

Trauma and Psyche in *Invisible Man* and *The Time Regulation Institute*: A Lacanian Psychoanalytical Approach

Görünmez Adam ve Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü'nde Travma ve Psike: Bir Lacancı Psikanalitik Yaklaşım

Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

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ABSTRACT

This study carefully examines Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *The Time Regulation Institute* (1961), while applying Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory on identity formation as a theoretical framework. Besides their publication in a similar timeframe, both literary works delve into various themes that eventually focus on the deep trauma experienced by individuals at the time. Ellison's master work explores the racial discrimination that prevailed in American society, while Tanpınar's work underscores the difficult challenges surrounding Turkish people in the middle of the turbulent years of modernization period. By applying Lacan's concepts of the Imaginary and Symbolic orders, this analysis helps to interpret how the protagonists manage to go through instances where they face intense psychological discomfort, estrangement from societal expectations and norms, and disillusionment stemming from significant losses. More specifically, the study analyzes how trauma, consciousness, psyche and loss are portrayed and altered in different states, while shedding light on their immense influence on the characters' sense of alienation and disillusionment, discussed within the theoretical framework of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. Through this interdisciplinary discussion, this study's aim is to provide a wider comprehension of the complex structures of identity, trauma, and alienation portrayed in presented literature, offering acumen into human nature within modern society.

Keywords: Identity, Psyche, Trauma, Alienation, Comparative Literature

ÖZET

Bu araştırma, Jacques Lacan'ın kimlik oluşumu üzerine psikanalitik teorisi çerçevesinde Ralph Ellison'ın *Görünmez Adam* (1952) ve Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar'ın *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (1961) adlı romanlarını ele alarak yapılmıştır. Benzer bir zaman diliminde yayımlansalar da, bu farklı edebi eserler, modern insanın derin travmasını vurgulayan farklı temaları ele almaktadır. Ellison'ın başyapıtı Amerikan toplumundaki yaygın ırksal ayrımcılığı ele alırken, Tanpınar'ın anlatısı Türklerin modernleşmenin hengamesi içinde karşılaştığı zorlu sorunlara ışık tutmaktadır. Lacan'ın İmgesel ve Sembolik düzen kavramlarını kullanarak yapılan bu analiz, kahramanların varoluşsal kriz anlarında, toplumsal normlardan kopmalarında ve derin kayıplardan kaynaklanan hayal kırıklığından nasıl geçtiklerini açıklamaktadır. Özellikle, çalışma travmanın, bilinç değişikliklerinin ve derin üzüntünün tasvir edilmesini inceler ve bu durumların karakterlerin aidiyet duygusu ve hayal kırıklığı üzerindeki dönüşüm etkisini Lacancı psikanalitik teorinin çerçevesinde aydınlatır. Bu disiplinler arası keşif aracılığıyla, bu çalışma edebiyatta tasvir edilen kimlik, travma ve yabancılaşma karmaşıklıklarının daha derin bir anlayışına katkıda bulunmayı ve çağdaş toplum içinde insan koşullarına dair içgörüler sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kimlik, Psike, Travma, Yabancılaşma, Karşılaşmalı Edebiyat

1. Introduction

In an article about comparative literature, Professor Kefeli points out the studies on comparative literature include careful analysis that is being conducted on “a slippery slope” since the author needs to pay close attention to avoid using definitive judgmental remarks (2006, 332). This is quite understandable since one needs to consider various differential elements among others to draw a conclusion which still may be short on some aspects. This is crucial especially when dealing with cult literary texts such as Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s *The Time Regulation Institute* since these significant works have been researched thoroughly over the years. The scholar needs to pay attention to these researches and avoid adopting the ideas presented as facts and use them to draw definite judgments. With this thought in mind, this paper focuses on analyzing the growth of main characters’ subjectivity over their experiences within their respective communities through a Lacanian reading to establish a pattern that includes the similarities as well as differences of the characters’ voyages. Prior to establishing a discussion on the characters’ journeys, it is also significant to highlight Ellison and Tanpınar’s mentalities, focuses as well as their backgrounds to have a wider understanding of the texts.

Ralph Ellison, an American author and literary critic, published *Invisible Man* in 1952. The novel is still considered to be one of the classics of American literature. The author came into prominence as an important figure in the literary world with his essays and criticism. The themes he generally employed included race, culture, struggle and the intricacies in society in general. Amidst other works, *Invisible Man* became an authoritative narrative that addresses the complex structures of African American individuals’ identity and existence in American society, dealing with the central themes of racial discrimination, the search for identity and the social difficulties. The novel is narrated through the eyes of an unnamed black character. The readers witness the main character’s struggles to exist in society as he encounters fundamental issues such as racial and social discrimination and prejudice while searching for individual identity. As the narrator finds himself among various incidents and people, he realizes the challenges of society’s ignorance and lack of understanding more. In addition, the novel carefully cultivates the process of finding one’s own identity and the inner conflicts that take place in the process. Ellison’s work offers a stimulating experience on ethnicity, individual identity and social structure while contributing a critical outlook on American literature and society.

