



J. D. Salinger'in Çavdar Tarlasında Çocuklar ile H. R. Gürpınar'ın Ben Deli Miyim? Romanlarında Uyumsuz Karakterler

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Karşılaştırmalı edebiyat, iki veya daha fazla eseri konu, felsefe veya biçim açısından inceleyen, benzerliklerini ve farklılıklarını karşılaştıran bir disiplindir. Bu çalışmada ele alınan yazarlar da farklı mekân ve zamanın yazarlarıdır. J. D. Salinger 1919 yılında Amerika'da doğmuştur. Çalışmada karşılaştırma bağlamında ele alacağımız diğer bir yazar Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar ise Salinger'dan daha erken bir zamanda, 1864 yılında, dünyaya gelmiştir. Farklı dönem ve mekânların yazarları olmalarına rağmen eserlerinde bazı benzerlikler vardır. Her iki romanda da ortak olarak dikkat çeken ilk noktalardan biri, her iki romanın da kahramanlarının insanları belirli özelliklerle suçlamalarıdır. Salinger'ın kahramanı Holden, insanların sahtekârlığından rahatsız olan bir bireydir. Gürpınar'ın eserindeki Şadan da insanların kendilerini son derece zeki olarak algılamalarını eleştirir. İki karakterin bir diğer ortak özelliği de kendi doğrularının olmasıdır. Olaylar ve insanlar hakkında kendi farklı dünya görüşleri ve bakış açıları vardır. Her iki karakter de kendilerini çevreleyen yapaylıktan ve ikiyüzlülükten şikâyet eder. Ayrıca her iki eserdeki baş karakterin ruh sağlığının da iyi olmadığı görülmektedir. Bu çalışma da söz konusu yazarların romanları arasında bir karşılaştırma yapmayı amaçlamıştır.

J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in The Rye*, H. R. Gürpınar's *Ben Deli Miyim?*; The Absurd Characters

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Comparative literature is a discipline that examines two different works in terms of subject, thought or form, and deals with the similar and different aspects of these works. In this regard it allows comparing the works of authors from various eras and locations. The authors discussed in this study are authors of different times and places. J. D. Salinger is an American author who was born in United States in 1919. On the other hand, Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar is an author who was born earlier, in 1864, in Istanbul. The similarity between two novels is primarily based on protagonists of the novels. One of the first points that draw attention in common in both novels is that the protagonists of both novels accuse people of certain characteristics. While Holden is annoyed by people's phoniness, Şadan criticizes people's perceptions of themselves as extremely intelligent. Another feature the two characters have in common is that they both have their own truths. Both characters complain about the artificiality and hypocrisy that surrounds them. In this regard it becomes essential to compare both authors due to the common features. This study aims to compare two novels in question.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Comparative literature is a discipline that examines two or more different works in terms of subject, thought or form, and deals with the similar and different aspects of these works. It is a discipline that allows scholars to compare works by authors from different eras and regions, which can be difficult to bring together and analyze under normal circumstances. J. D. Salinger and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar are two authors who can be taken as examples of this circumstance. In the works of these two authors, which differ in style and period, there are events and characters that might be compared. Salinger, who was born in the United States in 1919, was not a successful student. As a result, he changed school multiple times, which appears to have influenced the character of the novel he later produced, which will be addressed in this study. Despite his lack of success in lectures during his school years, he was actively involved in clubs and intellectual studies. Salinger was the literary editor of the school's magazine and he also took part in theatre. As can be seen from these circumstances his interest in literature began in his school years. He began to write short stories as a

result of his passion in literature. But Salinger's first work that comes to mind as a author and made him famous worldwide is *The Catcher in the Rye*. The novel, which was first published in 1951, has since been translated into other languages and has gained worldwide acclaim. The novel was censored in different eras and areas because it was deemed obscene by some circles. In this regard, it is comparable to the situation of the other novel that will be discussed in this study. It is ironic that the novel was both the most prohibited and the second most taught book in American public schools (Andrychuk, 2004: 6). The novel's hero is one of the reasons for the novel's popularity among young people. Holden Caulfield, the novel's seventeen-year-old protagonist, is essentially an antihero. The character's rebellious nature is particularly appealing to younger readers.

