

# Examining the Tale of Keloglan and Giant Mother Using Psychoanalytic Method: Transition from the Preoedipal Stage to the Oedipal Stage

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Derleme Makale

## Abstract

Psychoanalytic literary theory is one of the frequently used analytical approaches. The theory tries to understand the unconscious motivations and desires of characters in literary works, as well as subjects in real life. This theory, founded by Sigmund Freud and developed by his followers, suggests that the words, behaviors and actions in a literary text can be interpreted through a psychoanalytic lens in order to reveal the repressed desires and anxieties of the characters and the author alike. In the psychoanalytic approach, the oral stage, one of the psychosexual stages, is the period when strong bonds between the mother and the child are at the forefront, and competition with the father has not yet emerged. This period can also be called the pre-oedipal period. At this stage, as sexual differences begin to be perceived, the child turns towards the opposite-sex parent. This phase, which includes the phallic period, is referred to as the oedipal period. During this period, the father, whom the child perceives as positive or negative, is also included in the child's life. Fairy tales have been passed down through generations and have survived until today, both orally and in writing. The effects of situations such as fear and violence that can be found in fairy tale on children and how the child perceives and assimilates this content have attracted the attention of psychoanalytic literary theorists. It is assumed that the language of fairy tale can be effective in solving some unconscious issues of the child in the pre- and post-oedipal periods. In this text; In terms of psychoanalytic theory, the tale of Keloglan and the Giant's Mother, which is thought to include the issues of the child's pre-oedipal period, has been tried to be interpreted in the light of 'psychoanalytic literary theory'.

**Keywords:** Fairy tale, psychoanalysis, preoedipal period.

## Keloğlan ve Dev Anne Hikayesinin Psikanalitik Yöntemle İncelenmesi: Preödipal Dönemden Ödipal Döneme Geçiş

### Özet

Psikanalitik edebiyat teorisi, sık kullanılan analitik yaklaşımlardan biridir. Teori gerçek hayattaki öznelerin yanında, edebi eserlerdeki karakterlerin bilinçdışı güdüleri ve arzularını da anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Sigmund Freud tarafından temeli atılan ve onun takipçileri tarafından geliştirilen bu teori, edebi bir metindeki sözlerin, davranışların ve eylemlerin, karakterlerin ve aynı şekilde yazarın bastırılmış arzularını ve kaygılarını ortaya çıkarmak için, eserin psikanalitik bir mercekle yorumlanabileceğini ileri sürmektedir. Psikanalitik yaklaşımda psikoseksüel evrelerden oral dönem, anne ile çocuk arasındaki güçlü bağların önde olduğu dönemdir ve babayla rekabet henüz ortaya çıkmamıştır. Bu dönem preödipal dönem olarak da adlandırılabilir. Bu evrede, cinsel farklılıkların algılanmaya başlanması ile birlikte çocuk, karşı cins ebeveyne yönelir. Fallik dönemi kapsayan bu evre ödipal dönem olarak ifade edilmektedir. Bu dönem ile birlikte çocuğun hayatına olumlu veya olumsuz olarak algıladığı baba da dahil olmaktadır. Masallar kuşaklar boyunca aktararak günümüze kadar sözlü ve yazılı olarak ulaşmışlardır. Masallarda bulunabilen korku, şiddet öğeleri gibi durumların çocuklar üzerindeki etkisi, bu içeriği çocuğun nasıl algıladığı ve özümlediği psikanalitik edebiyat kuramcılarının ilgisini çekmiştir. Ödipal öncesi ve sonrası dönemlerde çocuğun, birtakım bilinçdışı meselelerinin çözülmesinde masal dilinin etkili olabileceği varsayılmaktadır. Bu yazıda; psikanalitik kuram yönünden özellikle çocuğun preödipal dönem meselelerini içerdiği düşünülen Keloğlan ve Dev Anası masalı, 'psikanalitik edebiyat teorisi' ışığında yorumlanmaya çalışılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Masal, psikanaliz, preödipal dönem.

