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**LINGUISTICALLY CONSTRUCTED WORLDS: A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

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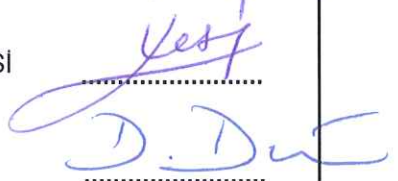
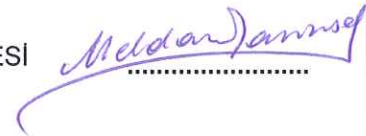
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this doctoral thesis titled as “Linguistically Constructed Worlds: A Comparative Analysis” has been written by myself in accordance with the academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that all materials benefited in this thesis consist of the mentioned resources in the reference list. I verify all these with my honour.

03/09/2015
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ABSTRACT
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Our lives are composed of big or small stories. People, who are born to these stories, unconsciously accept both the prevailing the “big stories” they are subjected to and the “small stories” they themselves tell as *reality*. This collectively accepted *reality*, which is constructed via language, is actually a composite of “big stories” told by the powerful elites. Since power shifts from one group to another through time, what is accepted as reality also changes historically, making the reality of one period falseness at another time. The fact that the ones who hold the power in their hands have changed throughout history results in the emergence and acceptance of different realities in different times. This dissertation aims at analyzing the processes and results of the engulfment of the small stories of the protagonists by the socially constructed big stories in the Canadian author, Margaret Atwood’s *The Blind Assassin* and the Turkish novelist, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (*The Time Regulation Institute*) against the narratives of these characters who finally manage to tell their stories, hence their own versions of reality. That both these novels underline the constructedness of reality and demonstrate the constant competition among different versions of these realities lies at the core of this dissertation. These novels indicate how those individuals who cannot cope with this competition disappear along with their stories. In this dissertation, the foregrounding of small stories in these two novels has been

interpreted as an effort of raising awareness about many other small stories and hence realities.

Keywords: Social Constructionism, Patriarchal Discourse, Margaret Atwood, *The Blind Assassin*, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *The Time Regulation Institute*.

ÖZET

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Linguistically Constructed Worlds: A Comparative Analysis

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Hayatımız büyük ve küçük birçok hikâyeden oluşmaktadır. Bu hikâyelerin içerisine doğan insanoğlu farkında olmadan hem her alanda maruz kaldığı “büyük hikâyeyi,” hem de kendi anlattığı “küçük hikâyeleri” *gerçeklik* olarak algılar. İnsanların bir araya geldiklerinde dil aracılığı ile inşa ettikleri ve hep beraber inandıkları bu *gerçeklik*, aslında birtakım güç gruplarının “gerçek” diye dayattığı büyük hikâyelerdir. Gücü elinde bulunduranların tarih boyunca değişmesi, gerçekliğin de bu süreçte değişmesine yol açarak, farklı zamanlarda farklı gerçekliklerin ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Bu tez, Kanadalı yazar, Margaret Atwood’un *The Blind Assassin* ve Türk yazar, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’ın *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* romanlarında geçen ve gerçekliği sosyal olarak inşa edilen “büyük” hikâyelerin roman kahramanlarının küçük hikâyelerini yok sayması süreçlerini ve bunun sonuçlarını, en sonunda kendi hikâyelerini dillendirmeyi başaran bu karakterlerin anlatıları ile karşılaştırarak irdelleyecektir. Tezin esasını oluşturan nokta; her iki romanın da, hem gerçekliğin bir inşa olduğunun altını çizmesi hem de farklı türden gerçeklik inşalarının sürekli bir biçimde birbiriyle rekabet içinde olduğunu göstermesidir. Bu iki romanda, bu rekabete ayak uyduramayan bireylerin hikâyeleriyle birlikte yok olabildiklerine işaret edilmektedir. Tez, bu romanlarda küçük hikâyelere yer verilmesini, yitirilen daha nice küçük hikâyeleri vurgulama ve okurda farklı türden gerçekliklerin varlığı konusunda bir farkındalık uyandırma çabası olarak nitelendirmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal İnşa Kuramı, Ataerkil Söylem, Margaret Atwood, *The Blind Assassin*, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*.