As the other author in this study, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar is considered as one of the most important figures in Turkish literature and his works are especially applauded for their contribution to modern Turkish fiction. His career contains texts in both poetry, nonfiction and fiction. Themes such as traditional Turkish culture, the extent of western influences and the concept of time can be considered at the forefront. Among his other influential productions, *The Time Regulation Institute* still continues to hold a significant place in Turkish literature. Whether it is the characters, the plot, the story, the word plays or the combination of all, the novel offers a deep inner reflection on the passage of time and changing social norms in a crucial modernization period in Turkish society. Tanpınar is also prominent as a critic. His

writings on literary theory and art has contributed significantly to the development and modernization of Turkish literature as well. Tanpınar is considered to be one of the most important figures of Turkish literature in the 20th century and has left a lasting impact on Turkish culture and literature.

As one of the masterpieces, *The Time Regulation Institute* (1961) is still considered to be among the forerunners of the twentieth century Turkish literature. The novel revolves around a main character who is somewhat of an insignificant and passive figure, caught in the turbulent times of Türkiye's transition from the traditions and mindset of the Ottoman Empire to a more modern, Westernized republic. Hayri İrdal finds himself amidst a dynamic society in which his dreams and aspirations collide with the social and political prospect of the country. As one of the most explicit symbols, the Time Regulation Institute, where Hayri works towards the end in the novel, is a satirical representation of the modernization period. The institution has been created for the purpose of with the intention of regulating Turkish time with international standards, meaning aligning Turkish values with Western ones. However, soon the readers witness the occurrence of all sorts of absurdities and challenges in its attempt to adapt those foreign values. Tanpınar delves into various themes including cultural identity, societal norms and traditions, modernity, and the clash between East and West. Hayri's story presents a perspective in which the author criticizes several aspects of society containing the physical and psychological effects of rapid modernization on individuals and the society in general.

Although they come from different cultural and literary backgrounds, Ellison and Tanpınar are writers whose works reflect on themes of identity, trauma and alienation along with several similarities that can be observed amidst their works. One of the similarities would be how they explore the experience of invisibility or marginalization of the individuals among their own respective communities. In *Invisible Man*, the readers are met with a protagonist who is feeling more and more invisible in a society that does not value, hear or recognize him due to his race. In *The Time Regulation Institute*, Tanpınar's protagonist continuously fails to make a connection with the world that surrounds him and, thus, struggles to find any meaning. The mentioned texts offer a critique of the dominant culture as well as the surrounding communities of the presented characters while inviting readers to reflect on the experience of being invisible or marginalized. Both authors also engage in similar literary techniques to highlight the psychological dimensions of their characters. Some of these techniques include stream-of-consciousness, dream sequences, and surreal imagery to further dwell on the inner selves of the characters and convey the complicated and often conflicting nature of individual psyche. Both Ellison and Tanpınar are celebrated for their penmanship in which they demonstrated stylistic innovation and mastery of language over and over in their works. While Ellison has been praised for the musicality, vivid imagery, and ability to convey the rhythms of African American vernacular into his writings; Tanpınar has come into prominence with his lyricism, subtle wordplay, and analysis of the rich cultural heritage of Türkiye. All in all, even though Ellison and Tanpınar come from different cultural and historical contexts and produce in different languages, they share a commitment to exploring the complexities of the human experience through their literary works.

When analyzing works such as *Invisible Man* and *The Time Regulation Institute*, it may be useful to utilize Lacan's psychoanalytic theory to understand the characters' inner conflicts, social roles and search for identity since the texts mainly explore the complex human experiences. The application of Lacan's theories to these books is subject to interpretation and depends on a critic or interpreter's perspective. By allowing an interpretation that includes Lacan's complex theories, the study can provide a framework for understanding the relationships between identity, language, and society in literary works, allowing for various interpretations and analyses in a deeper level of understanding.

2. Lacan's Theory of Psychoanalysis

In Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory, the orders in identity formation are highlighted in great aspects. Even though Lacan differentiates between these orders, he explains that they do not have a chronological order or can coexist at the same times in various occasions. In "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," Lacan primarily centers his argument on the sense of self (ego) along with the Imaginary order which is alluded to the illusionary state in which the association between the sense of self and the specular image takes place. Within the mirror stage that Lacan delineates, the infant child does not respect him/herself as a partitioned substance from their guardians or the surroundings. By the early 1950s, Lacan started to see the mirror stage as a lasting structure of subjectivity which interfaces it to the Imaginary order. By interfacing with the specular image, the newborn child begins to constitute a sense of self within the mirror stage.

