

Araştırma Makalesi (Research Article)
Gönderim Tarihi (Received): 17.08.2020 Kabul Tarihi (Accepted): 07.11.2020

Escape to Fantasy: Relocation of Fantastic Genre on Netflix Platform

Yasemin ÖZKENT¹²

Abstract

In the fantastic narrative, an alternative universe that is contrary to reality and fed by dreams is narrated. Fantastic stories can be conveyed in verbal-literary-visual ways. The number of films and serials in fantastic genre has increased in recent years according to the developments in visual technologies. Nowadays, these films and series that meet the needs of human imagination have become one of the most preferred genres by the audience. Fantasy is an escape area in which they have experienced the satisfaction they cannot find in everyday life, for crowds. It promises modern people to break the laws of the world they know, to describe the demands of imagination, and to gain the ability to dream while awake. So, modern people take more shelter in fantasies. Moreover, the updated new forms of fantasy give the audience more pleasure by combining the secrets of the past with the worries of the future. Based on these insights, fantastic series that among the most-watched Netflix contents of 2019 were examined in the study. The starting point of the study is the fact that nearly half of the most popular top ten series is in fantastic genre. *The Gift* (2019-), *The Witcher* (2019-), *The Protector* (2018-2020), *Stranger Things* (2016-) and *The Umbrella Academy* (2019-) series constitute the study sampling. The series were objected to qualitative analysis through the basic themes used by fantastic narratives. As a result, the orientation of the users of new media platforms towards fantastic genre was presented within the scope of repeated narrative items.

Keywords: Fantasy, Netflix, New Media Platforms, Fantastic Series.

Atf (Cite as): Özkent, Y. (2020). Escape to Fantasy: Relocation of Fantastic Genre on Netflix Platform. Akdeniz Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi, 34, 445-463. DOI: 10.31123/akil.781587

1 Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Selçuk Üniversitesi, İletişim Fakültesi, yaseminuzuntok@selcuk.edu.tr, ORCID Numarası: 0000 0002 8617 8429.

2 Sorumlu Yazar (Corresponding Author)

Fantazyalara Kaçış: Netflix Platformunda Fantastik Türün Yeniden Konumlanması

Öz

Fantastik anlatıda gerçekliğe aykırı ve düşlerden beslenen alternatif bir evren hikaye edilir. Fantastik hikayeler, sözlü-edebi-görsel yollarla aktarılabılır. Görsel teknolojilerdeki gelişmelere bağlı olarak son yıllarda fantastik tür özellikleri taşıyan sinema ve dizilerin sayısı artmıştır. İnsanın sonsuz imgelemindeki gereksinimleri karşılayan bu film ve diziler, izleyiciler tarafından en fazla tercih edilen türler arasına girmiştir. Fantazyaya, kalabalıklar için gündelik hayatta bulamadığı hoşnutluğu yaşadığı bir kaçış alanı olarak işlev görmektedir. Modern insana bildiği dünyanın yasalarından çıkmayı, düş gücünün istemlerini betimlemeyi ve uyanırken düş görme yetisi kazanmayı vaat eder. Modern insan bu yüzden daha fazla fantazyalara sığınır. Üstelik güncellenmiş yeni biçimleri, geçmişin gizleriyle geleceğin endişelerini bir noktada buluşturarak izleyiciye daha fazla haz verir. Bu açılımlardan hareketle çalışmada 2019 yılında en çok izlenen Netflix içeriklerinden fantastik tür özelliği taşıyan diziler incelenmiştir. En fazla izlenen ilk on dizinin yaklaşık yarısını fantastik dizilerin oluşturması, çalışmanın çıkış noktasını oluşturmaktadır. *The Gift* (2019-), *The Witcher* (2019-), *The Protector* (2018-2020), *Stranger Things* (2016-) and *The Umbrella Academy* (2019-) dizileri çalışmanın örneklemini oluşturmaktadır. Diziler, fantastik anlatıların kullandığı temel temalar aracılığıyla niteliksel analize tabi tutulmuştur. Sonuç olarak yeni medya platformları kullanıcılarının fantastik türe yönelişi, yinelenen anlatı unsurları bağlamında ortaya koyulmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Fantazyaya, Netflix, Yeni Medya Platformları, Fantastik Dizi.

Introduction

The curiosity of the humans towards the unknown since the times they recognized that they dream and can imagine has created the fantasy as an alternative world. Stories conveyed through wall pictures and hieroglyphics based on imagination in ancient times are depictions including fantasy items. Focusing on surreality, fantasy has improved in centuries and survived until today without being confined in strict borders and a constant pattern with the contribution of changing cultures and ages. Fantasy narrative is a journey to the unreal, the borders of imagination and the dark world. The laws of reality collapse through this journey, theories of time and space change and mysterious creates are encountered. Freedom can be defined as some kind of an escaping world embodying freedom, panic and fear.

While continuing its presence as a literary genre, fantasy has gained popularity in mass presentation forms such as cinema and television. Fantasy reaching the audience in three-dimensions through the means of technology almost gives a characteristic of reality to the fantasy. The rating of fantasia genre increases when the surrealist

themes nourished by tales and myths are visualized by combining with the means of technology. In a way, fantasy supplies its themes with the means of the period. Jason Mittell (2006) and Trisha Dunleavy (2018) who introduced “complex TV” concept to the academic field after 2000s stated that the main strategy television content creators applied was to keep up with the times. Mittell pointed out that series like *Six Feet Under* (2001-2005), *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) etc. moved between reality and subjectivity without strict borders and thus covered the effect of both thriller and comedy (2006, p. 37). In this regard, we can say that blurring the reality, Complex TV in a way also gets closer to the fantastic genre.

