

THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX IN *THE FROG* BY JOHN HAWKESJOHN HAWKES'İN *KURBAĞA* ROMANINDA OEDİPUS KOMPLEKSİ

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Abstract

The Frog is one of the well-known novels written by John Hawkes in 1996 which is narrated by the main character Pascal. The novels by John Hawkes which are the results of conscious rejection of the traditional realistic are accepted unusual and avant-garde by great numbers of literary critics. John Hawkes focuses on certain themes such as love, morality, unsatisfaction, and erotism via adopting peculiar methods to show how a writer can exceed the limits. In *The Frog* the author demonstrates how a young boy who feels an overwhelming obsessive desire to his mother develops a behaviour characterized by love, hatred, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, trust, and obsession towards the people around him in some manner. That obsession which is called Oedipus Complex was introduced by an Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud in 1899. Despite the fact that the first chapter of the novel is devoted to indicate Pascal has a wonderful childhood and acquaint the reader with the peaceful home in which he lives, he, still, encounters some difficulties which are resulted by his obsession of his mother. One of the main reasons of these difficulties he encounters is the reality of Pascal is exposed to some short stories were read aloud by his mother and he was influenced by these stories profoundly. The stories he listens about the frogs on a daily basis make Pascal to have a great interest in frogs which are going to alter his life dramatically in the long term. When he thinks he swallowed a frog which lives in his abdomen in times to come, his attitudes considerably change, his obsession with his mother gets bigger unlike he starts to loathe his father more. For that matter Pascal's life comes under the influence of his obsessions. In this article we will discuss Pascal's behaviours and how they are shaped by his excessive love of his mother to reach a deeper understanding about the Freudian Oedipus Complex syndrome in the novel.

Key Words: The Frog, Oedipus Complex, Freud, psychoanalysis, postmodernism

Öz

Ana karakteri Pascal tarafından seslendirilen *Kurbağa* romanı John Hawkes tarafından 1996 yılında yazılmış en iyi bilinen romanlardan biridir. John Hawkes'in geleneksel realizmin bilinçli reddin sonucu olan romanları birçok edebiyat eleştirmeni tarafından alışılmadık ve öncü kabul edilir. John Hawkes bir yazarın sınırlarını ne kadar aşabileceğini göstermek için özgün yöntemlere başvurarak aşk, ahlak, tatminsizlik ve erotizm gibi belli temalara odaklanmıştır. *Kurbağa* romanında yazar annesine karşı aşırı derecede saplantılı bir arzu hisseden bir çocuğun çevresindeki insanlara karşı nasıl sevgi, nefret, tatmin, tatminsizlik, güven ve takıntı ile karakterize olmuş bir davranış geliştirdiğini göstermektedir. Oedipus Kompleksi diye bilinen bu saplantı 1899'da Avusturyalı nörologist Sigmund Freud tarafından ortaya konulmuştur. Kitabın ilk bölümü Pascal'ın harika bir çocukluk geçirdiğini işlemesine ve okuyucuya yaşadığı huzurlu evi tanıtmaya ayrılmış olmasına rağmen o yine de annesine olan takıntısının yol açtığı bazı zorluklarla karşılaşır. Bu karşılaştığı zorlukların ana sebeplerinden biri de Pascal'ın annesi tarafından anlatılan kısa hikayelere maruz kalması ve bunlardan derinden etkilenmesidir. Hergün dinlediği kurbağalar hakkındaki hikayeler, Pascal'ın ileride hayatını önemli ölçüde değiştirecek kadar onlara ilgi göstermesine sebep olur. Her zaman karnında yaşayacak bir kurbağayı yuttuğunu düşündüğü zaman davranışları önemli ölçüde değişir, annesine takıntısı artarken babasından daha da çok nefret etmeye başlar. Bu nedenle Pascal'ın hayatı takıntılarının etkisi altına girer. Bu makalede romandaki Freudian Oedipus Kompleksi daha anlaşılır kılmak için Pascal'ın

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davranışlarını ve bu davranışların annesine olan aşırı sevgisi karşısında nasıl şekillendiğini ele alacağız.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kurbağa, Oedipus Kompleksi, Freud, psikanaliz, postmodernizm

Introduction

Where much American writing seems today is a conscious reaction against realism. In this sense Hawkes one of the leading authors, but an initial reaction to his innovations is likely to be that his work poses extraordinary difficulties for the unprepared reader (Greiner 3, 4). To bring to light his inner world and unlimited imagination Hawkes uses unique styles which make his novels worth to read and discuss on them. *The Frog* is one of the last novels by him narrated by Pascal, the main character, except the last chapter.