The second author to be discussed in this study, Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, uses a simple and humorous language in his novels and he deals with societal themes of the day. Gürpınar, who is a popular and widely read author in terms of the language he uses and the subjects he covers, is a prolific author. Characters from various layers of life are represented in vivid detail in the author's novels. It is stated that unlike the contemporary authors of his time in his works; “the fierce voice of nationalism is replaced with the voices of heterogeneity” (Şafak&Meridians, 2003: 67). Gürpınar's novel *Ben Deli Miyim?*, which will be discussed in this study, features unusual and colourful characters from different layers of society. It is claimed that Gürpınar's novel *Ben Deli Miyim?* is without doubt one of his most important works aimed at curing social issues through exposure (Sağlam, 2013: 110). In fact, the extent of this claim is somewhat doubtful, because although Gürpınar refers to social problems, he does not offer any solutions to solve the problems. At least, this is the case for the novel in question. Since the subjects dealt in the novel take on an obscene nature from time to time, it has drawn reaction from some parts of the society and has even been sued. However, Gürpınar vehemently denies the accusations attributed to him and he sees his novel as a lesson from life and according to him, the novel sheds light on the collapsing values of a generation. (Kaya, 2017: 165). In terms of these aspects, Salinger's work has similarities and differences with Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar's novel. The protagonist of Gürpınar's novel is an antihero as well. There are similarities between Şadan's perception and behaviour of life and Salinger's protagonist Holden. The purpose of this study is to compare the aspects of both characters as well as their outlook on life.

2. THE ABSURD CHARACTERS

2.1. Salinger's Holden

A novel's successfully constructed protagonist undoubtedly plays an important role in the novel's appeal and success. *The Catcher in the Rye* is a well-known work that has attracted worldwide attention and has been reprinted multiple times. Undoubtedly, the hero of the novel, Holden Caulfield, plays a significant part in the work's success. Although his rebellious spirit does not portray an ideal citizen in terms of not conforming to order, this rebellious spirit adds charm to the character. First of all, it should be noted that Holden is an intelligent but absurd character. He has a keen sense of observation of the world around him, including people and events. These traits are the positive aspects

of his character. However, he is not in harmony with people, events, institutions, and his surroundings. In this regard, he appears to be a troublesome character in his surroundings. As understood from the narrative, Holden is writing the story from a psychiatric hospital. The fact that he is being treated in a psychiatric centre is an indication of the problems he has experienced. The need for medical assistance emerged as a result of his struggle with the people around him and the incidents he witnessed. He is a character who responds to things like events and people. He has a reaction to everything that is not being honest or genuine. "He is driven crazy by "phoniness,"... insincerity, snobbery, injustice, callousness to the tears in things, and a lot more" (Behrman, 1951). That is, the reality or dishonesty of everything is the decisive factor in his perception of the world. Holden fails to see sincerity in people and events and thus he fails to establish healthy relationships.

The protagonist of the novel, Holden, is also the narrator of the story. In other words the story is narrated from the perspective of a seventeen-year-old adolescent. It is stated that; "Holden, is not wholly reliable in his understanding and reporting of events" (Naryal, 2017: 283). In this regard, he is a biased and unreliable narrator. Holden narrates events and people within the framework of his own subjective value judgments. From this point of view, his narration appears to be troublesome and unreliable. The novel opens with the scene in which Holden is about to be dismissed from Pencey High School. There is a striking comment about his expulsion from school. Marcus states that, Holden rejects school just like Holden is rejected by the school (1963: 4). So basically there is a mutual rejection. He acts as if being expelled from school is not a massive issue to him. The issue here is that judging by Holden's attitude he is not under the stress of a student who has been expelled from school. As the story progresses it becomes clear that Holden, who appears to be fairly at ease, has been expelled from a number of schools beforehand (Salinger, 2020: 10). In other words, he seems to be used to this situation as he has experienced expulsion from school several times. The concept of being expelled from school is one of the points that Holden desires to perceive. Namely, according to him, what is more important than being expelled from school is to understand the concept of expulsion. It is seen that he is different from his peers with this mentality. It is obvious that this way of thinking is not a healthy way of thinking.