People see their behaviors reflected within the imitative motions of the others. Through these motions, the imitated individual starts to utilize the position of a specular image. Whereas men recognize with the parent of the same sex, ladies are "required to take the image of the other sex as the basis of [their] identification" (Lacan, 1988, 176). Women realize "sex is not accomplished in the Oedipus complex in a way symmetrical to that of the man's, not by identification with the mother, but on the contrary by identification with the paternal object, which assigns her an extra detour" (Ibid., 172). Lacan's concept of the ideal ego addresses an individual's adaptation to societal expectations. Both novels illustrate characters grappling with societal expectations and striving to form their ideal egos. Both the unnamed narrator and Hayri Irdal try to find their places in society, starting with their families and subsequently within their surrounding communities.

On the journey to find their places among society, Lacan's theory focuses on the main Other who is represented generally as the mother figure. His theory underscores the significance of how mothers play fundamental roles during an individual's identity formation process since they are the first individuals that infants identify in the mirror stage. As the infant grows awareness, which is caused by the phallic signifier according to Lacan, the separation from the mother begins taking place. He associates the concept of signified with the unconscious and the concept of signifier with language. There are references that the signified constitutes the fixed aspects of the individuals. In the novels, the readers do not get any detailed information about the mothers of the main characters. The lack of the mother as the Lacanian *Other* can be

interpreted in various senses. One would be the described path of continuous disappointing encounters throughout the main characters' lives and their reaction to these experiences in terms of the traumas they face with can be described as the lack of identification with the signifier in an unconscious level.

State of consciousness occurs when "there's a surface such that it can produce what is called an image" (1991, 49). The infant has a tendency to identify with an image that seems to be unified since it feels fragmented due to its body's limitations. Once the subject feels identified with a coherent image, the stages for subject formation begins taking place and leads the infant's ego to act more aggressively and narcissistically. This is a fundamental step for the subject to have self-consciousness which will later on follow with the feelings of fragmentation and alienation from both the individuals' selves as well as their surroundings. Lacan's mirror stage explores an individual's self-recognition through a mirror and the conflicts during this process. In both *Invisible Man* and *The Time Regulation Institute*, the main characters delve into the protagonist's quest for identity and conflicts with societal roles, making Lacan's mirror stage applicable for understanding these conflicts.

The Symbolic order includes the translation of reality's meaning and the significance of the utilization of language whereas Lacan's Imaginary is restricted to the comprehensibility of the images. Within the Symbolic order, individuals transition from their bodily functions to a realm governed by words and "The Law," which are closely linked to representations conveyed through language. The Symbolic order encompasses culture. Like language, it is intertwined with the unconscious according to Lacan, who views the unconscious as a concept linking signification to the subject within the framework of the Symbolic order. In his book *Écrits*, Lacan highlights the unconscious being "*neither primordial nor instinctual*" (2005, 129). He perceives the unconscious as an entity that intermittently opens and closes, aiding in the subject's processing within the framework of the Symbolic order (Ibid., 143). Therefore, he connects unconsciousness with language when he further asserts that "[t]he unconscious is structured like a language" since the only method to grasp the unconscious is through thorough analysis utilizing words (1993, 167). Lacan points out that the Imaginary and Symbolic orders do not unfold in order, rather they are interchangeable and help to form the individual's evolving experiences. These two orders aid in comprehending the subject's world and reality, which encompass the subject's subjectivity and social interactions under the Law. In Lacan's Symbolic order, the subject realizes autonomy while also going under the control of a broader Law, which includes the law of the father, authority, language, culture, and more.

In order to move away from the law, the subject needs to experience losses. Jacques Lacan posits that all living subjects experience castration and are deprived of a phallus. This castration initiates a moment of loss that prompts the fragmentation of subjects. In "The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis," Lacan emphasizes the importance of this loss, which initiates the process of submission and symbolization necessary for the subject's emergence: "the subject is born in so far as the signifier emerges in the field of the Other" (1978, 199). The concept of the Other extends beyond merely another subject with its inherent diversity and resistance to identification; it also encompasses the Symbolic order that regulates the

connection with that other subject. The Other is embedded within the Symbolic order as Lacan correlates radical diversity with language and law. Lacan's concepts of the real, symbolic, and simulacrum can be applied to understand the characters' lived reality and internal worlds. Especially in works like *The Time Regulation Institute*, the relationships between the past and the present and the simulacra within an individual's inner world can be explored more deeply through Lacanian theories. In this study, the psychoanalytic analysis helps to identify the main characters' progress through processes of trauma and identity formations.

2.1. Trauma and Unconscious in *Invisible Man* and *The Time Regulation Institute*

In identity formation theory, Jacques Lacan proposes that the human psyche is mainly formed by unconscious wishes as well as conflicting confrontations that may evolve into different forms of psychological discomfort. Hence, it would be possible to interpret traumas being agents that lead to changes in a subject's behaviors and reactions while directly affecting one's psyche. In *Invisible Man*, the unnamed narrator begins to experience trauma from a young age when he witnessed a loved one's death, and later as a young man experiencing racism and discrimination. All of the traumatic experiences eventually lead to a sense of disconnection and fragmentation within the protagonist's psyche as he struggles to come to terms with his own identity in the face of societal pressures and expectations.