The dramatic story of Pascal gets start with when he is a little boy. He is the only child who lives with his parents working for a chateau in Domaine Artende. In those times of his childhood he is well-parented by his father and mother. Nevertheless, most would agree that in the novel, Pascal is sort of obsessed to his mother and highly influenced by her. "I had two grand passions, the frog pond and my mother" (Hawkes, *The Frog* 8) . As Pascal declares he has only one passion except of frogs and the reason why Pascal obsessed with frogs is her mother who reads short stories aloud in the evenings to him. Pascal's mother and father calls him Tadpole which means a larval amphibian specially a frog or toad larva. The way Pascal is exposed to stories, alias related to frogs leads him to be interested in frogs pond. The day he thinks he swallowed a frog which he calls Armand onwards, he spends more time with his mother. Since he thinks nobody can understand him, but his mother. That obsession gives us manifold clues about Oedipus Complex Syndrome. As a glance at Freud's classic letter to Fliess of 15 October 1897 shows, Deleuze and Guattari are perfectly correct in their observation that "Oedipus is born of... a reduction to personalized images." After referring to the "love of the father" that he has found in himself and now believes to be "a general phenomenon of early childhood," Freud adds this parenthetical comment:

(Similarly with the "romanticization of origins" in the case of paranoiacs –heroes, founders of religions.) If that is the case, the gripping power of Oedipus Rex... becomes intelligible, and one understands why later fate dramas were such failures. (Rudnytsky 465)

Pascal, notwithstanding he had no problems with his father in his childhood, just because his mother had a good affair with his father, he begins to see his father as an enemy. The author, equally important, gives many more hints about what Pascal thinks about the women especially resembles his mother somehow. Pascal finds the women older than himself attractive, since the way they talk, behave or whatever they do reminds his own mother to Pascal.

In that paper we will be able to discuss Oedipus complex syndrome influence on a son and mother, how it affects a son's life and the relationship between a son and father by comparing the significant hints that author has given us with the signs discussed by Sigmund Freud.

The Relationship Between Pascal and His Mother

If a reader wants to get a detailed information about Pascal's life, via critical thinking and a deep reading of the first chapter the reader will have no trouble understanding the rest of the novel. The details of his childhood and life are given by the main character, Pascal as a narrator himself. The way Hawkes have Pascal to describe his mother is an important point cannot be ignored by critics. My mother, a small trim dark-haired youthful woman more pretty than beautiful, was the first to call me her little Tadpole, though my father immediately joined her in the use of that familiar first name of mine (Hawkes, *The Frog* 3). In the very beginning of the novel, in these lines, the readers can quite easily realise that how Pascal describes her mother and how much important for him the name given by his mother. Another essential point can be concluded from what Pascal thinks, he has an idea of that his father just imitates his mother in a way in spite of the fact that he is not that kind of person as his mother is.

As it was declared in the introduction part Pascal has two obsessions; his mother and frogs. That Tadpole name is the one of the significant reasons cues us in how this kind of obsession takes hold of the main character, little Pascal. Hawkes follows this fairy-tale logic out the window as the pair set off on a chain of deviate escapades neither could negotiate without the other. Hawkes's elegant treatment of the fantastic and the perseve makes this more than just a stunt. Pascal, the narrator, has the affable, sophisticated voice of a country gentleman, with which he relates exploits of mother lust, incest, adultery, prostitution, and murder (Peaco 243, 244). The love of Pascal for his mother is the reason why he cares too much about everything she says. As his mother tells Pascal short stories every night about frogs, especially *Armand the Frog*, Pascal devotes his life to see that frog, Armand.

Armand, the frog that Pascal assumes he swallowed, is conceivably an implement Hawkes uses to demonstrate Pascal's inner world. His relationship with the frog is complex, from host-parasite to mutually enhancing partners. At the height of their association, Armand becomes a semi controllable, detachable organ of Pascal's body- a spare penis. Other tales that depart from realism may offer an impossible but convincingly vivid texture of sensory detail to orient the reader, but Hawkes never tries to convince us to play along. Instead, he simply lets Pascal tell his bizarre tale (Peaco 244). Peaco's idea enlightens a reader to get what is behind of Armand's story. In literature it is quite common to characterize animals to be seen as a character which lets the author reveal the characters' inner world somehow. Not only did Hawkes uses frogs to demonstrate the relationship between the character and frog but also the other novelists did. As given lines show it has been hundred years since authors started to use frogs in their books. Finally, one might even suggest that the episode of the frogs provides the play with an over-all structure of a ring-composition type. Whitman remarks upon the symmetry provided by contrasting the sublime song of the initiates with the

grotesque song of frogs. (Demand 86) Pascal's passion of frogs starts when he was a two-old-boy.

