active agents in the translation process has facilitated this resonance with the target reader?

Erendiz Atasü (EA): When the English translation was published in 2000, it elicited a notable response within the British media landscape. I received particularly noteworthy insights from individuals who had previously visited Türkiye and acquired *The Other Side of the Mountain* to deepen their understanding of the country. Some even expressed that, following their engagement with the translated text, they finally comprehended Türkiye and Turks, which I regarded as immensely valuable. Türkiye is a complex and multifaceted country, often challenging to categorize within conventional frameworks. It does not conform entirely to the traditional notions of either the Orient or the Occident, nor does it fit neatly within the dichotomy of religiosity and rationalism. This ambiguity often makes it difficult for foreign readers to situate Türkiye within their habitual conceptual frameworks. While thinking in certain categories is a natural tendency, Türkiye resists such classifications. Consequently, I experienced considerable satisfaction upon receiving feedback from international readers who confessed that they had gained a more profound understanding of Türkiye's fundamental nature through the translation. In a similar vein, several Turkish readers conveyed that the book enabled them to better comprehend facets of their own contemporary history, which was equally rewarding. This was particularly gratifying for me, as – although I remain uncertain about the extent to which the book resonates with British or American audiences – we face considerable challenges in teaching history to younger generations. From this perspective,

I believe the book has provided valuable insights to all its readers, regardless of cultural or national background.

MDNS: I am in complete agreement with your perspective. As a Turkish reader, I experienced precisely the kind of awareness you outline. *The Other Side of The Mountain* sheds light on the “other” dimension of our Republic that is seldom interrogated. For instance, in your book, we encounter another side of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, as he is portrayed as slowly ageing and gradually weakening. Typically, he is presented as the invincible and the great leader of our country.

EA: A diseased person ... His body is gradually letting itself go and he is aware of it.

MDNS: I think your portrayal of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as a corporeal and vulnerable figure, rather than solely as the heroic architect of the Republic, allows for an intimate and humanized perspective for readers. Well ... If I may proceed with my next question, it is evident that *The Other Side of the Mountain* has had a favorable impact on both source and target culture readers. Before delving into questions regarding the translation process, I would like to ask about your collaboration with the translator. What brought you and Elizabeth Maslen together?

EA: I can say that we started this by chance. My English was quite good. My mother, as portrayed in the novel, was a scholarship student. She studied English Language and Literature at Oxford University with a state scholarship and graduated successfully. After returning to Türkiye, she established the English Language Teaching Department at the Faculty of Education in Gazi University in the 1940s. For many years, she lectured on English literature and translation at this institution. Her translations from English Literature were published in a volume under the title *İngiliz Edebiyatı Üstüne Denemeler* [Essays on English Literature].⁸ Thus, my engagement with English and translation has been an integral part of my life since childhood. I can confidently say that my passion for translation has been cultivated over time.

After embarking on my own writing journey, I translated several of my short stories, including a chapter from *The Other Side of the Mountain* under the title *Vicdan and Nefise: The Kemalist Girls of Cambridge*. Then, I submitted it to *The Turkish PEN*, a journal affiliated with the international PEN organization, where it was subsequently published. Meanwhile, I had the opportunity to meet Elizabeth Maslen, who visited Türkiye to deliver a lecture on Doris Lessing invited by the British Council and Middle East Technical University. We got along really well, and after she got back to England, I sent her my translations. Maslen was deeply impressed by these and subsequently wrote back with a compelling proposal for a translation of the entire novel. Her critical assessment emphasized the novel’s nuanced exploration of existential and psychological dimensions, highlighting the profound intricacies of the human mind. Recognizing the work’s intellectual and literary significance, she enthusiastically advocated for a collaborative translation endeavor. Thus, our collaboration began. I initially translated the text into English, as Elizabeth had only a limited knowledge of Turkish. Once my draft was complete, I sent it to her, and she refined it into a polished literary version.

MDNS: An encounter that proves both intellectually stimulating and deeply rewarding for the reader ... During this collaboration process, how did you strike a balance between preserving the original meaning and spirit of the text as well as creating a text that is appropriate for the target language and audience? What decisions about

the translation did you take together during the collaborative process and how do you think this dynamic process is reflected in the work?