As emphasized by Pierre Bourdieu, television has acquired an influence on artistic, cultural and scientific production activities as the phenomenon most difficult to predict. This point of view helps us to understand the increase of fantastic genre in television in recent years (1997, p. 41). The success acquired by fantasy in cinema in terms of the audience and producers has also paved the way for the fantasy series in television. Fantastic-fiction is among the most watched genres in cinema and series sector around the world. According to Ünsal Oskay, the fear felt in front of the new, the difficulty of forming an interpretation connection between one’s own reality and the external reality, the concern and interest; all faced by the modern individual wanting to escape from the reality constitute the main impulse of the orientation towards fantasies which are the industrial production replacing the tales (1982, p. 7).

Looking at the development of fantastic series type in Turkey, the tendency of traditional television broadcasting to spare prime-time to a series that would appeal to the general audience has become the greatest handicap. The first samples of fantastic series in Turkey were *Uzaylı Zekiye* (1987), *Sihirli Safiye* (1993-1994), *Biyonik Belma* (1995-1996) and *Ruhsar* (1998-2001). The mentioned series and other examples include contents with magical powers and religious elements. Since the beginning of 2000s, the increase in the popularity of fantasy series genre has also caused the increasing of the interest in Turkey and narrative way facing the world especially with new media platforms. Digital media platforms helping the audience to reach their target have an important function in the popularity of fantasy series genre. The considerable production of fantasy genre in the contents of Netflix which is the most commonly used digital media platform in Turkey is interesting. Half of the most watched ten series of Netflix Turkey in 2019 belong to fantasy genre. The objective of the study starting from this detection is to present the orientation of new media platform uses towards fantasy genre within the scope of repeated narrative items. *The Gift* (2019-), *The Witcher* (2019-), *The Protector* (2018-2020), *Stranger Things* (2016-) and *The Umbrella Academy* (2019-) which are series still continuing constitute the sampling of the study. The series were subjected to qualitative analysis. Common fantasy items in these series will be examined under titles through the themes used by fantasy narratives. Accordingly, the orientation towards the fantasy will be evaluated within new media platforms, development of fantasy narration genre and modernization dynamics before analyzing the series.

1. Literature Review

1. 1. New Media Platforms and Netflix

With the use of internet influencing the whole world in 1990s, an unprecedented new era started. Many academic studies discussing the characteristics of new media were made at the beginning of 2000s. All digital technologies such as telephone, computer, satellite TV and tablets prevailing in all fields of life, dominantly affecting the social life of individuals and turning almost all organizations into a digital practice are gathered under new media concept today. Digital networks at society level and global scale have spread to the whole world in social and economic field (Van Dijk, 2006, pp. 2-12).

Elihu Katz and Paddy Scannell covered television-digital network technology convergence as the precursor of the new broadcasting period in the article called "The End of Television?" in 2009. The article points out that the quick development of new media platforms simultaneously providing different communicative dimensions form new discussions on the fact that television broadcasting could come to an end. It was stated that there was a transformation from the collective phase towards individual phase in television, in other words, mobile television shaped by new media means (post-television) replaced the period of television watching with family members. Thus the individuals have met the customized structure, portability (ability to watch from tablet, computer and cell phone anytime and anywhere) and provision of unlimited content (2009, pp. 7-8).

Concurrent with the studies showing the phase of change experienced by traditional television broadcasting with the new media, Netflix has spread its name to the whole world as the digital age television. Providing DVD sale and renting service through the internet in 1997, Netflix took one of the most important steps in post-television age using movie watching feature through the internet in 2007 (Jenner, 2016, p. 257; Osur, 2016). Another important step was its opening for use in internet-connected devices in 2010. Following this important development, it is the pioneer of digital content sector today in more than 190 countries and with more than 183 million subscribers today (netflix.com/tr). Netflix started broadcasting in January 2016 in Turkey.

As Netflix is directly financed by consumers, it must form a new content flow constantly. Thus, they produce movies and series to attract audience with a new series monthly and to present high-quality content (Ebersole, 2013, pp. 21-22). Its productions are based on the likes of the audience. The votes of the subscribers and numbers of views are important factors for content formation. When compared to the traditional television, it is possible to say that new television ecosystem contents have changed a lot in terms of form and subject. Changing of the television watching habits has caused the transfer of popular series on traditional television to digital platform.

Considering that the television series resemble the narrative ways as old as human history and that it is a genre blending narrative types such as novel, story, tale and legend and contemporarily displays them on the screen, we can understand why fantasy and mythological productions attract such attention. One of the main reasons of the inclination towards fantasy genres is the ability to reflect in a more realistic way

with the development of technological means. Looking at the blockbusters around the world, we can see a substantial number of the fantasy genre. Fantasy movies such as *Avatar* (2009), *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015), *The Avengers* (2012), *Frozen II* (2019) and *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows: Part Two* (2011) are among the blockbusters. Likewise, series such as *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019), *Supernatural* (2005-), *Fringe* (2008-2013), *Vikings* (2013-), *Merlin* (2008-2012) and *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-2017) can also be given as examples of most popular fantasy productions (imdb.com).

Producing country-specific contents in addition to its original contents, Netflix stands out with the series embodying fantasy items. According to Amanda Lotz, television watching experience has changed a lot with settings which can be called “online television” and “multiplatform setting.” Because new technologies remove the limitations on the content distributed over the internet. Evaluation and analysis of contemporary television industries can be related to different dynamics with the variation of production factors. This digital change can be theorized in different contexts (2019, p. 7).

To define internet series with fantasy items, “webisode” concept emerging with the broadcasting of television contents on digital environment most of the time is used. Webisodes are short series of 4-5 minutes prepared to be broadcasted on the internet and are generally broadcasted on this channel. They can sometimes be produced as small tips broadcasted between the episodes in connection with the storyline of the series broadcasted on traditional television (Hale, 2008).

