

Chapter 19

World Designs Presented to Children in Tales

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ABSTRACT

Tale as a popular and narrative form differentiates according to time and space, the subject it deals with, the way it works, and the way the hero is built, and it designs different worlds for children. Various gender definitions—femininity and masculinity roles—through these designed worlds are presented to children underhandedly. This study evaluates how gender definitions—redefined with social, cultural, and economic changes in today’s Turkey—are handled in recent Turkish tales by text analysis, specific to Keloğlan Tales on TRT cartoon channel.

INTRODUCTION

Communication instruments are one of the irrevocable instruments in today’s world. The influences of these instruments have been one of the significant research object in this era which is witnessed rapid technological advancements and a transformation of unilateral information into bilateral and simultaneous information.

George Gerbner’s “cultivation discourse” is the most comprehensive research tradition in relation to the cultural effects of television especially in the long term which is reaching a large mass. Gerbner states that “symbolic world” in television may have effects on the interpretation of world for the audiences” (qtd. Mutlu, 1999, 96-97). The world we watched on the screen is the stereotyped and distorted image of the real world (Mutlu, 1999, 97). Television presents audiences this stereotype world designs and various gender roles. Though the technologic advances in today’s world, television is still in our houses and various places, and it still proceeds to reach a vast audience. This vast audience covers people from different social, economic and cultural levels, different sexes and ages etc. Children are also among this audience. Television broadcasts address to the children in as much as adults. The awareness to this situation has led to broadcast of programs for children as well as adults.

As Füsün Alver highlighted “media which is devising reality designs influences not only culture and cultural settings but also individuals especially children, and forms the individualities”. Television which

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transmits constant messages opens the human experiences – limited by adults- to children (Alver, 2004, 129, 135). Postman states that the borders are eliminated with the improvement of media and children transformed into young adults gradually as they cannot protect themselves from intensive information (qtd. Alver, 2004, 130).

The television-child relation is different from the television-adult relation (Mutlu, 1999, 97, 130). Children are vulnerable against external stimulus. Children whose social identity is not formed yet have not improved some mechanisms to separate the sheep from the goats. Children are also the most vulnerable category against the “third person” impact. They adopt television as a source as well as other information sources to position themselves into social reality. They also create reality definitions by comparing information from other sources and television (Mutlu, 1999, 120, 121). Thematic channels are also active for children today as well as television programs which targets to child audiences.

Channels for children broadcast all-day and keep their attention constantly. Children are exposed to content of these channels (Çaplı as quoted in Günaydın, 2011, 4). Cartoons as being the irrevocable thing of channels for children present different world designs –good/evil, man/woman, nature/civilization and so on- to children. The messages delivered via representations to children settle in the minds of children and they effect the comprehension/interpretation of world in the eye of children. These messages also contain discourses related to gender roles.

Gender is a brand new concept and it was put forwarded by Robert Stoller in 1968 to demonstrate how sex differs from gender (Segal, 1992, 98). Teresa De Lauretis states in her “The Technology of Gender” article that the origin of gender may depend on the “technology of sex” concept of Michel Foucault’s theory of sexuality. Gender concept functions as the formation of individuals as men and women (De Lauretis, 1987, 2, 6).

Though the intensive modernization efforts of Turkey, it has still vivid patriarchal traditional society structure. Patriarchal structure is still dominant ideology though the transformations with the educated generation, and woman and man is perceived as two different party. Woman and man roles on television in our country mostly depend on gender stereotype and reproduce the gender inequalities in society. The presentation of gender roles are significant to shape the gender comprehension of children. Each message on programs has a behavior code and effects the identity formation and way of thinking of children (Günaydın, 2011, 47, 49, 95).

Children apart from family like other people learn gender stereotypes mostly on television. Unlike adults, children have not developed an evaluation ability yet, they accept the stereotypes as they see and record them to use later (Golombok & Fivush as cited in Günaydın, 2011, 37). The toys, story books with/out picture and especially programs on television emphasize on the woman and man difference. Children are exposed the bombardment of gender stereotypes (Giddens as cited in Günaydın, 2011, 37). The identity formations about gender are the world designs that are built via cartoons and stories world.

BACKGROUND

Gender Roles of Woman and Man: *Keloğlan Tales* ¹

The construction of gender roles in *Keloğlan Tales* cartoon broadcasted in TRT Kids which is among the thematic channels for children is the subject of this study. Before the analysis of *Keloğlan Tales*, it will be beneficial to mention about story and narration world. According to the definition of Turkish Language

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