EA: I began translating *The Other Side of the Mountain* in 1998, and the work was published in 2000 by Milet Publishing. It has been more than a quarter of a century since then, forgive me if I have difficulty in recalling some specific details. If we had had this conversation back then, I would have been able to provide more complete answers. Unfortunately, my friend Elizabeth Maslen, who might have offered valuable insights, is now ninety years old and is no longer able to assist with such inquiries. I reviewed my papers and realized that I haven't written much regarding my involvement in the translation process. However, I can say that the translation process that Elizabeth and I carried out was both productive and an immensely enjoyable intellectual experience. We hadn't even contacted the publisher at that time; thus, without any external pressure or time constraints, we had the opportunity to engage deeply with the text, carefully considering and discussing every aspect. The process was built on a mutual and honest exchange of ideas, progressing collaboratively as we were constantly asking each other questions. I recall composing extensively detailed explanations, beyond mere translation, specifically focusing on aspects uniquely pertinent to Türkiye – historical, social, and cultural nuances that I presumed Elizabeth would not be familiar with.

At that time, the internet had not yet become part of our lives, and I was even unfamiliar with the use of computers. I believe Elizabeth shared a similar experience. It may seem peculiar to younger generations today, but I typed out the sections I translated on a typewriter and sent them promptly. It is possible that I even sent some translated parts in my own handwriting. Elizabeth then adapted these texts into literary English. Thus, despite being quite different from today's digitally enhanced translation processes, our collaboration was a unique intellectual production method shaped by the conditions of that time.

MDNS: In addition to the translation-related decisions, I would be grateful if you could also elaborate on any challenges you encountered, if any.

EA: As I previously mentioned, it was a long, challenging, yet invigorating and fulfilling process. Rather than adhering strictly to a word-for-word translation, I focused on accurately conveying the emotional essence of the Turkish passages into English, and I believe I succeeded in this endeavor. At that time, my proficiency in English was quite good – though I regret to say that I cannot assert the same confidence today. Nevertheless, I would not have undertaken such a task had I not been sure of my linguistic competence. One of the most significant challenges – and indeed, the aspect that intrigued me the most – was capturing the atmosphere of the era through the personal lives of the characters. For this reason, letters from my family members that contained insights into that period were particularly valuable. It was essential to illustrate how historical circumstances shaped individual experiences. Based on the feedback we received from both Turkish and target readers, I believe we managed to achieve this objective.

MDNS: In that case, we may argue that the process initially involved in intra-lingual translation. That is, these letters from your parents were written in Old Turkish and the traditional script, would you agree?

EA: Yes, you are right. The process of examining these letters was indeed an intellectually stimulating yet emotionally demanding endeavor. As I delved into the historical narratives and familial memories preserved within these documents, I encountered a

spectrum of emotions, reflecting the complexities of the era. Thus, these letters have proven to be invaluable in illuminating the essence of that period.

Another key concern was conveying the novel's poetic elements – as seen in the case of street names. For instance, *Sakız Ağacı Sokak* (literally *Mastic Tree Street*) is a name with strong cultural and poetic connotations in Turkish culture. Initially, I translated it into English to preserve its evocative meaning for the target audience, because I also wanted them to experience these associations and recognize the poetic quality of the names. However, Elizabeth pointed out that an English reader unfamiliar with Türkiye might assume that such names were originally in English. She might be right reflecting an imperialist tendency to anglicize foreign locales. To prevent this misunderstanding, consequently, she recommended that we retain the original Turkish names, a suggestion we ultimately adopted.

Additionally, we engaged in extensive debate regarding the inclusion of footnotes for aspects of the text that a standard translation might not adequately convey. I was in favor of using footnotes, believing they would provide essential context. However, Elizabeth held the view that novel readers generally find footnotes disruptive to their reading experience. Instead, she skillfully integrated the required explanations into the text itself, thereby maintaining the narrative flow.