The readers have witnessed the protagonist's acceptance of how he hasn't been able to approach the truth without the expectation of lies since he's felt that it's been an innate necessity which has become a part of his own character at some point of his life. The unnamed narrator points out to his experience of trauma and the ways in which it has affected his ability to confront and acknowledge the truth about his life and the world around him. The way the narrator underscores his traumatic experiences along with the consequences may also be seen as a common coping mechanism for subjects who experience various trauma levels. These individuals seem to be in a constant state to make sense of and, eventually, come to terms with their own experiences. These coping mechanisms seem to be closely intertwined with the character's personality and, thus, suggest that they alter the ways in which trauma can shape a subject's identity and sense of self. The passages related to the topic in the novel demonstrate how trauma can lead to a sense of disconnection, from one's own self including feelings and experiences of the outside.

Right at the beginning, the narrator announces: "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass," but his feelings towards this invisibility alters throughout the narration (Ellison, 1995, 3). At some point, he points out his state of shock when he first realizes his invisibility but later on, he further asserts that it is precisely this invisibility that empowers him through his state of inbetweenness. The unnamed protagonist's realization of his own invisibility refers to the ways in which trauma can make a subject feel unseen and unheard, and the sense of uncertainty that he describes reflects, especially, the disorienting effects of trauma on an individual's sense of

identity and time. Ultimately, these quotations underscore the complex and often profound impact of trauma on an individual's psychological well-being and sense of self.

According to Lacan, trauma is a strong factor that can lead a subject to experience what he calls "split subject." This state is associated with an individual's sense of division or what he refers to as "fragmentation." The mentioned division is more linked to the occurrence of fragmentation within one's own psyche. Therefore, it is more psychological than physical. By feeling this irregularity, the subject may start distancing from the surrounding community as well as from his own self. The distancing from the community-or society in a larger scale- may include separation from the dominant society's traditional, cultural and social values as well. Thus the alienation gap between the surrounding community and the subject widens over time. In *Invisible Man*, the unnamed narrator is a character who experiences the increase of fragmentation and thus alienation from the rest of the community as he struggles between his own desires and needs and the expectation of his surrounding African American community as well as the white dominated society. The fragmentation results in the character's feeling of invisibility and therefore total alienation at some point in his life. He cannot find a way to cope and coexist in a racist community and as a result, the only solution he finds is to completely separate himself from the others and live in a manhole with his fragmented identity.

The experience of series of traumatic occurrences within the protagonist is also visible in *The Time Regulation Institute*. These experiences include Hayri Irdal's loss of family members and the business. However, one of the biggest traumas in his life-apart from his first wife's death- is when he realizes that his life's work and labor has been for naught upon the shutting down of the Time Regulation Institute. This realization hits Hayri Irdal harder and leads to feelings of alienation and isolation from the surrounding community as well. He represents the inbetweenness of the human psyche, the feeling of not belonging.

Tanpinar's novel, thus, viewed as having a complex structure in which the readers relate the themes with time, identity and trauma. In the case of this novel, the identification of trauma in Lacanian sense can be interpreted through the role of language usage, the unconscious of the subject as well as the representation of symbolic order in the formation process of the self. Since Lacan believes that the unconscious is structured like a language, it can be said that the self is formed through a process of identification with symbols and signifiers. Thus, trauma is identified when the disruption of this complex processes of identification take place and result in the feeling of fragmentation within the self. In *The Time Regulation Institute*, the protagonist is portrayed as being deeply invested in the idea of regulating time, to a point that he sees himself as a master of time. However, his deep investment in the regulation of time and the absurdities that follow eventually lead to his downfall as he comes to a point where he can no longer have any control of his surroundings. By not having control or the mastery over his life, the trauma begins to resurface in his psyche. Lacan would argue that the causes of Hayri Irdal's traumas are not simply the consequences of external factors but, rather, products of his own unconscious self. The trauma that Hayri experiences is thus not just an event that happens to him, but is a fundamental disruption of his psyche and his relationship to the symbolic order.