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## Introduction

Psychoanalytic theory deals with human fears, repressed desires, impulses and emotions that are thrown into the unconscious. This unconscious can be symbolized in art and cultural elements and works. Written or oral folk culture items such as fairy tale. They are the products of expressions of mental processes, fears, hatreds or desires (Jones, 2009). In the source of myths and tales that societies have produced from past to present, it has been determined that there are psychological elements such as dreams, images and symbols (dream). Based on this idea, psychoanalytic folklore theory was developed in the schools formed around Wilhelm Wundt, Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung in explaining folklore data. Both Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung evaluated folklore as a material of their own teachings while interpreting myths and tales with the method of symbolization (Çobanoğlu, 1999). "Masel", which originates from the Arabic word "parable", was translated into Hebrew and Turkish as "Masal"-fairy tale (Taner, 1992). Fairy tale: "It is a folk story that usually includes extraordinary heroes and adventures, and whose plot is imaginary and is told from mouth to mouth." (M. Laresses, 1992). It can be said that fairy tales help children cope with developmental issues and prepare them for life. Fairy tale may contain elements of fear and violence. The effects of these elements in fairy tale on the child who listens to the tale and the way the adult perceives these effects are probably very different. In order to understand these different influences, it is important to understand the fairy tale-child relationship. During the development process, the child may face problems that may differ depending on the stage he is in, his gender and his position in the family. The child often struggles with these problems without knowing their meaning and content. These problems, which are at the unconscious level, are not problems that the child can express. In order for the child to complete the developmental stages in a balanced way, it is important for the child to come to terms with these problems, overcome these problems, or at least realize that they are surmountable problems. Fairy tale can give the child hope that these problems can be overcome and a happy ending can be achieved; depending on the message that bad people who make life difficult will definitely be punished and the content of the fairy tale, it may enable the child's fantasies to come true at an unconscious level. Fairy tales are about the child's parents. They approach their problems implicitly. In this way, the child does not fear that his feelings about his parents will be understood and therefore does not feel guilty.

## Psychoanalytic Theory's Perspective on Child Development

Starting with Freud's classical psychoanalytic theory, child development has been a subject emphasized by all psychoanalytic theorists. Freud suggests that personality is formed through experiences in the first 5 or 6 years. He emphasized that the foundations of adult personality are laid in childhood and that the formation of this personality is under the influence of psychosexual development periods. Freud revealed child development in five periods. These are oral, anal, phallic, latent and genital stages (Geçtan, 1993). In the following years, many theorists who were followers of Freud examined the child's personality development and parent-child relationships from a psychoanalytical perspective. The mother who supports the development of the baby, protects and feeds him is expressed by Winnicott with the concept of "good enough mother". Winnicott describes a good enough mother who "really knows what the baby wants, so that they are so attuned to the baby's needs that the baby's needs are met." (Rafferty, 2000). Klein, on the other hand, based on the claim that the baby divides the mother into good and bad during breastfeeding, says that the good breast is "the first example of all maternal goodness, inexhaustible patience and generosity, as well as creativity (Gallagher, 2009). During these developmental periods, one of the most important problems faced by the child is the separation from the mother, who is the first stop in the journey of life. This situation, which begins physically at birth, occurs many times in the course of life, such as the child being weaned or the mother having to separate from the child because she has to work. The death of the hero's mother at the beginning of the tale symbolizes this separation. There is no longer a 'good mother' who immediately fulfills everything the child wants. The death of the good mother, or in other words, the pre-oedipal mother, symbolizes a new period in which certain rules are set for the child by his parents, some of his requests are answered 'no', he is told that he must undertake certain duties and responsibilities, and the awareness that there are some limits in the world he lives in begins to form. In fairy tale, the evil stepmother who appears right after the good mother dies, represents the mother who says 'no' to the child and sets rules in its daily life. The process of independence from the mother is one of the most difficult periods of the child's life. It is a natural part of this process that the child wants to avoid the difficulties that its development brings to its life and resists growth. This resistance manifests itself through the regressive attitudes exhibited by the child." (Parmaksız, 2017). One of the critical points of the developmental periods is that the child's sexual differences gain importance. "In the pre-oedipal stage, all the child's attention is directed to