1.2. Concepts of Fantasy

According to Tzvetan Todorov who evaluates the concept through a structuralist approach, fantasy is the indecisiveness state entered by a subject who only knows his/her own reality experiences a supernatural incidence. The subject tries to understand whether the thing s/he experiences is the reality or an illusion. Fantasy appears right at this point because the subject is about to reach the center of the fantasy. S/he is neither in the field of the reality, nor the dream. S/he is only in the transition area among these two. Thus fantasy always covers “real world”, “mystery”, “unexplainable”, “unacceptable” characteristics (2012, pp. 31-33). Some theoreticians include all realities beyond familiarity within the definition of fantasy. This view which may also cover negative meanings uses fantasy together with adjectives like “fake”, “irrational” and “exotic” (Irwin, 1976, p. 5).

Fantasy concept was etymologically covered in detail by Jean-Luc Steinmetz. Dating back to a Greek verb, the word covers different meanings such as “phantasien” meaning making visible and presenting itself through extraordinary events; “phantasma” meaning phantom and ghost; “phantasia” meaning fantasy; “fantasieus” meaning deceiving, “phantastique” used in Middle Age meaning being able to imagine ungrounded things and possessed when oldest uses are considered. The common point of the definitions is being the opposite of logic and being related to imagination and illusion (Steinmetz, 2006, pp. 8-9). Thus it is possible to state that fantasy is a narrative way nourished by

imagination. We can come across these issues first in literature and then in many fields of art such as cinema, poem and painting.

Folk tales, mythologies, legends, characters with supernatural forces, magical stories on the creation of earth and supernatural events can be given as examples for the first areas in which fantasy appears. Stories full of fairies, monsters, wizards, dragons and elves contributed to the development of fantasy narratives. Many ancient narratives have forms the basis of the present development of fantasy. Mikhail Bakhtin remarked the contribution "menippeia" form provides to the development of fantasy in the historical process. Menippeia is a form belonging to ancient Byzantine, Renaissance and Reform periods, can travels between this world and the upper world, can time travel and defeat spatial and temporal rules. Approaching the fantasy genre opposing to the rules of the reality, disrupting character unity and forming questions against metaphysics are caused by these characteristics (Jackson, 2003, pp. 13-17). Jacqueline Furby and Claire Hines claimed that the first written sample of fantastic was Epic of Gilgamesh of Sumerians (BC 2000) (2014, p. 17). Regardless of its roots, differentiating from the first resources, fantastic has acquired specific genre characteristics. But focusing on extraordinary stories, it has preserved its static structure disrupting reality.

Pierre Jourde and Paolo Tortorese claimed that the fantasy narrative doesn't create a world opposing to the reality but "tearings" form in the real world. Thus breakings from reality take place when the logic is inadequate in narration. Some contradictions are formed by inserting unreal and surprising items within the realistic framework built. The listener, reader or audience share an experience of a conflict between the reality and non-reality (2003, pp. 79-80).

According to Rosemary Jackson, fantastic can only be comprehended through psychoanalysis as it is a journey to the subconscious. Examining the relation it forms with unconscious desire and culture through psychoanalytic theory defines fantasy (2003, pp. 62-63). In his book called *Das Unheimliche (The Uncanny)* published in 1919, Sigmund Freud examined fantastic within psychoanalytic framework. Evaluating fantasy as dreams, he claimed that the author brings together his imagination, subconscious, meaning the characteristics one has, just like an individual who is dreaming. In his work called *Totem and Taboo* (1913), he stated that the characters such as ghosts or demons met in adulthood represent parents. Prohibitions imposed on the child, the desire which cannot be satisfied due to the pressure of the prohibitions cause the quest for new things to break the ban during the whole life of the individual. Fantastic narrative appears as the minister of the prohibitions here (Freud, 2002, p. 50).

1.3. Fantasies Becoming a Shelter

From a Marxist point of view on fantasy genre, Oskay criticized fantasia for presenting a way of escape from reality and mythicised science fiction for carrying hope for the future in his work *Modern Fantasia* (1982). According to Oskay, fantasia helps the individual to attenuate the shocks experienced in case of new and unexpected events

in life. Fantasia production in the period preceding Consciousness Industry presents characteristics of a craft. As the consumer, enriching and extending the meaning of the fantasia presented is a job which can freely be accomplished. New facts and changes in real life ease the shock of the day experienced through envisaging that they are being experienced in a prehistoric time and place. Thus against the tediousness of reality, the individual is able to keep his hopes alive for being free and getting away from estrangement one day (pp. 57-58).

Benjamin stated that the entire structure of life corroded and torn in pieces with the modern period was actually due to the development of a defense way against life brought along by modern life. In other words, the individual doesn't want to see the reality of life. Preventing the descend of life experiences to subconscious, this defense mechanism provides defense against the shocks of modern life. This condition is the principal problem of all authors and artists resisting the world they live in since 19th century. While people could come over this problem through rituals before industrial capitalism -by turning to the materials of the collective past-, no rituals are available to combine the memories of people today. Thus a person who could become an individual separates the individual past from collective past through participating in the principal culture instead of the rituals and even prevails on side over the other. Thus people experience difficulty in forming a unity between themselves and the external world. People trying to continue their presence in real life have the tendency of finding interests which won't cause a problem. Right at this point, fantasies which are the industrial products prepared for him emerge. Fantasies are not the products created by people themselves to surpass the reality of their lives, but are products created by *Leisure and Consciousness Industry* (Oskay, 1995, pp. 157-159). Thus the tendency towards the fantasy genre develops in connection with the conditions of the time. Daily hurries, individual and social depressions and social reality becoming tiresome orient the individual to an act of purgation through the fantasy world. This means that the individual needs an emotional catharsis. Managing reality with the unknown laws of fantasy by getting away from the current problems even for a while may explain the perception of fantasies as a need.