Similar to the unnamed narrator, Hayri İrdal also considers trauma in a more collective sense. He uses the people in *kıraathane*¹ as examples. When Hayri describes Doctor Ramiz, he states:

The doctor spent all his free hours of the day at one of the tables in this café, opening and closing his briefcase, cleaning his nails, complaining about life and the laziness of the country, explaining psychoanalysis, or listening to the surroundings. He was interested in almost everything. And every idea was endearing and worthy of acceptance for him, as long as one end was connected to social criticism; the other end was already in his hands and he could easily connect it to Freud and Jung. (Tanpınar, 2014, 139)

When Hayri İrdal criticizes the people and the place and asks whether or not he never gets bored, the doctor replies that it is this place that made him find joy in his occupation. He asserts: “[T]he community itself is important! There is no better place for social-psychoanalysis. Look how the past lives on; how they live it, jokingly and seriously... They all live in a completely different realm in their dreams. They dream as a community” (Ibid). Just like how the unnamed rather—or rather the invisible man—declares that he is invisible simply because people refuse to see him, Hayri İrdal also comments on how people evaluate others with contorted lenses that lead them to misjudge other people’s realities. It is possible to interpret that these types of aspects of human thought can be linked to various aspects of trauma and its connection to the psyche and its relation to mental pain, understanding other individuals, focusing too much on negative aspects of one’s own life and so on. In this particular novel, the readers experience the trauma and its consequences on both the individual as well as the society as a unity while delving into a rich exploration of this complex and multifaceted concept. The described trauma in the novel also includes the concepts of identity, unconsciousness and time.

Lacan views the unconscious as a concept that is not simply a repository of repressed memories and desires, but is instead a complex network of signifiers and symbols that shape the way we experience ourselves and the world around us. In *The Time Regulation Institute*, the protagonist’s actions follow a similar path to support Lacan’s definition. In the novel, the concept of the unconscious is central to Hayri İrdal who is deeply invested in the idea of regulating time, and, at some point, sees himself as a master of time. He makes references to how everything has an end, but it is the memories that stay with us until the end. However, his obsession with control ultimately leads to his downfall, as he becomes caught up in a series of events that he cannot control. Hayri’s unconscious desires and motivations are reflected in his relationship to time in the novel. His desire to control time is a manifestation of his need for power and mastery over his own life. However, as Lacan would argue, the unconscious is not just a reflection of individual desires, but is also shaped by broader social and cultural forces. That is why the novel implores not just the individual unconsciousness of the subject but the collective unconsciousness of the Turkish community at the time.

¹ Places where Turkish men get together to drink tea, play games such as backgammon, cards and etc. and gossip and chat. Men who frequent those places spend most of their time in there without any purpose other than to pass the time. However, there is also a culture that is associated with it. Those places become the source of formation for collective ideas, ideals, judgment and so on in the target community.

The Time Regulation Institute also explores the theme of collective unconsciousness, which refers to the shared symbols, myths, and archetypes that shape the way we understand ourselves and the world around us. Doctor Ramiz strongly believes that a person's dreams and aspirations are a mirror of the world they live in. That is why he is infuriated with the idea that Hayri İrdal does not see a single dream related to his father since Doctor Ramiz believes that figure is the core reason of the collective traumas that harvest in the society.

He accused me of not having the dreams that a man who dislikes his father, who looks for a father wherever he can find one, is supposed to have:

"How is that possible?", he said. "How could a man like you not have a single dream suitable for his illness! At least you should make some effort from now on... I want you to have dreams more suitable for your illness, do you understand?", he said. "Make all your efforts and try to have such dreams! First you must get rid of symbols. Once you see your father in your dream with his own face, everything will change, everything will be fine... It's not that easy. These things happen without you realizing it. So gather your willpower and try to get rid of the symbols that your father wears. Once they are gone, it will be easier to get rid of your father. That is, from the feeling of inferiority that comes from your father... I'm giving you a list of dreams you should see this week." (122)

The importance of seeing a proper dream that fits the psychoanalytical theory is more crucial for Doctor Ramiz that he ends up prescribing it just like a tablet medicine even though it does not make sense to order someone to see a certain type of dream at all. At this point, the readers are given a glimpse of Doctor Ramiz' individual traumas as well.

The Institute itself can also be seen as a symbol of the collective desire for control and regulation that underlies modern society. This concept of the unconscious in *The Time Regulation Institute* can be understood in terms of Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis, which emphasizes the role of language, the symbolic order, and the unconscious in shaping the self. Through this lens, the novel's characters and themes reflect deeper psychological processes that are at work both within individuals and society as a whole. After failing to cope with the modernist mechanism that follows the societies developmental processes, Hayri İrdal returns back to his own self. He often mentions about looking into one's own inner self/soul/unconscious to figure out the real self. He comments on how the outer and the inner self relates closely. While mentioning one of the characters, Nevzat Hanım, Hayri İrdal describes her as: "Jealousy, love, stubbornness, selfishness...,in short, all the terrible and cruel wheels of the human spirit worked around her to make this beautiful woman a shadow of herself. Almost everyone around her had come into her life, without once trying to understand her, always to pounce on her" (327). He continues to talk about the fact of realities behind her smile is not because she has reached "the reign of a spirit that has resolved all its issues, that has gone beyond matter, that shines there before our eyes with the distance of a star" but instead because of "the helplessness of a trapped person living in all kinds of threats and suffering behind the scenes" (337). The narrator makes a point on how the outer world that is formed by the surrounding societies directly affect one's inner thinking, aspirations and beliefs. In her article about the irony in *The Time Regulation Institute*, Moran makes a comment on how the author leaves only two characters (Nuri Efendi and Hayri's son, Ahmet) out of the irony since they are able to excel at a skill through hard work and honesty. In this sense, the novel demonstrates how societies can lead the individuals into corruption and immorality (1978). That is why Tanpinar underlines the importance of collective unconscious on the subjects' inner

thinking and traumas. In the case of the main character, this process of manipulation is done unconsciously and leads him to fail to realize the actual effects at the time. Unless the characters isolate themselves from their respective communities and alienate their minds, the real effects of trauma will not be evident.