the mother. As sexual differences begin to be perceived, this interest turns to the parent of the opposite sex. Now, the father is included in the child's life, which he perceives as a positive or negative figure (depending on the child's gender). In tales touching on the issues of this period, the gender of the hero is also important. If the fairy tale hero is male, his possible rivals are dragons, giants, dangerous creatures or kings. These are enemies stronger, bigger and almost impossible to defeat than the fairytale hero. The child listening to the story has a similar rival in its daily life. The father, who seems older, stronger and almost impossible to defeat, stands between the child and the mother. The fairy tale hero has to overcome the obstacles symbolizing the father in order to reach the princess, who symbolizes the mother. The situation is different in fairy tale where the hero is a girl. This time, the hero is faced with a stepmother, witch or wizard who wants to eliminate her. These figures symbolize the mother who makes the life of the girl listening to the story difficult. The hero of the fairy tale must struggle with the difficulties posed by the witch, sorcerer or evil queen in order to reach the prince who symbolizes the father." (Parmaksız, 2017). One of the critical points of developmental periods is when the child begins to discover sexual differences. The psychological dimensions of the relationship between mother and child and its unconscious extensions were scientifically questioned in depth for the first time with Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic studies, and the theories of Oedipus and castration complex emerged, which even many nineteenth-century intellectuals could not accept at first. The Oedipus complex, which initially emerged as a part of Freud's trauma theory, enabled this first theory, which it overshadowed over time, to be overcome. According to Freud, who put forward this sensational theory quite dogmatically, the beginning of the Oedipus complex. The point is in the child's neonatal age; because the child's first object of desire is his mother, who nourishes him and gives him life; In this context, the mother, who simultaneously carries the roles of caretaker, nurturer and pleasure giver, assumes the identity of the child's first seducer. When the child enters the phallus stage, he tries to take the place of his father, who is far superior to him in terms of physical characteristics, by making him a rival, and even unconsciously desires to eliminate his father for this purpose. On the other hand, the mother, who tries to prevent the child's competitive attitude and his jealously possessive behavior towards the father, imposes a series of prohibitions and threats for this purpose; However, the most powerful and traumatic of these is undoubtedly the threat that the father will castrate the child if this situation continues. This threat, which often works if taken seriously by the child, enables the child, who is afraid of castration, to stop perceiving his mother as an object of desire. But on the other hand, it also triggers the castration complex, which is the most shocking trauma of childhood. Freud states that the castration complex results in the end of the Oedipus complex in boys and the beginning of the Oedipus complex in girls (Korucu, 2011). The pre-oedipal period is the time period between birth and the emergence of the Oedipus complex. Regression is defined as returning to an earlier stage of development. It is the regression of the ego to an earlier period for 'defense' purposes when it cannot cope with the problems in the current stage (or in order to overcome them) (Blum, v1994). Fairy tale heroes can also show regression when they cannot overcome the obstacles they encounter. A child in the pre-oedipal period may have a fear that he will be killed or eaten by his parents. This fear can often find fulfillment in fairytale. Melanie Klein's persecution anxiety is a fear that occurs when the subject is in a paranoid-schizoid position, in which failure to care for the baby in the first months of life may result in a killing or killing dynamic (Ehrenschaft, 2008).

## Overview of Keloglan Tales

Keloglan tales, which have an important place in Turkish folk literature, can be described as a symbol of Anatolian culture and the people living in these lands. When you look at the fairytale, you can see many Keloglan characters. In some tales, there is only a mother, sometimes there is no mother or father. His siblings' names may also be mentioned in some tales. Generally, Keloglan is an orphan and poor young man who lives with his elderly mother. At the beginning, he is a sluggish person, who tries reluctantly under his mother's pressure, and who messes up his work because of his stupidity and forgetfulness. Keloglan's fate changes with his cunning and clever behavior against the unjust. In any case, Keloglan ultimately becomes a wealthy, powerful person and lives a happy life with his mother. In this respect, the Keloglan type and Keloglan tales express the people's longing to escape from poverty, become rich and powerful, and take revenge on the oppressors. He often manages to become rich or become the son-in-law of the sultan through his cunning, sometimes by cheating (Alptekin, 2002). In most of the tales where he marries the sultan's daughter, he has not seen the girl's face or fallen in love with her. He seems to use his intelligence and cunning to change his class and escape from the poverty he is in. In order to achieve his goal, he does not hesitate to take actions that may contradict the general moral rules of the society. He can be cruel not only towards evildoers, but also towards other people. Keloglan, if he is defined as a negative hero; It can be seen that he can exhibit behaviors appropriate to the expression 'bald' in his name. The Turkish meaning of the word 'Keloglan' is hairless boy. The word

bald among the public is also used to mean underdeveloped, weak and barren. Baldness, from a psychoanalytic point of view, represents the lack of genital hair and, from one perspective, castration. Keloglan is fatherless in the fairytale. In the fairytale, the Keloglan figure deals with the issues of the end of adolescence; It can prepare children for adult life with its unconscious messages. As the most important symbol of this; At the beginning of marriage and proving oneself through heroism, there is separation from the family, the hometown, that is, the center where someone else's power is valid. The hero, who left his home as a child, returns as an adult (Sezer, 2010).