LINGUISTICALLY CONSTRUCTED WORLDS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

Life is composed of big or small *stories* that give shape to our lives. People are born into big stories, which are called grand narratives, and unconsciously they accept these stories as “reality.” The term grand narrative (master narrative or metanarrative), which gives a thorough account to many historical, social and cultural events or experiences on a global scale, was introduced by Jean-Francois Lyotard in 1984. According to Lyotard, grand narratives “determine criteria of competence and/or illustrate how they are to be applied. They thus define what has the right to be said and done in the culture in question, and since they are themselves a part of that culture, they are legitimated by the simple fact that they do what they do” (Lyotard, 1979: 23). Grand narratives are master ideas that are legitimated by society and, therefore, have become familiar and “real” to all people. They control the way people live, behave towards one another or believe one thing rather than another by legitimating only *one* narrative. For Lyotard, “the people actualize the narratives [. . .] not only by recounting them, but also by listening to them and recounting themselves through them; in other words, by putting them into ‘play’ in their institutions—thus by assigning themselves the posts of narratee and diegesis as well as the post of narrator” (Lyotard, 1979: 23). As a result, there are grand narratives in almost every field ranging from religion, history, politics and social experiences or events to science. Such narratives “[. . .] act to universalize and cast dialogues in binary, contrasting categories that support the maintenance of dominant groups” (Stanley, 2007: 14).

With the beginning of culture begin master narratives, which appear as reality and which, with their binding power, not only bring people together for differing kinds of causes, but also confine them in the prisons of their own making. For instance, like all other holy books, the Bible, which gathers all Christians under one roof with the stories it offers, functions as a grand narrative. The story about the sinfulness of humans since the Fall, which is believed in Judaism, is considered as reality and has given impetus to the birth of a belief system called Christianity. By offering a chance for redemption, this metanarrative has made the believers’ lives more meaningful by giving them an aim to live for: “Metanarratives do have a purpose. They help us to have a collective identity and [. . .] help us relate to one

another” (Robinson, 2012: xxviii). While the stories in the Bible show a totally different worldview that is constructed in accordance with the teachings of Christianity, other holy books have different stories that are constructed in parallel with their religious values. For example, while in Christianity, humans are believed to be born sinful, it is believed that they are born free of sin and are innocent in other religious systems. Thus, every metanarrative presents a different story and mobilizes groups of followers around it by providing them with a life purpose. As postmodernists suggest, what we know as reality may be only a perspective offered by a story; therefore, it cautions us to the constructedness of what we call reality; for each metanarrative favors a different *reality*.

History is another metanarrative, which only mirrors the “big story” according to the dominant ideology of nations that produce them. Each nation has its own version of history but it is the version of the victors that prevails over those that lose. Likewise, next to the interests of nations, corporations and governments, the stories of small scale individuals, their sufferings and joys are all neglected in the grand narrative we call History. The motivations that dominate the writing of national histories may also change through time since the nations’ ideologies, which are actually political stories that are engraved in people’s minds as reality, vary in accordance with the benefits of the nations. Therefore, in the present as well as the past, every nation may favor one story over another in some period in history and add or create new historical facts while swallowing the counter narratives. American history follows a similar path:

The grand narrative that structured American historiography in the nineteenth century was composed of two closely intertwined strands. One was the story of Western progress, a liberal story of growing commercial development, representative political institutions based on democratic consent, and the advance and diffusion of knowledge—processes that were projected to remake the entire world. The second was the liberal/republican story of American exceptionalism, which seated world progress in the American nation. The special place of the United States in this story was attributed in part to favorable historical conditions that allowed it to form a New World antithetical to the old: the heritage of Anglo-Saxon institutions, the republican frame of government, the continent of uncultivated land, the opportunity offered by a free market of small producers. [. . .] The country's unique foundation located it in millennial as well as historical time, freeing it from the ills of Europe and guaranteeing it an ideal future, exemplary for the world. (Ross, 1995: 652)

By showing America as an “exemplary” New World, which offers equal opportunities to every citizen to make a fresh start, this American grand narrative actually serves the dominant ideology of the new nation at the time. Part of the American ideology in the nineteenth century was closely related to the need for manpower that will support the fast industrializing nation. That is to say, in order to attract people to America, such stories that are believed to represent “reality” are created as metanarratives. However, history “is a house of many mansions, and its narratives change over time” in accordance with the dominant ideology (Samuel, 1990: 122). That is to say, as the dominant groups’ ideologies change, they can twist metanarratives accordingly.

