

Feminist Rewriting and Intersectional Oppression: A Comparative Study of Spinning Silver and Rumpelstiltskin

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Abstract:

A comparative literary analysis of the Grimm Brothers' *Rumpelstiltskin* and Naomi Novik's *Spinning Silver* reveals how a traditional fairy tale can be reimagined through a feminist and intersectional lens. *Spinning Silver*, as a literary transformation, exemplifies how traditional narratives can be reappropriated to challenge deep-rooted gender norms and socio-political ideologies. The aim is to explore the literary mechanisms through which Novik reconstructs the tale, repositions its female characters, and redefines agency, autonomy, and identity within a feminist and intersectional framework. In doing so, it also interrogates the embedded structures of power and marginalization that operate in both the original and the rewritten narratives. The original *Rumpelstiltskin* is rooted in patriarchal and feudal values, wherein female characters are often portrayed as passive, voiceless, and dependent on male intervention. In contrast, *Spinning Silver* offers a narrative where women are positioned at the center, not only as protagonists but as agents of social transformation. Novik's reimagined characters are independent, assertive, and capable of confronting and subverting oppressive systems, be they economic, familial, or magical. Drawing on Iris Marion Young's theoretical framework *Five Faces of Oppression*, this study analyzes how *Spinning Silver* reflects and refracts these modes of oppression. The novel illustrates how intersecting identities, particularly those related to class and ethnicity, shape the experiences of its characters. Furthermore, the analysis incorporates Gérard Genette's transtextual theory, with a particular focus on *intertextuality* and *hypertextuality*, to examine how Novik's work maintains a dialogue with the canonical fairy tale tradition while simultaneously rewriting it. Through the lens of metamodernism, *Spinning Silver* is understood not as a rejection of traditional narratives but as a synthesis of continuity and disruption. The novel oscillates between irony and sincerity, past and present, realism and myth, creating a layered narrative that acknowledges its origins while transcending them. By integrating feminist theory, narrative theory, and transtextual analysis, this research seeks to illuminate how literary rewritings can serve as critical interventions in both literature and society. *Spinning Silver* is not only a feminist fairy tale; it is a text that reconfigures narrative space to articulate resistance, empowerment, and collective agency, particularly by subverting patriarchal tropes and embedding intersectional concerns within its world-building and character development. Ultimately, this study contributes to feminist literary criticism by demonstrating the transformative potential of fairy-tale rewritings as sites of ideological critique and creative reimagination, offering a multidimensional lens through which to interrogate power, identity, and narrative tradition.

Keywords: feminist rewriting, intersectionality, fairy tale adaptation, hypertextuality, intertextuality, metamodernism, gender roles, oppression