All the while that I was so engaged in concentrated, furtive study of my lily pad I was of course awaiting the black frog. What could you expect? After all, I was only a two-year-old whose passions, with which unknowingly he was all but bursting, could hardly have reached the degree of consciousness and sophistication that I have not restrained myself from articulating. No indeed. I was just a small boy waiting to spy on a frog. But far from innocent. I was robbed of innocence at birth, though I suspect that back then, at the dawn skepticism, many children were born missing their innocence. As for now, well, you'd be lucky to find an innocent babe in a thousand. If you wanted one, that is (Hawkes, Armand the Frog 141).

Pascal as a narrator goes back then when he was a baby, he declares that he was not an innocent baby which certifies that Pascal's behaviours started to take shape because of his interests even he was a two-year-old baby. The following days Pascal interiorizes what his mother exposes and when he thinks he swallowed a frog are apparently the most crucial period of time to make a reader notice how transparently Pascal's behaviours change. By these altered attitudes the readers see very clearly how Pascal is affected by Oedipus Complex syndrome. As a consequence of the cramps on his belly and psychological change he feels closer to his mother which is accepted as proved that he counts on his mother most, even he shares his vital secret which is about Armand lives in his stomach with her.

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Pascal has only one friend, Christophe who has a troubled mother-son relationship unlike Pascal.

The good childhood exists only to welcome the worst of circumstances, as I have so often said., indirectly or not, and even my affliction, which was of a pitch and radiance to equal what Cristophe suffered at the hands of his peculiar mother, brought to my life's beginning its own form of pleasure (Hawkes, The Frog 42).

As the given lines show Pascal compares his mother with Cristophe's and that gets his love more than ever and a reader can understand Cristophe's character here in the novel does not make any sense about Armand, but the relationship between a son and his mother.

The relationship Between Pascal and His Father

At the start of the novel we, the readers, are able to get information about Pascal's father. At the very beginning it is quite clear that Pascal has no any troubles with his father. But in the following days, since he sees his father as an obstacle to his bond with his mother, every single thing about him makes Pascal hates him more than ever. Freud's accentuation of the initial coincidence of love and identification is that love can no longer be separated from jealousy, as the classical oedipal schema insisted. In fact, hate does not arise from a simple

rivalry for the oedipal love object (Jacobsen and Brick 271). Hate of father in Oedipus Complex which derives from jealousy makes a son to desire his father to be dead. Pascal hates his father's sense of humour, kindness, confidence and so on. The joke of his father's about his grandmother's teeth bothers Pascal. The way he behaves makes Pascal not to admit his behaviours as what a good father should do. He explains his feelings by saying "Beyond his joke he was not able to express his fatherly love of me, though he tried hard enough, and back then when I had barely risen from my life in the pond, so to speak, I was delighted to have his slightest attention. At any rate Papa's good humor thrived in daylight" (Hawkes, *The Frog* 19).

While suffering from the cramps on this stomach because of Armand, Pascal's mother tries to cure him. As a result of it happens almost every night Pascal's father cannot spend time with his wife as he used to before and even though his reactions are not that excessive Pascal sees him as an enemy. "And what about dear little Papa, striding anxiously and angrily back and forth in a chilly glen, while I lay half naked in the house he had fled, basking beneath warm sun and dear little Maman's full attention and timid hands? What perfection!" (Hawkes, *The Frog* 64) The emotional tie between Pascal and his mother cannot be understood by his father Pascal thinks. He thinks his mother is the only one who can feel him and heal him from this terrible pain. His hate and jealousy of his father never ends, but gets bigger day by day. Jealous hate is hate caused by the fear of losing what one has. It is hate for the other who threatens our having. It is a sort of preventative aggression. Jealous hate is not a passion of being but rather a passion of having. Hate as a passion of being is, instead, irreducible to jealous hate for the other, the similar (Recalcati 175).