Political systems, such as communism and capitalism, are also grand narratives that favor one ideology over another and present it as an everyday reality. Since “a master narrative is a script that specifies and controls how some social processes are carried out,” both master narratives reflect their own versions (Stanley, 2007: 14). That is to say, while communists are against the exploitation of labour and working class, capitalists support a competitive socioeconomic system whose only purpose is to make more profit through labour force. In other words, by giving universal and overarching worldviews, both political systems explain and legitimize societal rules and values from their own perspectives.

Metanarratives in every field “help us understand our place in the world” (Robinson, 2012: xxviii). Social theories and social movements, for example, patriarchy and feminism, are one other field to which metanarratives can be applied. Patriarchy normalizes the dominance of men over women in all aspects of life. By rigidly and clearly defining men’s and women’s positions in society, patriarchy as a metanarrative not only reinforces the powerful group, but also prevents a possibly social chaos. Feminism, on the other hand, functions as a counter narrative to patriarchy since this social movement favors equality between men and women. Therefore, unlike the advocates of patriarchy, feminists view the social order from a different perspective. Yet, like other grand narratives, these two narratives are also “socially derived and socially maintained” (Burr, 1995: 44).

Interestingly, science can also be considered as a metanarrative in many ways. For instance, the advancement in science is believed to show human progress

towards a better future where human intellect plays an important part. In contrast to medieval times or dark ages when religion was the ultimate source of everything in universe and was believed to be the only way to moral and ethical progress, in the present, science has started to assume a similar function, providing a door to a better future. Hence, not only can these narratives change over time when the belief system in society changes, but also different scientific theories justify different beliefs. For example, while Freudian theory explains every human action in relation with libidinal desires, Gustav Carl Jung relates human behaviour to archetypes. Thus, even those systems, which appear to us in garbs of most objective reality and undeniable truth, are based on an element of commentary and interpretation that people bring to life, which then masquerade as reality, truth and “life” itself.

Like these grand narratives, people also construct their own small stories as they communicate with one another. “Personal narrative is a way of using language or another symbolic system to imbue life events with a temporal and logical order, to demystify them and establish coherence across past, present” (Ochs and Capps, 2001: 3). As people interact with reality, they create stories to give order and meaning to this reality and to their interaction with it. Either through verbal communication or written narratives, they shape reality through their words. However, not everyone’s story or narration becomes acceptable. That is to say, while the stories that are supported by bigger stories are accepted easily, the alternative versions cannot compete with these stories and therefore, are engulfed. Although people are surrounded by stories in every aspect of their daily lives, they do not realize that they are living in these stories. Instead, they associate stories with literature and, therefore, create a separate space where stories can prevail. In fact, stories help people understand the world they live in by presenting them slices of life and constantly reminding them that everything in real life is story. Similarly, in their novels, both Margaret Atwood and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar not only show that stories are the “life” itself, but also shed light on how some socially constructed personal narratives that go hand in hand with master narratives are accepted widely in society while the alternative stories are ignored.

Both Margaret Atwood, one of the most prominent and celebrated contemporary Canadian authors, and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, one of the most important and influential modern novelists in Turkish literature who is still praised for his literary works many years after his death, have been nominated for and won several awards due to their unique styles of weaving stories in their fiction. Though both writers have several literary works ranging from poetry to essays, the focus of this thesis will be on their two significant novels, *The Blind Assassin* (2000) by Margaret Atwood and *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*¹ (1961) by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar.

Though differing in their narrative strategies, Tanpınar and Atwood still share some characteristics peculiar to literary classics such as dealing with universal themes and issues that each reader at different time periods and at far corners of the world can share in and sympathize with. That is to say, although there is only a slight intersection between the time periods of the two novels, Atwood narrates events that take place in Canada between World War I and World War II and Tanpınar divides his novel into parts representing the Ottoman, Tanzimat and Republican eras of Turkish history—both writers focus on the same universal theme which is the effect of social construction of reality on people's lives. In other words, no matter how different the time periods or nationalities are, this theme prevails in both books.