Ellison's protagonist experiences a similar enlightenment toward the end on unconsciousness and its collectivity. He asserts: "The truth is the light and the light is the truth. And the light is the unconsciousness which is the truth of the unconscious" (Ellison, 1995, 10). The quotation describes the concept of the unconscious and its role in shaping the protagonist's experiences and sense of self. The quotation may also be interpreted as speaking the danger of losing touch with one's own psyche and unconscious motivations in the face of trauma and dislocation. In her paper, Ulucan states: "The encounter with the hostile culture demolishes their past and takes possession of their future" (2022, 137). In the case of the unnamed narrator, we see this collective detachment of African American from their past cultures and traditions and shaping of their futures according to the directives that are established by the dominant White culture. As it is suggested the ways in which the unconscious may hold the key to understanding one's life trajectory and ultimate destination. It highlights the power of the unconscious to shape one's thoughts and actions, even when these processes are not fully understood or conscious. In *Invisible Man*, the concept of the unconscious is central to the protagonist's journey of self-discovery.

The unnamed narrator is constantly bombarded with racist stereotypes and caricatures that seek to define him as a certain type of person, and he struggles to assert his own identity in the face of these external forces. As the narrator begins to explore his own unconscious desires and motivations, he discovers that his sense of self is deeply tied to his relationship with his community and the broader history of African Americans. His journey can be seen as a process of identification with symbols and signifiers that allow him to understand himself in relation to broader social and cultural forces. The novel's themes reflect deeper psychological processes that are at work both within individuals and within society as a whole, highlighting the complex and often fraught nature of identity formation.

In terms of the process of identity formation in light of Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis, the role of language, the unconscious and the symbolic order within the formation of self is highlighted in the mentioned novels. Through this view, the protagonists' traumatic experiences are not just plot devices, but are instead reflections of deeper psychological processes that follow the novels' characters and themes. As one of the fundamental steps to further progress in the Symbolic order, it is expected for the subject to submit to the Law. This submission to the law of the order is usually followed by an experience of loss in the subject. The novels' characters are seen to be experiencing this loss and entering the order of the law, however, they end up defying this law while alienating themselves from their respective societies and breaking the bond to disillusion themselves.

2.2. Loss and Alienation in *Invisible Man* and *The Time Regulation Institute*

According to Lacan's theory, loss is a fundamental aspect of human experience, as the self is constantly in a state of becoming, and must constantly negotiate its relationship to external forces. In both novels, this aspect of loss becomes a reoccurring theme within the protagonists' experiences. In *Invisible Man*, the concept of loss is central to the protagonist's journey of self-discovery. The unnamed narrator begins the novel as a young black man who is struggling to find his place in a society that views him as invisible. He admits: "Life is to be lived, not controlled; and humanity is won by continuing to play in face of certain defeat" (Ellison, 1995, 577). He constantly experiences stereotypical racist remarks that try to define him as a certain type of person, and he struggles to assert his own identity in the face of these external forces.

As the unnamed narrator begins to explore his own unconscious desires and motivations, he discovers that his sense of self is deeply tied to his relationship to his community and the broader history of African Americans. At some point in the narrative, he realizes that he should not be held responsible for anything that takes place in his past. This realization becomes a game changer for him since, in the narrative, there are several aspects when he felt like a puppet whose outcome of actions was determined by others. In light of this information, his journey can be seen as a process of negotiating loss, as he comes to terms with the fact that his sense of self must be constructed in relation to broader social and cultural forces that are often beyond his control. Not until the end that the unnamed narrator realizes: "I was looking for myself and asking everyone except myself questions which I, and only I, could answer" (15). He finally understands that while focusing on the losses, he forgot to turn to himself and take responsibilities of his own actions. He feels empowered with this newfound acknowledgment that will help him step away from the law and find his own self/voice.