Pascal's hatred of his father causes by he knows his mother does not belong him. For every son who is obsessed to his mother it can be said they do not want their fathers as an obstacle, as a threaten of the tie between him and his mother. Moreover it can be said their absence emparadise him. Lacan takes this fascinating detour through theology so as to return to the relation between the subject and the Father, and, more precisely, to the Freudian problem of the waning of the Oedipus complex. The Father wanes and in his place the superego arises—as Freud teaches, through incorporation—as, precisely, "the heir of the Oedipus complex." But the waning (*Untergang*) of the Oedipus complex implies a certain "de-idealization" of the Father as well. The death of the Father is the death of the Ideal of the Father. The superegoic incorporation of the dead father, Lacan explains, necessarily contains an unconscious reproach directed at the father who fell short of the Ideal. The superego is thus produced as a neurotic compensation for the *défaillance* of the ideal Father. In this sense, the hate of the superego that can cause the subject so much suffering (in what Freud calls "moral masochism") is really hate for the Father who is incapable of sustaining the Ideal—hate for the lack of the Other. Hate therefore refuses what love seeks. If love seeks the lack of the Other, hate repels this lack (Recalcati 176). Freud's myth demonstrates that there is a resemblance between the hate of father and Father. In the novel when Pascal's father attends army, that absence of his father makes Pascal satisfied. Nevertheless when he comes back and when he is with crutches under his armpits and proud of being a wounded soldier, that makes Pascal hate him more by reason of he cannot be a hero neither for him nor his mother.

The biggest clue of given by the narrator, Pascal himself, how he hates his father and even desires him to die out has been told via Christophe's tragic history. "Could it have been anything other than our distinctive fate that caused the burial of little Christophe's father on the very day that my own father attacked my frog, using my mother as his sham agent of mercy? Surely not. And perhaps little Christophe was luckier than I in the long run; who knows? At least his father had a shorter life than mine" (Hawkes, *The Frog* 60). At the time of Pascal is sent to lunatic assylum the only one who he awaits for is his mother, yet the day his father comes and the way how he explains his mother is gone leads Pascal to kill him, his father, by showing Armand which comes out his mouth abruptly. Even after that tragic day we never let known that Pascal is regretful for that day. This situation shows us that Pascal has already internalized what he has done. Every baby has murderous impulses towards its symbolic father. These wishes are so powerful for children, neurotics and for primitives (that is those whose unconscious processes dominate them in any era), that their impact on the child, neurotic or primitive is as strong as if they had actually murdered the father. So Freud insists on saying that the primal murder was not just a wish, but an actual event, so that the impact on the modern reader is sufficiently strong (Bocock 211). That murder of father is the result of what Pascal desires instinctively and a result of Oedipus Complex Syndrome according to Freud..

How Oedipus Complex Syndrome Affects Pascal's Life

The boys grow up with Oedipus Complex Syndrome encounter many difficulties in their whole life which is signified terrifically via Pascal's story by Hawkes in *The Frog*. McDougall enables us to have a chance to get information how Oedipus Complex affects the victims. The enactment may covertly enable an increase of pleasure. (McDougall 7) "Each secret theater self is thus engaged in repeatedly playing roles from the past, using techniques discovered in childhood and reproducing, with uncanny precision, the same tragedies and comedies, with the same outcomes and an identical quota of pain and pleasure. What were once attempts at self-cure in the face of mental pain and conflict are now symptoms that the adult I produces, following forgotten childhood solutions." As McDougall remarks even the incidents took place in the past develops our behaviours in the further life.

Pascal's desire of his mother leads him to develop a behaviour which inescapably causes an impending doom. His excessive interest of frogs alters his life in all respects. He only waits for his mother to heal him and even he treats other people under the influence of Oedipus Complex Syndrome. The protagonist, Pascal, unconsciously changes his attitudes day by day, month by month, and year by year to those who he encounters in his daily life. To illustrate; Pascal has a high opinion of almost all the women characters in the novel, especially the married ones who remind him his mother such as count's wife, Dr. Chapote's wife, the women in Madame Fromage's brothel. At the same time he feels like to spend his time with these women, he does not like their husbands for some reason. There is no exaggeration if we say may be the women he knows somehow are found as attractive as his mother used to be by Pascal. This griever emotional tie leads Pascal to maintain his life in a sadistic way. The writer, Hawkes, acknowledges he illustrates the feeling of the characters by

using a sadistic way in one the interviews. I don't mean to apologize for the disturbing nature of my fiction by calling it comic, and certainly don't mean to minimize the terror with which this writing confronts the reader my aim has always been the opposite, never to let the reader (or myself) off the hook, so to speak, never to let him think that the picture is any less black than it is or that there is any easy way out of the nightmare of human existence. But though I'd be the first to admit to sadistic impulses in the creative process, I must say that my writing is not mere indulgence in violence or derangement, is hardly intended simply to shock. As I say, comedy, which is often closely related to poetic uses of language, is what makes the difference for me. I think that the comic method functions in several ways: on the one hand it serves to create sympathy, compassion, and on the other it is a means for judging human failings as severely as possible; it is a way of exposing evil (one of the pure words I mean to preserve) and of persuading the reader that even he may not be exempt from evil; and of course comic distortion tells us that anything is possible and hence expands the limits of our imaginations (Hawkes, John Hawkes: An interview 146). In the interview Hawkes declares us he is one of the writers who plays with the readers by having them to think deeply. He has an extraordinary method of writing which makes him totally different from the others.