Social reality is somehow generated by the way we think or talk about it, by our consensus about its nature, by the way we explain it to each other and by the concepts we use to grasp it. Social facts are thought to be a product of the very cognition, the very intellectual processes through which they are cognized, explained and classified, in so far as this cognition is a shared, collective one.
(Collin, 2002: 3)

The moment people communicate with one another, they create social facts and once they *collectively* accept and believe in the existence of these facts, they *construct* the world they live in. Even our most essential “facts” are results of such constructions. “In other words, it is from our relationships with others that the world becomes filled with what we take to be ‘death’, ‘the sun’, ‘chairs’, and so on” (Gergen, 2009: 4). Since people attach meaning to objects, concepts or things as they talk to one

¹ The 2001 edition of this book, translated by Ender Gürol, will be used throughout this dissertation.

another, “understandings of the world are achieved through coordinations among persons—negotiations, agreements, comparing views and so on” (Gergen, 2009: 6).

However, there can be different constructions of social reality in different time periods and cultures. For instance, whereas slavery once was legal and normalized in the United States, it is both illegal and condemned in today’s world. Likewise, while the supremacy of white race over the black, which was a socially constructed belief generated by the powerful whites, was highly praised in the past, such discrimination is strongly forbidden and criticized nowadays. Thus, when the way people think changes and they collectively stop believing in something, the socially constructed reality cannot exist anymore. Moreover, a socially constructed ceremony in an African tribe can be celebrated while such ceremonies may be regarded as primitive and irrational in other cultures. In other words, social constructions of reality “are historically and culturally bounded, are rational only within particular traditions” (Gergen, 2009: 166).

Apart from the concrete facts, such as mountains, rivers or the Earth, which exist independently from the social world but are still named collectively among members of society, everything can be created socially. Even the self is constructed socially. Our friends, neighbours or family constantly construct ourselves the moment we interact with each other and as a result we are classified into certain behavioral and social patterns created collectively.

Whether socially constructed facts represent *reality per se* or not is problematic since reality can be formed in different ways in different times and cultures in the hands of the powerful group. For instance, social reality can be constructed in favour of men in a patriarchal system and normalize the submissiveness and passiveness of women. Since men are the dominant social group in patriarchy, they can easily manipulate the ideas and make women accept their roles without resistance. Moreover, other forms of socially constructed realities can exist in parallel with the interests of the dominant groups. That is to say, if capitalism is favored in society, the inequality in the system and prejudices towards proletariat will be normalized and become everyday reality shared collectively. As a result, “the taken-for-granted logics or realities of the dominant culture” will “perpetuate injustice” (Gergen, 2009: 16). Injustices are also perpetuated by expansions of

locally constructed activities to larger communities and social groups. Hence, this vicious circle will continue so long as everybody collectively shares it in his or her consciousness.

Humans iteratively engage in joint activities in which a social reality is locally constructed, and the locally constructed social reality is cumulated within a large scale collective through the combination of the intrapersonal and interpersonal mechanisms. It is the iterative process of local construction of social reality and its cumulative consequences that end up constructing the large-scale social reality in which we live. (Kashima, 2014: 91)

Through language, *physical reality* is formed no matter how irrelevant the relation is between the image and the name given to that image. For instance, although there is no relationship between the *image* of door with the *word* door, still words actualize physical reality. Likewise, language is also required to create *social reality*, which in contrast to physical reality, does not exist in nature, for language is the only medium to construct realities both in the microcosm and the macrocosm. In other words, our connection with social reality can *only* be maintained through language. “The words themselves do not describe the world; but because of their successful functioning within the relational ritual, they became truth telling” (Gergen, 2009: 10). In other words, the words gain their significance and are believed to represent reality as a result of social interaction.

The oldest and one of the most widespread stories, the Bible, starts with “word”:

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, **Let there be light: and there was light.** And God saw the light, and it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. (King James version, Genesis 1:3; emphasis added)*

Hence, it all started with “word.” As God is the almighty, his utterance created the light and the universe. The world started to exist only after it began to be constructed and maintained through language. As human beings interacted with one another, they discovered the fact that the world could be linguistically constructed through words. That is to say, when names started to be given to objects, events and feelings, they began to be realized. For instance, the moment the words “light” or “mountain” were given, the world started to be *realized* in relation with these words. People either named small mountains as “hills” or found the binary opposite of “light” and called it

“darkness.” Therefore, physical reality has been constructed through words. Likewise, through language, the whole social order can be shaped and taken for granted for the only reality. Thus, as people interact with each other in daily life by the help of language, they form social realities, which range from social and cultural norms to gender roles.