As stated earlier, Holden has a problem of being compatible with his environment, school and family. As a result of this incompatibility, he is in the process of being expelled from Pencey, the fourth school he is enrolled in. He seems unconcerned about courses, thus he fails to fulfil his school obligations by failing five of the four courses. It can be asserted that Holden has no principles when it comes to accepting responsibility and carrying out his responsibilities. As another example, he is in charge of the school's fencing team, which is preparing to participate for a competition. Since Holden loses the team's equipment on the subway, they are unable to participate in the event. Holden portrays a quite unconcerned manner and he does not care about team's dissatisfaction with him. Moreover, he makes fun of this situation: "The whole team ostracized me the whole way back on the train. It was pretty funny, in a way" (Salinger, 2020: 9). In other words, his actions and reactions show a lack of consistency. His behaviour is often difficult to assess; he does not show any feeling of responsibility in

his obligations, but he feels compelled to say goodbye to a former history teacher before leaving the school. He is caught in a web of paradoxes; he wants to say farewell to the teacher, yet when the teacher gives the life lessons, he feels irritated, he wants to leave there as soon as possible. In fact, he is not aware that the problem is not in people or places. He is far from understanding that the problem is caused by himself. The fact that he is not comfortable in any places gives the impression that he is not a character at peace with himself.

Holden is not very good at making friends or maintaining friendships. When schoolmates get together for a cause or activity, Holden avoids getting together with them. Despite the fact that the entire school is at the football game, he decides to stay in his dorm and read. Holden, who prefers to be alone, also refrains from establishing a healthy communication with his friends who pay visit to him. At the dorm a complicated friendship is observed between him, Ackley and Stradlater. Each character has a tense relationship with Holden, who regards them both as phonies. However, he continues to be in a certain friendship with them, albeit at a minimum level. Holden's criterion for evaluating all people, events, and facts is whether they are phony or not. According to him, Ackley and Stradlater are also phony. "He was at least a pretty friendly guy, Stradlater. It was partly a phony kind of friendly, but at least he always said hello to Ackley and all (Salinger, 1951: 34). It seems that phoniness is not unique to humans; for instance, he considers movies to be phony as well. That's why he harshly criticizes his older brother D.B.'s decision to pursue a career in the film industry by moving to Hollywood (Salinger, 1951: 4). He is uneasy about his older brother working in the film industry in Hollywood since he deems it insincere. It is remarkable that such an adolescent has such views about the world around him. These unconventional ideas are, in fact, one of the characteristics that make Holden's persona appealing.

Holden sometimes exhibits unpredictable behaviour. An incident between him and his roommate is an illustration of this situation. He physically assaults his roommate as a result of a situation he has constructed in his mind. His friend is apparently taken aback by the sudden onslaught. It is because there is not any precise circumstance that justifies this attack. His friend is quite astonished as he does not expect such a physical attack from Holden. This incidence demonstrates Holden's erratic and unhealthy behaviour. Holden's behaviour of this kind has been interpreted as follows; "...in fact his attitudes are symptomatic of a serious psychological problem" (Miller, 1982: 129). Yet in another example, when his younger brother Allie dies, his reactions are somewhat exaggerated. "...they were going to have me psychoanalyzed... I slept in the garage the night he died, and I broke all the goddam windows with my fist, just for the hell of it...I even tried to break all the windows on the station wagon we had that summer, but my hand was already broken" (Salinger, 1951: 50). His reactions to the events he experienced are unpredictable. This event happens when Holden is just thirteen years old. Such unexpected and exaggerated reactions are again reflections of Holden's unhealthy mental condition. It is obvious that he requires psychological assistance and treatment. As a result of the recurrence of similar incidents, he is eventually admitted to a psychiatric facility for treatment.

One of the distinguishing characteristics in Holden's perception of life is his inconsistency. While people's phoniness is the thing that bothers him the most, he is not honest in many situations either. In truth, he refuses to realize that the characteristics that irritate him are equally present in himself. Moreover, he does not hesitate to express this feature. "I'm the most terrific liar you ever saw in your life" (Salinger, 1951: 22). However, he does not express his lying as a flaw, but rather as a feature to be proud of. This contradictory attitude reveals his lack of sincerity about his thoughts on phoniness. This issue is important because the subject of phoniness is a trait that forms the basis of Holden's perspective on life throughout the story. However, it is evident that he is not a very trustworthy individual, as he lies frequently. Holden's narration is problematic; he is not a reliable narrator because he uses contradictory statements. As an instance, he states; "I'm quite illiterate, but I read a lot" (Salinger, 1951: 24). Such a remark does not contain a clear logical pattern. As previously indicated, his narrative with such elements is recognized to be problematic.