In her article called "Why Are Americans Afraid of Dragons?" (1974) Ursula K. Le Guin questioned why people were still attracted to fantasy genre although they were so afraid of dragons, hobbits and fairies. The most realistic answer for this question was "the provision of delight and pleasure" according to Le Guin. While giving this answer, she focuses on the advantages of imagination. She states that the aim of fiction created through imagination is to provide the understanding of the environment one lives in, his/her feelings and story of life in more depth. A person who claims to understand the world well enough and have whatever s/he wants thinks that s/he doesn't have anything to do with fantasy. Le Guin claims that most street urchins have read *Lord of the Rings* series. Because fantasy and money are inversely correlated (Le Guin, 2006, p. 36). Similarly, Lincoln Geraghty pointed out the contribution provided by fantastic series to the discussions in cultural, historical and political fields. Also fantasy television has an important position in learning about a culture and its future visions. Accordingly, he stated that fantasy is a genre preferred in the past, today and future

and will continue its existence by updating itself through means like technology and machines (2009, p. vii).

In a period when mass communication functioned as a mean for fantasies (Adorno 2005, p. 243), fantasia was produced as a need. Through literature and comic books in previous centuries and through means such as cinema and television today, the individual gets away from the natural life and uses each as a liberating mean. Carrying this view a step further for the conditions of today, Giovanni Scognamillo and Metin Demirhan define cinema as an art which has become fantasia by itself (2005, p. 7). The extraordinary characters, different times and places the individual watches on the screen have the positions and power that s/he would be pleased to reach. Fantasy reaches the audience in three dimensions with the means of technology. Thus fantasia forms its themes according to the resources of the present age.

On the other hand, movies appear to be invaded by the demands of the subconscious appearing interesting for the modern men. First the prohibited demands are depicted and then neuroses and psychopathies are emphasized and these demands are negated towards the end of the movies. After subconscious demands seem to be fulfilled, the answer to the question "what would happen if these demands are fulfilled?" is answered mostly at the end of the movies. Following this end given as a lesson, the conscience is re-justified against the subconscious. The fantasies people unsatisfied with the reality refuges in are negated at the end of the movie most of the time. In other words, they are tamed (Oskay, 1982, p. 61). Traumas experienced by the individual are among important guides to help us understand this function of fantasies. Psychoanalysis states that the individual has the tendency of living previous negative feelings over. Returning to the source of a previous trauma, the individual considers that he can thus understand the meaning of pain. Willing to do something against the dangers caused by contemporary life, the individual thinks that he can have control, even if it is limited. These movies have the influence of narcotic on the individual passing beyond reality even for a limited time (Oskay, 1982, p. 62). Death is the best example which can be given to better understand the pleasure the fantasies provide the individual in psychoanalytic terms. Death has remained a question in human life which can never be answered. Fear of death covering all life is tried to be eased with stories on rebirth or after death through supernatural forces. Here we should also cover the effect of myths helping the individual to struggle with personal problems and exemplifying subconscious. The individual struggling with daily life gets away from personal problems through myths.

Fantasy has an unchanging and real aspect. Because fantasy is the language of "inner self." Not depending on facts doesn't prove that it is not real. The fact well-known by children is also known by adults. The reality of fantasy is a resistance to the aspects of life considered to be fake and a challenge against its emptiness and unnecessary. Refraining from freedom is the fact behind Americans' fear from dragons (Le Guin, 2006, p. 37). Thus fantasy genre is demanded as a rebellion against all rules we have to obey in modern life and responds to the wills of humans to experience catharsis and change the world. Fantasy narratives open the doors to a transcending world and this transition is a call to a metaphysical world from a physically solid world. The secondary

world built by the individual is good for the psychology and the individual feels superior through identification.

1.4. Characteristics and Themes of Fantasy Genre Narrative

The main meaning of a narrative is the verbal or written discourse, a narrative report undertaking to narrate an event or series of events. It makes reference to the series of real or fictionalized events constituting the subjects of the narrative and their connections such as binding and contrast (Genette, 2011, p. 13). According to Eric S. Rabkin, the main clues of understanding whether a narrative is fantasy or not are its reconciliation points, the location of events, the language used and the fractures in time (1979, p. 6). But it is inadequate to think that the nature of fantasy documents can be understood through an easy comparison with the external world or the distortion of reality's nature. Fantasy is formed by reversing the basic rules of narrative. Fantasy narrative should shock the reader, narrator and hero with the story line, theme and character development and the language of the narrative. For example starting with phrases like "once upon a time" states that an alternative world will be presented within the focus of language characteristics right from the first sentence (1979, pp. 20-21).

Actions providing the emergence of themes in fantasy narrative take place in four stages. The first action is "emergence." The reader is upset right at the beginning of the story with the emergence of the fantasy character (ghost, elf, etc.). In the "possession" which is the second action, the hero of the story is detained by supernatural powers such as devil, monster, wizard, etc. In the third action which is "destruction", a supernatural evil force tries to destroy the hero of the narrative. A struggle starts here and leads us to "transformation" which is the final action. The story is solved in this action. The transformation embodying the transition to the expected supernatural events take place (Steinmetz, 2006, pp. 40-42). At this stage, we should cover paraxial concept which is used to explain this transformation in fantasy genre. The place in the purgatory between real and unreal where the distinction between the two worlds becomes unclear is called "paraxial." This area which is more related to space is the metaphor showing that reality and fantasy are related and interconnected. This threshold also provides the better understanding of the borders of reality and supernatural (Furby and Hines, 2014, pp. 62-63).

Fantasy story forms with certain formings but "strange events" form the spine of fantasy (Todorov, 2012, p. 94). These strange events contain some themes. "Ghost" is one of the most common of these themes. Seeing a ghost gives the feeling of looking at a covert reality one tries to hide. Ghosts wandering among people and leading a life in between sometimes also appear as vampires. The other theme frequently used is "twin." It can represent the other part of the incomplete identity of the individual or can be a villain justice seeker. "Wizard" is another motive commonly used in recent popular series. Unexplainable extraordinary events are solved by relating them to wizard. Sometimes extraordinary creatures are added to the story through magic (Steinmetz, 2006, pp. 33-36). "Extraordinarily depicted places", "shadows", "vampires", "werewolves", "witches",

“monsters”, “horrible animals”, “extraordinary psychological conditions”, “cannibals” and “transformation” are the most common themes of narratives (Jackson, 2003, p. 49). No matter what their themes are, passing beyond reality is the most distinct characteristic of fantasy narratives from other genres. Fantasy genre builds a unique reality refusing the mimetic expected from works of art. It gives a shocking, strange and surprising feeling to the reader. Fantasy narratives of today continue their presence as a hybrid genre although they have changed form and function.