Since every individual’s, family’s, culture’s and nation’s perception of reality is different from one another, not every story can be sustained. Therefore, there is always a competition among stories. While some stories lose the competition, some stories, which are shaped by the powerful group in society, dominate. In other words, not everyone has power to shape everyday reality. While the ones who are powerful gain more chance to rule over the weak through words, the weak are left speechless before the powerful:

It is not true that all constructed meanings are taken into account or even consequential. Some exist merely as part of the noise of human conduct or at best become marginalized voices of low efficiency. Other constructed meanings, however, become incorporated in to the ongoing cultural and social structural arrangements of a society and thus can be highly consequent. (Maines, 2000: 579)

That is to say, the ones who hold the power shape everyday reality and *normalize* certain versions rather than others. Since the ones who are silenced in everyday life cannot find a chance to make their side of the stories heard, some of them, like Atwood’s protagonist Iris, may resort to writing their version of the stories and present their counter-discourse through narratives. While Iris narrates the painful story of her and her sister’s victimized selves to make her side of the story known, the protagonist of Tanpınar, Hayri İrdal, narrates the competition of different stories in a comical way and shows which stories prevail in the end. I propose to illustrate in this thesis how the socially constructed dominant ideology imprisons both protagonists in Margaret Atwood’s *The Blind Assassin*, the winner of the 2000 Booker Prize, and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s *The Time Regulation Institute* and keeps them away from living in their own stories.

In the first chapter of the thesis, the definition of social and linguistic constructionism and its bases will be examined. Social constructionism, which was first introduced by Berger and Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality* published in 1966, is “the argument that the ways in which we collectively think and communicate about the world affect the way that the world is” (Vass, 2012: 4). As

people communicate with one another in their daily lives, they form realities that are meaningful to them due to their communal acceptance. Therefore, “reality itself for humans is a human, social construction” (Smith, 2000: 122). That is to say, if people stopped believing in the existence of something collectively, it would not exist and, therefore, different versions of social constructions are always possible. Hence, reality can change in accordance with “collective consciousness” of humans.

There are some key elements that form and give shape to the construction of social reality. To start with, language provides a basis for social construction since it enables people to interact with one another and agree on certain realities. “Everyday life is, above all, life with and by means of the language I share with my fellowmen” (Berger, 1966: 51). That is to say, the words to which people attach certain meaning through language, create everyday reality as the more people name a thing or a concept through language, the more real it becomes. According to Blummer, the meaning of things “is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows” (cited by Harris, 2000: 376). Hence, language functions as a medium, which provides people with everyday reality through communal interaction.

Language’s capacity to transcend “here and now” also enables the reflection of various meanings and experiences. Thanks to this capacity, language can transmit certain social norms to the following generations. However, the meanings attributed to words can be manipulated by powerful groups. That is to say, through language, powerful groups can impose certain rules and roles and normalize them for their own benefits, and therefore, rule the weak. By institutionalizing and legitimizing social structures, the powerful group can *officially* imprison the weak in the dominant discourse. Hence, the focus of the first chapter of this thesis will be on how the dominant groups strengthen their power through institutionalization and legitimization of social structures.

In the second chapter of the thesis, Margaret Atwood’s famous novel *The Blind Assassin* will be discussed in terms of bearing the constructedness of patriarchal discourse as it leads to the victimization of women characters, namely Iris and Laura, in the novel. Iris, the narrator of the novel, falls victim to the dominant and prevailing stories that are *authored* by men. Growing up without a mother and with the responsibility of her sister Laura, Iris falls victim to the stories of her father

and husband. She internalizes passivity and submissiveness, the values that patriarchy attaches to and values in the members of the female gender, and she tries to pass these on to her sister. Although Laura has a more rebellious spirit when compared to Iris, Laura's rebellion is also limited in patriarchal society where she is labeled as mentally ill or a riot. In other words, the two sisters are desperate before the patriarchal system, which impose and *normalize* certain rules on women. Though everyday life is constantly socially constructed in many other fields in the novel, this chapter's main concern is on gender construction and how several women, including Iris herself, are blind to it.