MDNS: Indeed, while footnotes, as Elizabeth Maslen has emphasized, can occasionally disrupt the reading flow for some, they also provide a wealth of supplementary information for research-minded readers, offering deeper insights and contextual details. Personally, I find immense value in delving into detailed research and uncovering the underlying complexities within a text. Considering this translation process and the challenges you mentioned, do you think collaborative translation enriches the text, or does it lead to a fragmentation in meaning making?

EA: I don't believe collaborative translation has led to a fragmentation in meaning; rather, it has the potential to enrich it. As previously noted, composing in English allowed me a certain freedom. I observed that expressing culturally sensitive or taboo subjects – or ideas that were ingrained as taboo in my upbringing – became significantly easier in a foreign language than in my native tongue. This phenomenon also arose during my work on *Gençliğin O Yakıcı Mevsimi* [That Scorching Season of Youth] (1999), where I instinctively conceived expressions relating to sexuality in English first. This highlights how translation can inherently amplify a text's complexity and nuance, rather than merely transferring meaning.

I experienced the same freedom and ease while translating *The Other Side of the Mountain*. I consciously moved away from a strictly literal, or *mot à mot* approach. Instead, I prioritized understanding the sentence's underlying intention, its core meaning, and its emotional resonance. My central question was “how can I effectively recreate this feeling in English?”. When I encountered difficulties in capturing the intended emotion or struggled with a particular passage, I collaborated closely with Elizabeth. I provided her with detailed explanations of my expressive goals, and she refined the text to ensure the book's meaning was effectively conveyed in the target language.

Elizabeth's role was crucial in navigating the linguistic and cultural nuances ensuring clarity and readability through targeted revisions. I placed considerable trust in her expertise and generally refrained from interfering with her editorial decisions. Therefore, I don't think there was a significant loss of meaning. Nevertheless, the inherent

untranslatability of certain poetic idioms suggests that some degree of semantic loss is unavoidable. This phenomenon, however, is not unique to translation; indeed, it mirrors the broader challenges of human communication. Even among individuals with strong interpersonal connections and shared understanding, subtle gaps in emotional comprehension invariably persist. Similarly, translation is subject to an irreducible gap between the original text and its rendering in another language.

I contend that the translator's primary objective is to minimize this inevitable gap, a task demanding considerable effort, particularly in accurately conveying the intended meaning. Elizabeth and I engaged in extensive dialogue, rigourously discussing and refining the text until we achieved a mutual sense of satisfaction. Our collaborative process aimed to produce a final version that was both nuanced and resonant. Therefore, I reject the notion of translation as a purely mechanical exercise and strongly believe that the translator plays a critical, indispensable role, rather than being an insignificant figure in the process.

MDNS: Drawing upon your dual experience as a writer and translator in the context of *The Other Side of the Mountain*, do you posit that the translator's role warrant recognition as a form of creative authorship?

EA: Absolutely. The translator's role transcends that of a simple interpreter, passive channel, or an "artist in the shadow". Rather, they should be acknowledged as a proactive creative force, analogous to the original author.

Part 2: the gendered pen: women's writing, translation, and resistance in patriarchal literary traditions

MDNS: The hierarchical relationship between author and translator reflects the historical marginalization of women within patriarchal literary systems, where their creative contributions are frequently undervalued. This dynamic resonates with Gilbert and Gubar's probing inquiry in *The Madwoman in the Attic*: "Is the pen a metaphorical penis?"⁹ – a question that underscores the "anxiety of authorship" experienced by women writers. As a woman engaged in both writing and translation within a literary landscape historically shaped by masculine dominance, what specific challenges have you faced? In what ways do you perceive this patriarchal structure impact women who identify as writers, translators, or both, and what strategies have you employed to circumvent these obstacles?

EA: Türkiye is, without question, a profoundly patriarchal society, and throughout my lifetime, this patriarchal structure has intensified. This shift toward conservatism was not an organic or voluntary evolution, but rather, it was a deliberate imposition with significant sociopolitical consequences.