On the other hand, in Tanpinar's novel, Hayri İrdal becomes obsessed with the idea of regulating time in order to achieve progress and modernity in Türkiye. As he becomes more and more involved in the Time Regulation Institute, he begins to lose touch with his own identity and psyche, becoming increasingly alienated from his family, friends, and community. The main character realizes that his identity is formed not by his personality but rather with the help of his interaction with the surrounding society. He says:

Without realizing it, just by coincidence, I had met a number of people, one of them had taken an interest in me. No matter what I did, I was now in his grip, I couldn't get rid of him. The machine was set up outside, working on orders from the outside, now increasing its speed, then decreasing it, sometimes stopping. Then, neither the saw, nor the knife, nothing worked. Then the panic and torment were immediately replaced by fear. I was afraid of what we call a little later. (Tanpinar, 2014, 186)

He feels suffocated because of his current state but only later on in the narrative that he comes to an understanding about the significance of loss. In order to move forward from the Law of the Father—or the authority—one needs to express losses. Sometimes losses are needed to grow further. Tanpinar's protagonist comments about the losses that he has experienced and how those losses have left him with the imprisonment throughout his life but at the same time have helped him to move forward. His wife Emine's death was especially difficult for İrdal, however, he describes his feelings as:

With Emine's death, I was left completely empty, as if the last branch I was clinging to had been severed. What I had lost was so great for me that at first I could not understand it. Nor could I measure its consequences for my life. I simply wandered around with something black and very heavy inside me. Then a different feeling, a sense of liberation, was mixed with this devastation. I was freed from an oppression. Now Emine could never die again, or even get sick. She would remain there in a corner of my mind, just as she was. Many other things in my life could have frightened me, all kinds of disasters could have happened to me. But the most terrible thing was the possibility of losing her and the fear of that was no longer there. (149)

This acceptance infuses his growth out of the law and helps him turn back to his own inner self. In Lacan's theory, the self is formed through a process of identification with symbols and signifiers, and is constantly renegotiating its relationship to these symbolic structures. As the novel progresses, Hayri Irdal's obsession with time regulation leads him to experience a profound sense of loss, as he realizes that his efforts to impose order on the world are ultimately futile. As time accumulates, the protagonist becomes increasingly disillusioned with the project of modernization since it is paralleled with the institution itself, and begins to question the very foundations of his own psyche and culture. This marks to the beginning of his slow process of alienation from his surrounding community.

Alienation, in the context we use in this study, refers to a state of disconnection or separation from oneself, others, or one's environment. In the novel, the protagonist Hayri Irdal becomes increasingly alienated from his own sense of self as he becomes more and more involved in the project of modernization in Türkiye. The idea is that alienation can arise from a person's inability to achieve their dreams results in a sense of disillusionment and leads to a distancing from one's own self. In both novels, the alienation of one's own self as well as the surrounding community is an evident theme. When Hayri Irdal's character is analyzed, his alienation includes distancing himself from his own cultural heritage, as he becomes more and more invested in Western ideals of progress and rationality. Tanpinar does not focus solely on and criticize Western values but rather stresses on the individuals' subjectivity of reaching those ideals. In his novel, *Five Cities*, there is a similar outlook as he describes the people in Erzurum being hard workers with ethical values and how these virtues affect their self-confidence and overall vision of the world (1960, 36). The author believes that as long as the community is honest, society will eventually excel. While he believes that there is a need to improve working conditions so that individuals can become the master of their time as well as lives, he criticizes the ones that lose connections to their roots (2002, 76). Hayri's obsession with time regulation is motivated in part by a desire to catch up with the West and prove Türkiye's worth as a modern nation, but in the process, he loses touch with his own cultural roots, values and traditions. Overall, by analyzing *The Time Regulation Institute* within this scope of alienation theme, the novel can be understood as a result of the tensions between traditional cultural values and the forces of modernization and globalization. Hayri's alienation reflects a broader sense of dislocation and fragmentation that many people experience in the face of rapid social and economic change.

Similar definition of the concept of alienation is also visible in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Contrary to Tanpinar's novel, in the context of *Invisible Man*, alienation is seen to be the result of the pervasive racism and social inequality that the main character faces as a black man

in America. Throughout the novel, the protagonist experiences various forms of alienation as a result of his race and social status to a point where the readers do not learn his name. As he repeatedly declares multiple times in the narrative, he is invisible to those around him, as his experiences and perspectives are not recognized or acknowledged by the dominant culture and society. This sense of invisibility is exacerbated by the protagonist's own sense of uncertainty and confusion about his identity and place in the world. The protagonist is also alienated from his own community, as he struggles to reconcile his own desires and ambitions with the expectations and traditions of the black community. In the example of when the unnamed narrator takes the white trustee, Mr. Norton, for a drive around the campus, he is in a dilemma about going to the places where black locals live. He tries to avoid as much as possible but is still forced by an upper authority only to end up being kicked out from his school. He is caught between the demands of his own individuality and the pressures of conformity to group norms, and is constantly struggling to find a sense of belonging and acceptance. At the end, he does not believe that there is any place for him to belong and become a functioning part of any system. Through deeper analysis, it is possible to interpret that the concept of alienation in *Invisible Man* reflects the broader social and historical forces that shape individuals' experiences of themselves and the world around them. The unnamed narrator's experiences of racism, social inequality, and cultural conflict highlight the complex and often fraught nature of identity formation and cultural change in the United States, and underscore the importance of understanding the broader social and historical context in which individual experiences take place.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper focuses on the application of Lacanian psychoanalysis to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *The Time Regulation Institute*. It unveils profound insights into the characters' psyche and societal constructs that are mainly marked and grouped by trauma, unconscious conflicts, loss, and alienation. Both novels, through their intricate narratives and complex characterizations, exemplify Lacan's concepts of the Imaginary and the Symbolic as well as the fragmentation and alienation.