## The Tale of the Giant Mother and the Keloglan in the Context of the Preoedipal Period

Once upon a time. There are many servants of God. It is a sin to say too much and to eat too much. Once upon a time, in a remote village of a country, there was a Keloglan. This Keloglan's parents died and he was left with two sisters who needed to be taken care of. Since they were very poor and helpless, they would go to one of the houses for dinner every night. There was a giant mother who lived at one end of the village, adjacent to the forest. These poor people wandered around the whole village, then wandered around and visited the house of this giant mother one evening. The food was eaten and they went to bed. This giant mother sat by the stove and waited for them to sleep, her eyes were going crazy, her belly, accustomed to human flesh, was gurgling and she was picking wood chips between her teeth. Keloglan observed his giant mother's state, suppressed his heedlessness, and realized that when she fell asleep, he would cut them, hang them on the hooks on the ceiling, trim them, cook them, and eat them for a few days. Even though he told both of his sisters that the situation was like this and that, they could not stand the tiredness, the sleep, and the weight of the fatty food, and they drifted off. This Keloglan lay on the cushion, did not close his eyelashes, and waited for his giant mother to come out. The giant mother waited by the stove. After he had left the place and sleep had fallen on the houses and barns, he got up, walked slowly to their room, bent down and saw that Keloglan was still not asleep, looking crazy, and asked: Who is sleeping, who is awake?

Keloglan shouted from where he lay:

Everyone is sleeping, Keloglan is awake!

The giant mother also said:

Why doesn't Keloglan sleep?

Keloglan got up from where he was lying:

"Before I went to sleep, my mother would bring me scrambled eggs and I would sleep like that..." said this Keloglan. In the middle of the night, the giant mother ran to the chicken coop and brought fried eggs to this Keloglan. Keloglan sat down and ate it, scraped the bottom and licked it. He went to bed, but still did not sleep. The giant mother sat by the fireplace and waited. The wolf and the bird slept, the mountain and stone slept, the waters slept, but this Keloglan did not sleep again. The giant mother waited and waited, got up, walked slowly to their room, bent down and saw that this Keloglan was still not asleep, looking crazy and asked:

'Who is sleeping, who is awake?'

Keloglan shouted from where he lay:

'Everyone is sleeping, Keloglan is awake!'

The giant mother also said:

'Why doesn't Keloglan sleep?'

"Before going to bed, my mother would bring me fresh buttermilk and I would sleep like that..." said Keloglan, I would sleep after drinking it. In the middle of the night, the giant mother immediately ran to the cellar, crushed yoghurt, made a bowl of buttermilk and brought it to Keloglan. Keloglan put the big bowl over his head and licked its insides. Oh he went to bed but still couldn't sleep. He was lying there with his eyes fixed on the ceiling, spinning around and playing crazy. She is the giant's mother, she sat by the stove and waited. The wolf and the bird slept, the mountain



and stone slept, the waters slept, but this Keloglan did not sleep. The giant mother waited, got up, the child still not asleep, she looked crazy. She asked:

'Who is sleeping, who is awake?

Keloglan shouted from where he lay:

Everyone sleeps, Keloglan is awake!

The giant mother also said:

Why doesn't Keloglan sleep?

Keloglan got up from where he was lying:

'Before going to bed, my mother would bring me fresh water from the stream in a sieve and I would sleep like that...' said Keloglan. This giant mother took the sieve from the wall and ran to the stream in the middle of the night. The giant mother kept trying to fill and take out water with a sieve; Keloglan immediately nudged his sisters to wake them up, they put on their shoes on the road and started running. But Keloglan forgot his six-bladed pocket knife at his giant mother's house. He stopped on the road, scratched his bald head and thought: He said, 'Come on, you go home, I'll come with my pocketknife!' He ran and came to his giant mother's house. Just then, his giant mother gave up carrying water with a sieve and was coming home. When Keloglan saw her, he immediately went into the storeroom and hid. He opened his pocketknife and began to draw and carve here and there in the loader. The giant mother also listened to these crackling sounds and said:

Rattling mice

Fleece squares

I lost Keloglan

There are wounds in my heart. She said and opened the door of the closet. And what do I see? It's Keloglan, with a pocket knife in his hand carving out things here and there?" Oh, Keloglan, I thought I had lost you, you got into my clutches well...' she said. As soon as she caught him, she put him in the sack, tied him around its mouth and hung it on the hook on the ceiling. He went to cut a large and gnarled stick, swearing to beat him as a revenge. While his giant mother was searching for a large and knotty stick in the forest, Keloglan managed to open the sack and went downstairs. He immediately brought his giant mother's beloved calf from the barn. He stuffed it in a sack, tied it around the mouth, and hung it on the hook on the ceiling. Then he ran and run away before the mother realized. The giant mother came, brandishing the stick she had cut, cursing Keloglan, and started to get tense and hit the sack hanging from the ceiling, without saying that God created it. While my father was hitting, 'bee, bee!' sounds were coming from inside the sack. She said, 'You liar and fraudster Keloglan, you can make sounds like a calf to make me feel sorry for yourself!'; and she hit the sack in such a way that after a while, the calf's hair cut off and thin blood began to leak from the sack. Seeing this, the giant mother took the sack off the hook. She opened it and saw that his beloved calf had turned into a pile of meat and bones from the beating and was lying in a heap. The giant mother knelt on the ground and hugged her beloved calf. She cried loudly and sobbed loudly. She was so angry with Keloglan that her hair stood up on her head and lice were smeared on her head. She grabbed her stick and ran after Keloglan. She reached the edge of the river and the three siblings crossed to the other side. The giant mother called from this side.

Keloglan, bald boy

bad boy games

I'm confused here

How did you do it, boy?

Keloglan also called from the other side: "There is a broken car there, fasten its wheels and go, go, go! The giant mother immediately ran to the car, pulled off one of the wheels, tied it to her feet and walked into the river. As she walked, it sank, and as it went on, the wheel pulled it to the bottom. She yelled, "Oh right, oh right!"; and she drowned and sank to the bottom. Keloglan was also saved from the hands of the giant mother and from her evil. They have achieved what they want, we will take care of ourselves (Alangu, 2021).

## An Attempt to Analyze the Tale of Keloglan and the Giant's Mother from a Psychoanalytic Perspective

In the Tale of Keloglan and His Giant Mother, Keloglan and his siblings do not have parents and caregivers and they have to go somewhere else every night and be guests in order to feed themselves; It symbolizes the phase of separation and independence from the mother at the unconscious level. Keloglan has to think about both himself and his sisters' hunger. The caregiver also has to bear the responsibility of others. The Giant Mother's house, at one end of the village, adjacent to the forest, again symbolizes the themes of distance, desolation and loneliness. Considering that the separation in the child may be related to age regression; The 'Giant Mother' who appears before Keloglan is big in terms of regression. It may be related to the fact that the child, who needs to stand on his own feet and has passed to the next stage of development, shows regressive tendencies, needs the mother's breast, and resists development. This giant mother; While feeding Keloglan and his sisters and providing them with a place and opportunity to sleep; At the same time, the mother's stomach growls. Giant Mother picks her teeth. These associations of the oral period may be related to the concept of being eaten by the mother and the concept of 'cannibal mother' as a reflection of the pre-oedipal period. While Keloglan struggles with the giant mother, he also continues to eat and provides oral satisfaction. By getting rid of his giant mother; Crossing the river to the other side of the river by saving her sisters may be a symbol of the transition from the pre-oedipal stage to the oedipal stage. Despite this transition, the fact that the 'pocket knife' was forgotten in the giant mother's house and the giant mother greeted the bald boy, who returned home to get the 'pocket knife', with a 'bigger and gnarlier' stick, may be symbolic expressions of this transition. The maturing penis with the pocket knife and the larger stick encountered later may mean the father's penis and oedipal rivalry.

## Conclusion

In the tale of Keloglan and the Giant's Mother, it can be seen that the child's problem is clearly related to the mother. In the later parts of the tale, the fear of being destroyed by the father and the oedipal rivalry are also touched upon to some extent. In summary, the plot of the tale is the death of the good mother, confrontation with the bad mother, transition to the next stage of development, brutal punishment of the bad people, and starting a new life by leaving the troubles of the previous periods behind. The tale of Keloglan and the Giant Mother, in addition to the cultural traces it carries, can be a useful tale for children in this stage of development, touching on the issues of the child transitioning from the pre-oedipal stage to the oedipal stage from a psychoanalytical perspective.

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