For working women, professional life has always been fraught with challenges, and this reality remains universal. This is equally true for women in the literary sphere, where establishing oneself as a young female writer is particularly arduous. The path to recognition is neither straightforward nor equitable. However, in my case, I was fortunate in one critical respect – I began writing later in life. My first book, *Kadınlar da Vardır* (1983) [Women Also Exist], was awarded a literary prize upon its publication.¹⁰ At that time, literary awards carried substantial prestige – a stark contrast to the present day, where their proliferation has diminished their value. In that era, an award-winning book commanded significant attention and recognition.

Additionally, I did not enter the literary world as a novice. By the time I began writing, at the age of 35 or 36, I had already established myself professionally, having secured a respected academic position as an associate professor at a university. This distinction is pivotal. In a patriarchal society, the perception of a 25-year-old woman – who is often more economically vulnerable and lacks financial independence – differs markedly from that of a 35 – or 36-year-old woman who holds tenure and enjoys a stable income. The power dynamics shift substantially with age, financial security, and professional status, affording a degree of protection and credibility in a male-dominated literary landscape.

MDNS: The argument presented here has reminded of me the key point you articulated in *Bilinçle Beden Arasındaki Uzaklık* (2009) [The Distance Between Mind and Body]: “A woman can never be truly free if she cannot own her own body and money”¹¹

EA: Achieving economic independence is indeed a critical advancement for women, as it not only facilitates mental liberation but also alleviates the burdens historically imposed upon them. Then, as Virginia Woolf insightfully argues in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), women writers must confront two significant challenges. The first challenge arises from the entrenched patriarchal literary tradition, while the second stems from the pervasive stereotype of ideal femininity, which has remained largely unquestioned across generations. These factors contribute to the phenomenon of “writer’s anxiety”, previously mentioned. Thus, in Woolfian terms, the cliché of ideal womanhood, “Angel in the House,” who does not have “a mind or a wish of her own”¹² must be killed.

To further elaborate on the challenges I have faced, I did not undergo experiences of marginalization or sexual exploitation. I was lucky ... Unfortunately, women must learn such defensive strategies from a young age. Consequently, navigating the literary landscape as both a woman and a writer within a predominantly masculine environment presents significant challenges. However, writing is an all-encompassing passion – an enthusiasm, a fervour, and a profound love – that serves as a catalyst for overcoming challenges. The translation process, in my case, posed fewer difficulties compared to other creative endeavors. At the age of 53, I had already established myself as a prominent figure within the literary landscape of Türkiye, having published numerous works and received literary accolades. My retirement, coupled with the fact that my child had reached adulthood, and my grandchild had not yet been born, afforded me the privilege of temporal freedom, enabling me to immerse myself fully in the translation process. Notwithstanding the absence of significant personal interference with my translation work, it is evident that the absence of such favorable circumstances would have rendered the task decidedly more arduous. Ultimately, it is not external conditions that enable a writer to navigate adversity, but rather an internal force – whether it be an intrinsic love of writing, innate creative talent, or an existential imperative to create despite life’s pressures. The absence of such an intrinsic drive would render the process nearly insurmountable.

MDNS: Reflecting on past eras and the challenges faced, it can be argued that we are relatively more fortunate today; especially when considering Mary Ann Evans and Cahide Üçok, English and Turkish writers who published their works under male pseudonyms, as well as Jane Austen and Fatma Aliye, who signed their novels simply as “by a lady”. We no longer even debate the existence of a distinct literary tradition for women.

The Other Side of the Mountain explores the historical transformations, social roles, and struggles of women through a multi-layered narrative. How did you approach conveying this historical depth in translation, particularly the use of the language and social expressions of earlier periods? Was the language modernized, or was it deliberately shaped to maintain historical authenticity? How was this cultural and historical dynamism made accessible to the target audience?