2. Method

Qualitative data analysis method was used in the study as the fantasy items covered in the series have a textual structurization. Qualitative data analysis tries to make inferences with the information derived from the theory in connection with conceptual framework. Some scenes in titles selected based on the basic characteristics of fantasy genre were also subjected to descriptive analysis which is a qualitative data analysis type. Thus the basic characteristics of fantasy were desired to be emphasized.

Many disciplines such as education, psychology and social sciences very commonly use qualitative and descriptive research (Nassaji, 2015, p. 129). Qualitative analysis is an analysis method which facilitates the understanding of theories and concepts through clarification and is less standardized compared to other methods. Instead of testing a hypothesis, the reasonability of a theory, concept or interpretation is tried to be shown in qualitative analysis. Qualitative researcher proceeds towards a general interpretation by explaining the pattern formed by recurrent behaviors, objects or ideas through social theory. That means the pattern is tried to be accessed through data analysis (Neuman, 2014, p. 314; 326). Depiction constitutes the first step of qualitative analysis. It categorizes the basic characteristics of individuals, objects and facts. Chance of comparison and association between data is acquired through theming the collected data (Dey, 2005). Accordingly, the hypothesis of the study presents that these series broadcasted on Netflix platform are convenient for characteristic detection of the fantastic genre. Thus it is possible to relate the orientation of the audience towards fantastic genre to narrative items.

The aim of the latter part of the study was to discover the fantasy items in the most watched Netflix series of 2019. The most watched series were *The Gift* (2019-), *La Casa de Papel* (2017-), *The Witcher* (2019-), *The Protector* (2018-2020), *Stranger Things* (2016-), *Black Mirror* (2011-), *Sex Education* (2019-), *The Umbrella Academy* (2019-), *The I-Land* (2019-) and *You* (2018-). The study was limited to five series with fantastic genre characteristics. *The Gift*, *Witcher*, *The Protector*, *Stranger Things*, *The Umbrella Academy* these series constituted the sampling of the study. The common themes in these series which are samples for fantasy genre will be examined under titles.

3. Findings

3.1. Fantasy Heroes

Supernatural creatures, talking animals and heroes with superhuman characteristics in fantasy movies and series can be the characters of the narrative. The unlimited possibilities of fantasy provide the easy addition of healing women, vampires, witches, demons and angels to the story. With “telefantasy” concept evaluating all issues equally, Sue Short brought along a different approach to fantastic genre. In the definition gathering science fiction, fantasy and supernatural items together, surrealistic items such as figures like shape shifters, vampires and individuals with superhuman powers, phenomena from other dimensions and space traveling machines not discovered yet are covered (2011, p. 10).

Fantastic heroism is made prominent through the main character Atiye and her grandmother in *The Gift*. As an artist living in İstanbul, Atiye has been drawing the same symbol since childhood. The archeologist Erhan finds the symbol she draws in Göbeklitepe. The mystery of the past starts to be solved through the gathering of Atiye and Erhan. In quest of completing her own inner journey which is among the most common destinations of fantasy, Atiye comes across her grandmother Zühre who suddenly appears and disappears and seems to come from another era. The references to the legend of Shahmaran were also included in the study in addition to Zühre. When Zühre representing the queen of snakes dies, her powers will pass to her daughters. Another characteristic of Zühre is her ability to heal. The villagers attack her house considering she is a wizard and devil. They kill her husband and burn one of her daughters throwing them in the fire. Zühre’s kins have a star shaped birth mark. The people who bear this mark are healers and can travel in time. Continuing her presence after death, Zühre helps Atiye to get out of Nemrut where she was trapped and gain her supernatural powers. The other character guiding Atiye was the shepherdess with the star shaped birth mark on her forehead who was actually Atiye’s aunt who died. The girl she saw the picture of in a cave in Göbeklitepe appears and disappears. Sometimes she sees her in her room at night and sometimes she leads her in the cave.

Many associations of the fantasy world are present in *The Witcher*. Many scary creatures of the fantasy works were included as the creatures representing the dark face of the world. In this world full of witches, wizards, elves, monsters and species with supernatural abilities, the main character Geralt is a monster hunter and his life changes as the elves and dwarfs seeing themselves as the real owner of the world fight with humans. Geralt is a “Witcher” with extraordinary abilities. Witchers are much stronger and faster than normal people due to alchemy. He cures his own body, diseases and wounds, his feelings can get stronger when necessary and he can use simple forms of magic. Geralt sometimes searches for elves by casting net in the water and sometimes makes elves do what he wants. When waiting for the birth of a baby who is going to change the order of the world, Witcher meets the strong wizard Yennefer and young princess Ciri who has mystical powers. Ciri born as a part of divine ordinance is expected to change the destiny of the world.

The Protector based on the theme of finding one's self also has similar fantasy text characteristics. The main character Hakan was an ordinary shopkeeper in Grand Bazaar and he learned that he was the last hope of people protecting the world from dark forces for centuries and that he was the last protector of İstanbul. He was given a secret mission in history. He wears his special cloth -talismanic shirt- to gain mystical powers. Sultans and their sons used to wear this shirt to be protected against evil in Ottoman Empire. This talismanic keepsake kept in a crate in Grand Bazaar makes Hakan strong and tough with its superhuman power. Hakan has a special dagger which is the only thing that can kill immortals. His ring glows in the presence of immortals. His dreams guide him in the wars with immortals. Another fantasy character is Faysal who is thousand years old. Faysal also tries to destroy İstanbul just like all other immortals in the narrative.