One of Holden's most notable characteristics is his misanthropy. He does not love people and this feature is clearly understood through his behaviours; in fact, the only person he displays love for throughout the novel is his deceased brother. For instance, Holden himself states that he dislikes Ackley, Stradlater, Morrow, Carl, etc. (Salinger, 1951: 72). He criticizes almost every character he meets by exposing their flaws during the story. Holden, who does not get along well with others, does not openly express his feelings. In fact, his true feelings are difficult to comprehend due to his inaccurate narration. It can be deduced what he feels from his actions and speech because he does not express his feelings freely. While he gives the impression that he is unconcerned about getting expelled from school, on the other hand, he admits that he cried as he was leaving the school: "When I was all set to go, when I had my bags and all, I stood for a while next to the stairs and took a last look down the goddam corridor. I was sort of crying. I don't know why" (Salinger, 1951: 68). It is seen that he tries to gloss over the fact that he is sad instead of expressing it openly. Despite his flippant attitude toward getting dismissed from school, it is clear that his true feelings are not in this direction.

In the light of all these events and information, it is understood that the character of Holden is not in a very healthy mood. At the end of the story, he is treated as an inpatient in a mental health institution. The protagonist in Gürpınar's novel *Ben Deli miyim?*, Şadan, will be examined in the next part, and similarities between the two characters will be highlighted.

2.2. Gürpınar's Şadan

Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar has novels in which he analyzes and criticizes the mentally ill types and their extremely negative and harmful actions in society with the meticulousness of a psychologist (Gürpınar, 2021: cited from preface). Gürpınar's novel discussed in this article, *Ben Deli miyim?*, is one of such novels. The protagonist of this novel and the character to be discussed in this study is Şadan. Şadan is also the narrator of the story, meanwhile it should be stated that Şadan is an unreliable narrator like Holden. However it should be noted that Şadan is the narrator of most of the novel. By the end of novel, the narrator changes and the story is conveyed by another character. As the story

progresses Şadan commits suicide as a result of a deep depression. Thereafter it is Şadan's wife Revan, who tells the story's conclusion. Revan, who is a more reliable narrator than Şadan, tells what happened at the end of the novel.

One of the first points that draws attention about Şadan's character is his critical approach to people. He criticizes people's perceptions of themselves as extremely intelligent. "Because everyone, from the patient in lunatic asylum to the professors of the university, is first and foremost an admirer of his own mind and intellect...This great belief in everyone's own genius shows the depth of the disease" (Gürpınar, 1981: 7). Şadan underlines that everyone thinks they are very intelligent. According to Şadan, such a misconception is a disease and this strong conviction in one's own genius demonstrates the disease's severity. One of the social issues he emphasizes is people's conceit. In other words, people who are in illusion, those who admire themselves, are harshly criticized. It is also noteworthy that a mentally unstable character brings up such a problem of society.

Şadan's perception of life is a bit different from a normal, psychologically healthy person. He is not fully insane, but he has some severe indications of madness. He does extreme things that no sensible person might do. "For example, it is my custom to smudge it with a few drops of urine before going to bed on a clean mattress in my own home or as a guest" (Gürpınar, 1981: 25). As can be seen in this example, Şadan's mental health condition is not healthy. This is the course of behaviour that will make people uncomfortable in society. What is noteworthy here is that Şadan is aware that such behaviour is not normal. Therefore, he secretly performs such acts. "Now when I saw the bed trembling from this cleaning, a squeak got stuck in my pee... I'm just looking for a quiet time in the room" (Gürpınar, 1981: 201). He is well aware that revealing such deviant habits will result in a furious reaction. This is one of the instances where Şadan's personality differs from that of Holden's. Şadan is conscious of his own issues to some extent. And since he is aware of his own condition, he tries to conceal it as much as possible.