Conclusion

Even though *The Frog* is not a leading novel which is about Oedipus Complex, the readers still have a chance to evaluate a character's inner world, behaviours, and the accusing of the others by Hawkes' avant-garde and innovative technique. As a writer I'm concerned with innovation in the novel, and obviously I'm committed to nightmare, violence, meaningful distortion, to the whole panorama of dislocation and desolation in human experience. But as a man-as reader and teacher I think of myself as conventional. I remember that after Faulkner's death, which followed so closely on the death of Hemingway, there was a kind of journalistic polling of critics and reviewers in an effort to assess our position and reassess our writers in terms of influence and reputation (Hawkes, John Hawkes: An interview 142).

At a very early age the little boy develops an object-cathexis for his mother, which originally related to the mother's breast and is the prototype of an object-choice on the anaclitic model [einer Objektwahl nach dem Anlehnungstypus]; the boy deals with his father by identifying himself with him. For a time these two relationships proceed side by side, until the boy's sexual wishes in regard to his mother become more intense and his father is perceived as an obstacle to them; from this the Oedipus complex originates. His identification with his father then takes on a hostile colouring and changes into a wish to get rid of his father in order to take his place with his mother (Freud). Pascal identifies himself via the frog lives inside his stomach, Armand, to enable us to learn what how he reacts. Hawkes deliberately tries to disturb the readers who look for an extraordinary story about the frogs. It can be easily seen that even though the novel is known with the relationship of Armand and Pascal, a reader who has a comprehensive reading style catches sight of the theme, Oedipus Complex theory.

Miss Maman? Of course I missed Maman- from the start- and wondered why she did not visit me, which she never did, or why she did not send me a few loving, encouraging words on paper. But on

that score there was only mysterious silence. Perhaps she thought that at last I was old enough to live without her, an impossibility that makes me grieve even now, or perhaps, once rid of both Papa and me, she could not bear the emptiness that so much as a thought of us would deepen. But I longed to see Maman entering Saint-Mames in search of me, smiling and carrying on her arm a wicker basket filled with preserves which she herself had prepared from the glorious fruit of the Domaine Ardente. Yet there was never a sight of her, never the sound of her voice. I lay awake weeping for Maman and wishing that the pain inflicted on me by Armand would dissolve once and for all my memories of Maman and leave me with nothing, which of course it did not, and this at a time when I was twelve or fourteen years of age with both feet squarely planted over the threshold of young manhood. (Hawkes, *The Frog* 103-104)

The readers of the novel, inevitably, feel deeply how Pascal who receives a treatment in a lunatic asylum misses his mother. He thinks he is old enough to not be rescued by his mother again and even though he is still not informed that his mother is dead, he never blames her for not coming to visit him. She is still the most important person in the world who backs him up. The following days his father comes and lets him know his mother is gone, he, for the first time, reacts via Armand by letting him come out from his mouth. Pascal's first obsessions were his mother and Armand, but as he grows up he feels the same feelings for the women resemblance his mother. It can be proved by the last sentences of Pascal for the first three chapters. The first chapter ends with Pascal remarks he cannot live without Maman which makes the reader believe when his mother is gone, that will be the end of Pascal's story. Nevertheless Pascal's story does not end when he knows of why his mother did not visit him. In the end of the second chapter Pascal states that he cannot live without Marie Claude and in the last of third chapter Pascal admits he can live without his mother. We, as the readers, are able to see that Pascal's mother had an important role as a 'mother' in his life. It was not because of her behaviours or personality, but the role of being a mother.

A detailed study of this novel, *The Frog*, in fact, enables us understand what is Oedipus Complex actually and how it affects the victims. The way Pascal is obsessed with his mother and what she says, how he loathes his father for no reason, except the jealousy as he thinks he is an obstacle, and when he meets women like his mother how he can deal with the agony he used to suffer; these all explain the readers of the novel the life of a boy with Oedipus Complex Syndrome.

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