Stranger Things is another series with fantastic theme. It takes place in the fictional town of Hawkins in 1980s. Hawkins National Laboratory creates an alternative universe due to energy explosion while making experiments on humans in supernatural areas. This universe called Upside Down is a place which appears as the shadow of Hawkins where the sun doesn't rise and creatures wander. The creature called Demogorgon from this universe kidnaps Will. Will among the main characters of the series passing to the alternative universe is the beginning of weird events. While the police department, his family and friends Mike, Lucas, Dustin and Eleven try to find Will, they also try to struggle against the monster constituting danger for all humans. When fantasy characters start the story in a normal way and gain supernatural forces later, they are considered to pass through a threshold between two worlds. Praxis concept which was covered before also gained functionality in the characters of *Stranger Things* as in Atiye and Hakan. The laboratory door opening to the parallel universe can be associated with a threshold between the two worlds as mentioned by Furby and Hines (2014, pp. 62-63). In the story starting with the experiments made in a mysterious laboratory in the town of Hawkins, the main characters of *Stranger Things* are children with physic ability. With the appearance of eleven who has psychogenetic powers, some studies are made. Through the door opened in parallel universe by children who think that Will was hiding from a monster, monsters start to come. The door opened in the laboratory is a journey towards the fantasy world.

The Umbrella Academy presents fantasy characters with different characteristics. Surreal powers of each character make the story fantasy. Among the women who get pregnant and give birth on the same day at different places of the world, the babies of seven women are adopted by a scientist. Father Hargreeves has the technology to build a humanoid robotic mother for the children and make Pogo the chimpanzee the housekeeper of the house through evolution. He turns the children into super heroes in his science academy. First of all, Diego moves the knives he carries as he wants. Allison can control minds. Klaus can call dead and speak to them. Five is thirteen years old physically and fifty eight years old mentally and he lived in purgatory for forty five years.

The common point of the characters in all mentioned series is the fact that the characteristics of these individuals which would be unbelievable in daily life providing

the audience-character unification through the atmosphere built in the series. Because these characters own the position and power the individual wants to reach.

3.2. Death-Immortality

According to Furby and Hines, fantasy is formed by immortality, miracles, windows opening to the alternative world and stories diverging from the laws of reality (2014, p. 41). Immortality, taking information from the dead, passing between the two worlds, staying in purgatory, raising someone from death are among the main themes of fantasy narratives. The human being who cannot accept death and wants to resist it tries to come over the fear through symbolizing it. Death is most frequently covered with a return in fantasy narratives. While the first scene of *The Gift* starts with her watching her own funeral from a distance, she brings her dead sister Cansu back through traveling in time at the end of the season. Cansu who was adopted when she was a baby returned from death in her real identity as Erhan's sister Elif. Death image commonly used in fantasy narratives was positioned as returning a missed person whose death was regretted instead of an item revealing the fears coming from subconscious. The person who will help Atiye to bring her sister back and will open the door between death and life was her dead sister. The struggle Atiye has against the deaths of her own and her sister is also a way of healing her soul.

Immortals were positioned as the important element of the narrative in *The Protector*. Immortals sent to the world in the period of Mehmet the Conqueror were dark forces who wanted to destroy İstanbul. Shining ring stone shows the presence of immortals. The special dagger of the hero is the only way to destroy immortals. Faysal among the immortals tries to return his murdered wife Rûya with the blood of the last protector. On the other hand, Hakan, the last protector, can travel to the past in half-dead state after drinking a magic potion. When he loses his powers, he gets himself killed and is resurrected through electroshock to be able to reacquire his powers. When he dies after jumping in the sea, he wakes up replacing an ancestor who was the first protector. The blood of Hakan who is also the last immortal would resurrect other immortals. A secret door is explored during the restoration of Hagia Sofia. An icon of Christ, a box full of gold and a glass were behind this door. The other immortals awake when this glass is filled with protector's blood. The glass here is the holy grail used in the last supper of Christ in Christian mythology. It is believed that Christ said that his blood with miraculous powers was in the glass and the one who finds the glass will become immortal.

Klaus who can speak to dead by calling them and can lead them in *The Umbrella Academy* suffers so much from this gift. To take this power under control, his father tried to train Klaus by locking him in a tomb. One of his brothers Ben died in an accident when he was very young and is included in the narrative due to his connection with Klaus. In fantasy narratives, the dead come back to discover the obscurity of death by facing it. The curiosity for the unknown things about Ben and the time after his death is satisfied here.

As a result, the story of all kinds of resistance against death in fantastic narratives confirms mortality. Repeated covering of death with its accepted inevitability gives the audience the feeling of gaining experience against death. Journeys to the after-death which can be read as the metaphor for one's inner journey makes the individual braver towards the unknown.

3.3. Chaotically Structured Time and Place

In her book *Complex Serial Drama and Multiplatform Television* (2019) examining American "complex TV" dramas in terms of their creation processes, narrative characteristics and industrial applications, Dunleavy points out the caotic time structurization as a characteristic of complex TV. This characteristic is given through additional scenes like "flashbacks" and "flashforwards" to give some depth to the stories of the characters. Dunleavy claims that this technique is especially seen in contents produced by digital medial platforms and thus the narrations are no longer linear (2018, pp. 10-11; 105). This structurization is also common in fantastic genres. Cluttering up generally accepted concepts such as time and space and building supernatural time and places are among the main characteristics of fantasy narratives. Changes played with the rules of the real world such as jumping to another time from the present, living in a multidimensional time, passing between the present and future, playing with the speed of time -slowing, fastening- give the audience the pleasure of having control on time.