EA: As previously mentioned, my parents' letters helped a lot. Moreover, when writing about the 1930s and 1940s, I intentionally employed the Turkish language as it was spoken during that period to recreate the historical atmosphere. By reflecting the linguistic characteristics of the time, I aimed to preserve the narrative's authenticity. However, given the significant evolution of the Turkish language over the decades, certain words had become obsolete and faded from common usage. To address potential comprehension challenges for contemporary readers, I included a small glossary at the end of the book. This approach, while appreciated by some, was met with criticism from others, who found the unfamiliar vocabulary difficult to engage with. In response to such criticism, I explained that my primary goal was to maintain the historical ambiance of the narrative. Critics countered by arguing that if absolute fidelity to atmosphere were the guiding principle, then no literary work should ever be translated into another language, as translation inherently entails some degree of loss. I acknowledged this limitation, recognizing that even between two individuals who share the same language and a close personal bond, complete comprehension of thoughts, emotions, or cognitive processes is unattainable. Meaning is always, to some extent, lost in translation. My primary objective was to minimize this loss within the Turkish text itself. Inevitably, in the English translation, certain nuances were lost – an outcome that was beyond my control. This is partly because English has not undergone the same degree of linguistic transformation as Turkish. While the English language has certainly evolved within a globalizing world, the core structure of literary English has remained relatively stable compared to the significant linguistic shifts in Turkish.

Beyond linguistic nuances, there were cultural and social elements embedded within the text that were immediately comprehensible to a Turkish audience. However, to ensure that foreign readers could grasp these cultural references, I initially suggested incorporating footnotes. My collaborator, Elizabeth, expressed concerns that footnotes might disrupt the reading experience, as novel readers generally prefer an uninterrupted narrative flow. I agreed with her perspective from a literary standpoint. Therefore, instead of using footnotes, I sought to integrate these socio-cultural details seamlessly into the text itself, making them more accessible to an international audience.

Actually, this challenge in cultural translation is somehow inevitable. A similar issue arose in the English translation of my own work. Despite our concerted efforts to render cultural nuances in a manner accessible to an English-speaking audience, certain subtleties remained resistant to full transmission. This experience highlights the intrinsic complexities of literary translation: while meaning can be conveyed across languages, the cultural and emotional depth embedded in linguistic structures often proves resistant to complete transference. This is not a failure of translation but rather a reflection of the profound differences between languages and cultures. The task of the translator, then, is to navigate these complexities, striving to preserve as much of the original meaning and atmosphere as possible while ensuring the text remains engaging and accessible to its new audience.

MDNS: Yes, you are right. Balancing cultural specificity with cross-cultural accessibility is difficult. As the author and “owner” of the original text, how did this dual role influence the translation process? During translation, how did you navigate the tension between your intrinsic connection to the text as its creator and the objectivity required of a translator? Did you experience moments where your roles as writer and translator became intertwined?

EA: I view the texts I compose during the writing process as transiently mine. Once completed, I relinquish ownership, acknowledging that the works belong to the reader and, more broadly, to the linguistic and literary tradition they inhabit. During the translation process, I made a conscious effort to adopt an external perspective on my own writing, a strategy that facilitated the translation process. Familiarity with the sentences – whose meanings I knew intimately – precluded significant challenges in conveying the intended message. Consequently, I experienced no internal contradictions during the translation process.

As I have previously noted, subjects deemed taboo within one’s cultural upbringing – such as sexuality – are often challenging to articulate in one’s native language. This has been my personal experience as well. I mean I found that expressing these themes in my native language posed greater challenges than their translation into English. In *The Other Side of the Mountain*, although these themes are not as prevalent as in some of my other works, I encountered no difficulties in rendering them into English. This ease in translation stemmed from the fact that I had conceptualized many of these expressions in English prior to translating them into Turkish. As a result, I did not perceive a dichotomy between my roles as author and translator, nor did I identify significant gaps in meaning resulting from the translation.

MDNS: So, it seems you are suggesting that the roles of author and translator did not function as separate identities, but rather as an intertwined and unified whole during your collaborative translation process. This perspective effectively dismantles the traditional binary opposition between the original work and its interpretive translation.

EA: Precisely. The translation process was collaborative in nature, characterized by mutual engagement rather than a hierarchical relationship where one party held authoritative control. I think this approach reflects the principles of the philosophy of sisterhood in feminist criticism, which advocates for a dialogic and critically engaged process that actively dismantles man-made binaries and transcends the conventional divide between the original author and the derivative translator.