In *Invisible Man*, Ellison's protagonist tries to navigate in society with racial oppression (racial diversity) and societal invisibility (class hierarchy), embodying the traumatic losses and experiences that affect his body as well as psyche while he is in the middle of struggling to establish his identity and existence within a Symbolic order that refuses to see, and therefore, acknowledges him. It seems that he is in a reflective state where his fragmented self is caught between the Imaginary order's feeling of false coherence and the Real's disruptive forces. The false feelings of unity that the narrator feels always end up crushing down as he feels the reality that he is presented later on. The protagonist's ultimate realization of his invisibility, and his embrace of this condition, symbolizes a tragic but profound reconciliation with his alienation, an acknowledgment of the unconscious truths that shape his reality. Leading him to flee his surrounding community and ending up in a state of hibernation, the narration ends with a more optimistic note that the narrator is almost ready to take another chance, end his hibernation and begin to take action once again.

Similarly, in *The Time Regulation Institute*, Tanpınar's characters besides the protagonist—including, but not limited to, mainly Doctor Ramiz and Halit Ayarci—grapple with the disintegration of traditional values and the imposition of a new societal order, leading to profound experiences of loss and alienation at the end. Through the lens of Lacan's psychoanalysis in this narrative, we observe the characters' attempts to find coherence in a rapidly changing world, their unconscious drives manifesting in obsessive behaviors and the relentless pursuit of an elusive sense of stability. As the main point of focus, Hayri İrdal's way of coping with the realities of society where it becomes an ongoing experience and the struggles of the character to establish an identity amidst all is more clearly described. The novel's tone and elements highlight the character's futile efforts to impose order on the chaos of his lives—whether in the case of the inheritance incident or ridiculous actions taken in the Time Regulation Institute—ultimately reinforcing his alienation. The character's shift from Imaginary order's false realities to the losses that move him to the Symbolic order under the Law and then to a state of alienation from the self and the surrounding communities resonate similarly to Ellison's *Invisible Man*.

Both novels present a reading that enables to explore Lacanian themes of identity formation while demonstrating how personal traumatic experiences, individual's unconscious, and the inevitability of loss shape the characters' psyche and alter their sense of place, or rather *placelessness* in the world. The comparative analysis of *Invisible Man* and *The Time Regulation Institute* not only enhances our understanding of these literary works but also underscores the universal relevance of Lacan's psychoanalytic theories in exploring the depths of human experience. Through this lens, the characters' alienation becomes a mirror reflecting the complexities of the human psyche, a testament to the enduring power of literature to illuminate the darkest corners of our unconscious minds.

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EXPANDED SUMMARY

This study carefully examines Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar's *The Time Regulation Institute* (1961), while applying Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory on identity formation as a theoretical framework. Besides their publication in a similar timeframe, both literary works delve into various themes that eventually focus on the deep trauma experienced by individuals at the time. Ellison's work explores the racial discrimination that prevailed in American society, while Tanpinar's work underscores the difficult challenges surrounding Turkish people in the middle of the turbulent years of modernization period. By applying Lacan's concepts of the Imaginary and Symbolic orders, this analysis helps to interpret how the protagonists manage to go through instances where they face intense psychological discomfort, estrangement from societal expectations and norms, and disillusionment stemming from significant losses. More specifically, the study analyzes how trauma, consciousness, psyche and loss are portrayed and altered in different states, while shedding light on their immense influence on the characters' sense of alienation and disillusionment, discussed within the theoretical framework of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory.

In *Invisible Man*, Ellison's protagonist tries to navigate in society with racial oppression (racial diversity) and societal invisibility (class hierarchy), embodying the traumatic losses and experiences that affect his body as well as psyche while he is in the middle of struggling to establish his identity and existence within a Symbolic order that refuses to see, and therefore, acknowledge him. It seems that he is in a reflective state where his fragmented self is caught between the Imaginary order's feeling of false coherence and the Real's disruptive forces. The false feelings of unity that the narrator feels always ends up crushing down as he feels the reality that he is presented later on. The protagonist's ultimate realization of his invisibility, and his embrace of this condition, symbolizes a tragic but profound reconciliation with his alienation, an acknowledgment of the unconscious truths that shape his reality. Leading him to flee his surrounding community and ending up in a state of hibernation, the narration ends with a more optimistic note that the narrator is almost ready to take another chance, end his hibernation and begin to take action once again.

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