Traveling through time and places is the means of completing her own inner journey for Atiye. The last words of Zühre who died at sunrise in Nemrut mentioned that Atiye's own journey started and she was obliged to do this because of her bloodline. When her grandmother dies, the shepherdess with the star-shaped birth mark takes Atiye to the cave. The moment Atiye enters the cave, the entrance is closed by falling stones. The scene Atiye sees whenever she enters a tunnel in the cave is a journey to her subconscious. She faces herself again in every scene effecting her cognitive journey and acquires a relative liberation reinterpreting her experiences. She learns about her mother's cruel behaviors towards her as an infant, that she couldn't accept and was jealous of her sister when she was a child and that she was abused by her fiancé. She sees a woman all in white whenever she is tired and this woman guiding her in her inner journey encourages her to go deeper. When she gets back to the earth's surface with the eruption of Nemrut Mountain, she has both sides of her life combined with a conscious self in Göbeklitepe.

The symbol drawn throughout the narrative by Atiye who is an artist refers to an inner journey. Her life changes when she learns that the same symbol is also present in Göbeklitepe. The symbol combining two circles combined through a square in the middle represents the combination of Atiye's self and shadow. The square structure in the middle resembles the panoramic view of Göbeklitepe. We can say that Göbeklitepe is the connection point of Atiye's self she reached through time traveling and the Atiye everybody knows. Shahmaran, Nemrut Mountain and Göbeklitepe were connected in

the inner journey of Atiye. The experience of the journey matured Atiye and provided her to take control of her life. Solving the problems in her life one by one, she goes to take the gift of the Goddess. This door she passes through in Göbeklitepe takes her to her dead sister this time. The moment Atiye hugs her sister, she finds herself back in her normal life.

According to Rabkin, fantastic presents an alternative world while infringing the real world. The needs emerging in the internal universe of the text are met in this world (1979, pp. 17-20). Use of visual tricks especially through science fiction arouses interest to the door opened to the supernatural universe. The fantasy of passing between times and places challenges today. Resisting the chronological time taking humans towards death which is their biggest despair is the unique area which saves the individual from the nightmare of disappearance. The expanded time of *The Witcher* provides the individual a free space. The universe of the narrative has a chaotic structure in terms of time and space. The main characters of the narrative live in different timelines. The series covers the years 1210, 1249 and 1263. Yennefer enters the story nearly fifty years ago and Ciri's scenes start from the present time and Geralt starts nearly fifteen years ago. Geralt's adventures are towards the past and Ciri's adventures are towards today. A time structuring departed from real world and in which the past leaks into the present time is present.

Steinmetz stated that fantastic documents first create an atmosphere suitable for reality with its unique methods and then destroys it. The point it focuses on is not to caricaturize an internalized universe, a society or romantic relations but to mess around all generally acknowledged concepts such as time, space and place. In other words, fantastic doesn't have any intention of changing the present order. It rather wants to have a fear and excitement causing content (2006, pp. 39-40). When we evaluated through the approach of Steinmetz's, Hakan travels between the past and today to discover his identity and to protect İstanbul. He goes to the past in a half-dead state after drinking a special elixir. He has to solve the mystery by traveling back in time to fight with dark forces. When all İstanbul chases him, Hakan jumps in the water with the talismanic key and enters the body of the first protector going back to 1459. Vizier who communicates with whoever he wants through the reflection on the mirror also has the ability of transcending time and space limits. The fantasy space here has a structure which may be real but through the breaking of time and space, it appears as the area in which the character discovers his/her self.

The story of *Stranger Things* focuses on the creatures coming through the door opening to the parallel universe/dimension due to some laboratory experiments. Will who recently disappeared was kidnapped by a monster coming from the parallel universe and his friends passing to the parallel universe saved him. But Demogorgon virus infecting Will causes him to exist in both universes. He cannot escape from Upside Down. The only way for the characters to cope with this universe is to live there. The transitions of the monsters in the other universe at unexpected times mess time and space theory. In other words, it becomes functional through tearing the ground of reality.

Five is the character who can travel in time. Although all siblings were at the same age since they were all born on the same day, five is thirteen years old. He time hopped after leaving home and continued his life in his 13-year-old body when he returned. He was stuck somewhere during time travel and remained there for 45 years. In the years he lived as the last surviving human on earth, he was actually stuck in the time of apocalypse. Thus he was recruited into the agency called "time commission" which tries to stop humans trying to intervene in time. Taking the time back, five tries to prevent apocalypse. These efforts of returning take him to the funeral day of his father. Five returns eight days before apocalypse. Klaus who has the ability to speak to the dead stayed at Vietnam War for a year going back in time following some incidents. At the end of the season, all siblings go to their childhood traveling together in time.

Conclusion

Although fantasy series genre doesn't have a long history, the roots of the stories are quite old. Based on historical transformation and different cultures, fantasy forms its own themes with what the age brings. Rearrangement of fantasy genre with the means of modern technology has left the place of its structure which developed with imagination in the past to visual narrative pushing the limits of the mind and logic. The identification with the characters on the screen embodying superhuman powers, the audience opens the doors of an enchanted world s/he wants to reach.

According to Oskay, dreams and fantasies have gained more place in the life of modern people. There is a connection between the emergence of the desires in collective subconscious and social changes. Crowds living in a phase of change and having difficulty in understanding this change try to overcome the semantic blurriness they experience through the metaphoric explanations of fantasies. Thus, understanding the social meanings in fantasies provides the comprehension of both the change and the utopian possibilities of the phase of change (Oskay, 1982, p. 211). Looking back at the historical journey of fantasies, we understand that they became popular in a period of important social changes which are hard to explain. The masses having difficulty in understanding the phase of change try to surpass the semantic blurriness they face in their lives through the metaphoric explanations of the fantasies. Although the first works were started to be produced a short time after the beginning of cinema, limited technological means limited the number of fantasy movies. While satisfying the curiosity towards the unknown, advanced technological means use the power of image and visuality more. Refuging of modern people in these industrial fantasies is based on their high plausibility. The adventure of fantasy genre starting with literature and comics continued in cinema and television and then on internet platform. We can say that the movies and series with highest number of audience today are in fantasy genre.