MDNS: Thank you for elaborating on this issue. As you have mentioned, your description of the collaborative translation process aligns closely with feminist translation theory, which challenges the conventional divide between author and translator, encouraging us to reconceptualize translation as a creative, dialogic, and critically engaged process. I would like to shift the focus from collaborative and collective translation practices that challenge and diminish the hierarchical divide between authors and translators to the feminist translation process.

Feminist theorists such as Sherry Simon, Luise von Flotow, Barbara Godard, Lori Chamberlain, and Gayatri Spivak have explored translation as a field that strengthens women’s roles in cultural production. They situate translation within gendered contexts, viewing it as a “feminist form of resistance” and a means to liberate translation from masculine dominance. By emphasizing the translator’s visibility, they argue that translation is

not merely a passive transmission but an active process of textual reproduction. Have you employed deliberate strategies to enhance your visibility as a translator, or any feminist translation techniques to transform masculine language, foreground women's experiences, preserve cultural contexts, or clarify the multi-layered structure of the text?

EA: The translation process for *The Other Side of the Mountain* did not involve the conscious application of feminist translation strategies, as I was not familiar with such approaches at the time. Consequently, we did not intentionally employ these strategies in our work. It is challenging to determine the degree of unconscious influence that may have occurred, given that the original texts were inherently written from a feminist perspective. I am uncertain about the extent to which the feminist viewpoint was successfully conveyed in the translation. However, feminist translation was not a deliberate focus, nor did we intentionally shape the translation with this approach, as the text itself was already infused with feminist consciousness. That being said, *The Other Side of the Mountain* is not a work that overtly declares itself as feminist; literature, by nature, cannot be strictly ideological. However, these texts were written by an author committed to making the injustices faced by women visible and addressing them through narrative.

MDNS: Then, can we consider this a form of resistance?

EA: Yes, but as mentioned before, when considering whether this constitutes a form of resistance, one must acknowledge the subtlety required in literary expressions of resistance. Literature often conveys such themes implicitly, avoiding overt didacticism to maintain its artistic integrity and broader appeal. This nuanced approach allows the narrative to resonate on multiple levels, embedding feminist perspectives within the fabric of the story rather than imposing them explicitly. Thus, while the text may not overtly declare its feminist stance, its commitment to highlighting women's issues through narrative subtlety serves as a powerful form of resistance in itself.

MDNS: Thank you for your thoughtful and candid responses. I would like to further our conversation by referencing a quote from your interview on women's literature. During an interview with Buket Aşçı, you posited, "The notion that a male writer cannot portray a woman's story is unfounded, as evidenced by works such as Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, and Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil's *Bihter and Vedide*.¹³ To authentically depict both male and female characters, a writer must be capable of transcending personal biases." Would you maintain the same viewpoint if this issue were considered in the context of translation? Do you believe that a translator's gender is crucial in conveying meaning, particularly when translating works that center on women's experiences, encompassing themes of sexuality and sensuality?

EA: I maintain my stance on this matter, though I acknowledge the opportunity to critique my own perspective. In the interview you referenced, I cited authors such as Tolstoy and Flaubert – prominent and canonical literary figures. Their works, situated within the realist tradition, often eschew explicit bodily descriptions in favor of subtle innuendos. A notable illustration of this subtlety is found in Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. In a pivotal scene, Emma and her lover consummate their affair in a carriage, yet the act itself is never explicitly described. Instead, the narrative relies on the movement of the carriage to imply the intimacy, leaving the interpretation to the reader. When I first read the novel at the age of 13 or 14, I did not grasp the significance of the scene. It was only much later that I fully understood its implications.

When it comes to literature that directly engages with the body, one must recognize the inherent difficulty writers – particularly male authors – face in entirely transcending their embodied biases. However, literature, by its very nature, defies rigid categorizations, definitions, and structural confines. For every generalization posited, there exists a corresponding exception. While one cannot categorically assert that male authors are entirely incapable of shedding their prejudices regarding the body, the challenge may indeed be greater for them.