Another characteristic of Şadan is that he has his unique truths. He has a distinct worldview and perspective on events and people. He conveys these views as if they are universal truths. It is striking that Şadan expresses his thoughts on intelligence and insanity in considerable detail (Gürpınar, 1981: 7-8). Şadan is appalled by hypocrisy and insincerity of people. "How am I going to live among these deceptive people who are friendly-faced enemies who cheat on each other with a laugh?" (Gürpınar, 1981: 9). The dishonest and insincere behaviour of the members of the society towards each other is one of the situations that disturbs Şadan very much. At another place he asserts that; "Throwing and breaking whatever I can get into the faces of all the people I come across, "Idiots, scoundrels, liars, swindlers, traitors, oppressors, this is how God created the world. Why are you deceiving your people with the excuse of correcting it?" (Gürpınar, 1981: 10). As illustrated by these examples Şadan feels the same way Holden does about people's insincerity. He sees people as liars, scoundrels and swindlers, and he criticizes people for not appearing as they are. On the other hand, he refrains from expressing that these hypocritical behaviours are also present in him.

Şadan gets angry with people's reverence of ignorance and hypocrisy. However, he is regarded to be dishonest. Şadan, who accuses people of lying and fraud, is a person who employs deception in all forms when necessary. By slandering Revan, a married woman, he takes part in the breakdown of a happy marriage (Gürpınar, 1981: 79). In terms of evil and mischief, it can be recognized that Şadan is far ahead of Holden. Because towards the end of the story, it is seen that he is a dangerous person capable of committing murder (Gürpınar, 1981: 278). It is asserted that although Şadan loses his mental balance from time to time, he is conscious both while committing murder and committing suicide (Ulutaş, 2006: 38). In this context, it can be claimed that his terrible activities are the result of his own conscious choice, rather than a breakdown of his mental balance.

Şadan has a tendency to dislike people. Revan, his wife, is the only person he confesses to love. He does not have a close relationship even with his mother. "Mom, we're two freaks who do not get along and do not let their deal go" (Gürpınar, 1981: 129). He holds his mother responsible for his psychological problems. "Alas, poor mother, I have become like this, getting on my nerves by saying, "Yes, oh no ... "to every stupid word in front of your naivety. Unless a person is hypocritical and sneaky, he cannot get on well with even his closest relative." (1981: 10). In this regard, it can be stated that Şadan is unable to create a healthy family bond. In fact, he is an isolated character and he cannot establish healthy dialogues with his environment. In this regard he is not an ideal character for the society, but this does not prevent him from expressing the problems in the society.

Apart from the above-mentioned commonalities, there are also various minor similarities between the two characters. Being extravagant and fond of entertainment are also common characteristics of the characters. The financial situation of the families of both characters is above average. Both characters are frivolous characters. They do not obey the authority; they live as they know, as they want. They act with their feelings, they act as they feel. The decisive factor in the thinking and manoeuvring of both characters are their instincts. When all of the above factors are taken into account, it is clear that both characters have a lot in common.

3. CONCLUSION

It has been the subject of the comparative literary studies to examine similarities and differences in the stories written by the authors who wrote in different times and places. The two authors whose works are reviewed in this article are from distinct eras and geographical locations. J. D. Salinger is an American author who was born in United States in 1919. On the other hand, Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar is an author who was born a little earlier, in 1864, in Istanbul. Despite the fact that they are authors from different eras and places, there are certain similarities in their works. In this context, Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and Gürpınar's *Ben Deli Miyim?* show some similarities. This similarity is primarily based on protagonists of the novels. Some obvious similarities between the two characters are as follows; first of all, both characters are unreliable narrators. Both characters complain about the artificiality and hypocrisy that surrounds them. The mental health of both characters is not very good. At the end of the story, Holden is receiving psychological treatment in a rest house. Şadan's condition

is more serious; by the end of the story, he commits suicide as a result of a deep depression. Both characters have a dislike towards people. These are a few of the similar aspects of both characters. In addition to aforementioned similarities there are other minor similarities as well. Being extravagant and fond of entertainment are also common characteristics of the characters. The financial situation of the families of both characters is above average. Both characters are frivolous characters. They do not obey the authority; they live as they know, as they want. They act with their feelings, they act as they feel. The decisive factor in the thinking and maneuvering of both characters are their instincts. When all of the above factors are taken into account, it is clear that both characters have a lot in common. In this context, it is thought that it would be useful to compare the two novels. And the purpose of this study is to draw as many comparisons as possible between the two novels.

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