Fantasy genre constitutes half of the most watched series in 2019 on Netflix Turkey which is the digital media platform with highest number of users in our country. The study analyzes these series theming them under fantasy narrative framework. The characters with supernatural forces are the main items of the fantasy universe design

presented by the series analyzing immortality and chaotically structured time-space. The causes of orienting towards these items and fantasy narratives were explored through theoretical discussions. As a result, it can be claimed that the fantasia characteristics in the series envisage the world modern individual dreams of. In any unsolvable technological development or whenever the individual wants to escape from the real world, the familiar myths will continue to function as a shelter.

References

- Adorno, T. (2005). Kültür Endüstrisini Yeniden Düşünmek. E. Mutlu (Ed.) In *Kitle İletişim Kuramları* (pp. 240-249). Ankara: Ütopya Yayınları.
- Bourdieu, P. (1997). *Televizyon Üzerine*. (T. Ilgaz, Trans.). İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları.
- Dey, I. (2005). *Qualitative Data Analysis A User-Friendly Guide For Social Scientists*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Dunleavy, T. (2019). *Complex Serial Drama and Multiplatform Television*. New York: Routledge.
- Dijk, V. (2006). *The Network Society*. Great Britain: Sage Publications.
- Ebersole, A. (2013). From Netflix to Netflixed: Digital Television Production in the Post-TV Platinum Age of the Audience, *CTCS 687*, 1-36.
- Freud, S. (2002). *Totem ve Tabu*. (K. S. Sel, Trans.). İstanbul: Sosyal Yayınlar.
- Furby, J. and Hines, C. (2014). *Fantastik*. (S. Yavuz, Trans.). İstanbul: Kolektif Yayınları.
- Geraghty, L. (2009). *Channeling the Future: Essays on Science Fiction and Fantasy Television*. Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- Genette, G. (2011). *Anlatının Söylemi*. (F. B. Aydar, Trans.). İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi.
- Hale, M. (2008, 29 December). NBC Bridges Series Gaps with Online Mini Dramas. *New York Times*. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/29/arts/television/29webi.html?_r=0 accessed 21 April 2020.
- Internet Movie Database. (2020). <https://www.imdb.com> accessed 28 April 2020.
- Irwin, W. R. (1976). *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Jackson, R. (2003). *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. London: Routledge.
- Jenner, M. (2016). Is This TVIV? On Netflix, TVIII and Binge-Watching. *New Media & Society*, 18 (2), 257-273.
- Jourde, P. and Tortoressse, P. (2003). *Fantastik Mantık İçin Bir Skandal*. (E. Özdoğan, Trans.). *Kitaplık (66)*, 79-81.

- Katz, E. and Scannell, P. (2009). The End of Television? Its Impact on the World (So Far), *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (625). Thousand Oaks & CA: Sage.
- Le Guin, U. K. (2006). Amerikalılar Ejderhalardan Neden Korkar? D. Erksan, B. Sortıay, M. Gürsoy Sökmen (Prep.) In *Kadınlar, Rüyalar, Ejderhalar*, (M. Ahıska, Trans.) (pp. 31-37). İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.
- Lotz, A. D. (2019). Teasing Apart Television Industry Disruption: Consequences of Meso-level Financing Practices Before and After the US Multiplatform Era. *Media, Culture & Society*, 41 (7), 923-938.
- Mitell, J. (2006). Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television. *The Velvet Light Trap* 58, (pp. 29-40). University of Texas Press.
- Nassaji, H. (2015). Qualitative and Descriptive Research: Data Type Versus Data Analysis. *Language Teaching Research*, 19 (2), 129-132.
- Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Toplumsal Araştırma Yöntemleri, Nitel ve Nicel Yaklaşımlar 2*. (S. Özge, Trans.). Ankara: Yayınodası.
- Netflix about. (2020). <https://about.netflix.com/tr> accessed 12 April 2020.
- Oskay, Ü. (1982). *Çağdaş Fantazy Popüler Kültür Açısından Bilim-Kurgu ve Korku Sineması*. Ankara: Ayko Yayınları.
- Oskay, Ü. (1995). *Eстетize Edilmiş Yaşam Alman Faşizminin Düşünsel Oluşumlar*. İstanbul: Der Yayınları.
- Ostrowski, M. (Producer) and Schmidt, H. L. (Director). (2019-). *The Witcher* [Netflix Orijinal Series]. USA, Poland: Sean Daniel Company.
- Osurl, L. (2016). *Netflix and the Development of the Internet Television Network*. (PhD Thesis). Syracuse University, ABD.
- Rabkin, E. S. (1979). *Fantastic Worlds: Myths, Tales and Stories*. Toronto & Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Scognamillo, G. and Demirhan, M. (2005). *Fantastik Türk Sineması*. İstanbul: Kabcacı Yayınevi.
- Short, S. (2011). *Cult Telefantasy Series*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company.
- Steinmetz, J. (2006). *Fantastik Edebiyat*. (H. F. Nemli, Trans.). Ankara: Dost Yayınları.
- Sutherland, A. (Producer) and Açıktan, O., Uyanık, G., Baltacı, A. T. (Director). (2019-). *The Gift* [Netflix Orijinal Series]. Türkiye: OG Medya.
- Sutherland, A. (Producer) and Evrenol, C., Aral U., Uyanık, G., Tiryaki, G. (Director). (2018-2020). *The Protector* [Netflix Orijinal Series]. Türkiye: Netflix, O3 Medya.
- The Duffer Brothers. (Producer and Director). (2016-). *Stranger Things* [Netflix Orijinal Series]. USA: 21 Laps Entertainment, Monkey Massacre.
- Todorov, T. (2012). *Fantastik Edebi Türe Yapısal Bir Yaklaşım*. (N. Öztokat, Trans.). İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.

Way, G. (Producer) and Gabriel, B. (Director). (2019-). *The Umbrella Academy* [Netflix Orijinal Series]. USA: Dark Horse Entertainment.