MDNS: Your reflections on the role of translators in conveying corporeal and sexual themes are intriguing. Do you believe that translators acquainted with such themes, particularly those with lived experiences, enhance the translation process? Specifically, do you think female translators are better equipped to interpret narratives infused with masculine discourse or gendered language? Does this belief influence your preference for working with female translators?

EA: Not necessarily. While the selection of translators was often circumstantial, yet I have predominantly worked with female translators. This pattern aligns with the observation that women tend to engage more deeply with literature authored by other women, a trend that extends to translation. While a male translator might struggle with certain aspects of the female experience, this is not a universal rule. The translator's ability to immerse themselves in the female psyche is crucial – understanding the nuances of the female body, emotions, and sensory experiences.

MDNS: You raise a valid point. Your novel, *Gençliğin O Yakıcı Mevsimi* [That Scorching Season of Youth], particularly the character AyşeAysu, comes to my mind. In the pivotal scene where she and her partner Fethi become intimate, the harsh warning, “Women don’t touch, but are felt up!”¹⁴ profoundly unsettle AyşeAysu. Translating this line posed significant challenges for me, as I aimed to convey the same discomfort, pain, and humiliation in the English version. Therefore, I made a concerted effort to preserve the emotional intensity of the original text within the target language and culture. Based on this experience, I believe that a female translator, due to her lived reality and sensitivity to gendered discourse, can more accurately convey the linguistic and emotional depth of a feminist text.

EA: I am in full agreement with your assertion. A male translator who shares the same mindset as the male character in that passage would inevitably produce a poor translation. This is an undeniable reality.

MDNS: Throughout your career, with the exception of Alvin Palmar, you have primarily worked with female translators. While you mentioned that this was not always a deliberate choice, it seems that it was, ultimately, the right one.

EA: Indeed, I concur with that assessment. It was coincidental, but nevertheless, the right decision.

MDNS: I would like to conclude our conversation with one last question. Given your extensive experience as both a writer and a translator, could you share your insights into the challenges women encounter within literary and translational domains? In the context of these challenges, what strategies would you recommend for women to enhance their visibility, assert their voices, and preserve their identities within male-dominated literary frameworks? Additionally, how can they overcome existing barriers and cultivate unique literary styles that reflect their distinct perspectives?

EA: Writing is inherently liberating – an undeniable truth. I have always felt that I was born to write, though this realization came to me later in life. This delay, I believe, is deeply connected to the broader issue of women’s oppression. However, one does not need to be “born a writer” to experience this liberation. The act of writing strengthens one’s sense of self and provides clarity, which, in turn, fosters confidence. This confidence, however, is not immediate – it evolves gradually, through the very act of writing itself.

Of course, there is no singular or magical path to achieving success in literature. Today’s social structures – both globally and within our own country – are in a state of chaos and upheaval. The challenges women face in literature and translation are deeply embedded within these broader societal crises. Yet, despite these difficulties, writing remains a powerful tool for self-expression and resistance. It is through writing that women can assert their voices, challenge dominant narratives, and carve out their own unique literary identities.

Notes

1. Hulme, *Ethics and Aesthetics of Translation*, 3.
2. Atasü was a professor of pharmacognosy at Ankara University until her retirement in 1997.
3. For further details, see <https://erendizatasu.com/en/works/>.
4. 1996 winner of ORHAN KEMAL award.
5. Hersant, “Author-Translator Collaborations”.
6. Ibid.
7. Ethical approval for this interview was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Kütahya Dumlupınar University on October 4, 2024 (Protocol No. 446). Informed consent was obtained from Prof. Dr. Erendiz Atasü prior to data collection, in accordance with the university’s ethical research guidelines.
8. Sayron, *İngiliz Edebiyatı Üstüne Denemeler*.
9. Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 6.
10. 1982 winner of AKADEMİ first prize for amateur writers.
11. Atasü, *Bilinçle Beden Arasındaki Uzaklık*, 131.
12. Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, 59.
13. Atasü, *Ideas About Women’s Fiction*.
14. Atasü, *Gençliğin O Yakıcı Mevsimi*, 75.

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