"The gender order is hierarchical in that, overall, men dominate women in terms of power and privilege" (Berkowitz, 2010: 133). Through the narrator, Iris, Margaret Atwood exemplifies the dominance of men, who happen to be first the fathers and then the husbands, on every aspect of women's lives. To start with, both Iris and Laura are brought up in accordance with patriarchal values. Starting from their early childhood, the two girls are taught how to behave ladylike and are prepared to become good wives and mothers. In other words, both girls learn and submit to being imprisoned in the men's world. The manipulation of language so as to serve to the benefits of patriarchy provide men with power since men can maintain the patriarchal system by means of the power of language to transmit patriarchal rules and roles to the future generations. Therefore, the vicious circle in which women are trapped never ends. Once girls are educated in their "fathers'" houses, they go to their "husbands'" houses to behave well. Iris' husband, Richard, the wealthy industrialist to whom Iris is sold off after her father's bankruptcy, abuses not only Iris, but also Laura both psychologically and physically. Both sisters are trapped in Richard's story and what is most striking is that Iris remains blind to her sister's suffering. The two sisters are not given a chance to author their lives and live in their own stories. Moreover, as obedience and submissiveness to patriarchal roles are normalized in society, other women characters in the novel also remain unaware of an alternative system where they can act on their own stories. Hence, Atwood's focus on the power of patriarchal discourse in every aspect of women's lives through language will be examined in this chapter.

The third chapter aims at shedding light on how dominant stories entrap the weak by attributing certain roles to them in Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's novel, *The Time Regulation Institute*. Through an ironic tone, Tanpınar presents the mouldable nature of the narrator, Hayri İrdal, who constantly gets imprisoned in other people's stories and always fails to create his own stories. Beginning from his childhood, Hayri İrdal is surrounded by stories, particularly the ones his father's friends has told. He is dragged into an imaginary world where he can meet people from another world or can have gold through either alchemy or prayer. His contact with the "real world" is problematic and, therefore, Hayri always needs someone like his first wife, Emine, a down-to-earth woman who can keep him away from this fantasy world. However, once, upon Emine's death, Hayri is left alone, he is totally driven into other people's stories. Tanpınar also shows Hayri's incapability of authoring his own story and presents the tragic end that his story has caused through irony. Hayri's failure in mastering his story shows the fact that he cannot be an author; instead, he is an actor who performs the roles given to him in other people's stories.

Tanpınar not only focuses on the entrapment of Hayri in everyday life stories, but also criticizes institutions of any kind, ranging from science to government. Tanpınar's criticism against the socially constructed institutions, particularly the Time Regulation Institution, Psychoanalysis Community and Spiritualists Association, leads the reader to question all today's institutions. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is not only to show how the protagonist, Hayri İrdal ends up being a pawn in other people's stories and fails to create his own story, but also to show Tanpınar's criticism of socially constructed institutions.

Finally, the last chapter of the dissertation will compare and contrast *The Blind Assassin* and *The Time Regulation Institute* in terms of narration and present how the social construction of the dominant ideology has shaped the narrators' lives. Whereas Iris narrates "her story" in contrast to "his story," Hayri seems to write his story in gratitude for Halit the Regulator's positive influence on Hayri's and his family's life while giving place to plural voices and showing the competition between them. While Iris narrates her story in a rather tragic tone, Hayri writes his story in a comical tone. "In every narrative text, one can point to passages that concern something other than events: an opinion about something, a disclosure on

the part of the narrator which is not directly connected with the events, a description of a face or of a location, and so forth” (Bal, 1985: 8). These hints show the reader that the writers imply more rather than explicitly putting them into words. That is exactly what both Margaret Atwood and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar do in their novels. By giving certain clues to the reader, they expect him or her to relate the references with the text. Therefore, the second part of this chapter will examine the change in the lives of the characters whenever an important historical event occurs in the stories and relate the lives of the protagonists to the historical events. Both Atwood and Tanpınar use allegories to represent or symbolize certain historical figures or events. Either through a science fiction story which is embedded in a fictional story as in *The Blind Assassin* or through the fictional story in *The Time Regulation Institute*, the writers refer to real life events allegorically. By doing this, both writers also show the fact that social construction is not only limited to the periods that take place in fiction but it is also a part of an ongoing everyday reality. That is to say, people constantly construct realities by interaction regardless of time periods and the collectively accepted ones become everyday realities.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BASES OF SOCIAL AND LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCTIONISM

Social constructionism is the agreement among people that the taken-for-granted realities of everyday life are *real*. Potter explains, "Reality enters into human practices by way of the categories and descriptions that are part of those practices. The world is not readily categorized by God or nature in ways we are all forced to accept. It is *constituted* in one way or another as people talk it, write it and argue it" (Potter, 1996: 98). The socially constructed realities, such as money, marriage or culture do not stem from our knowledge of nature. Instead, they derive from interaction between people. In other words, "knowledge is seen not as something that a person has or doesn't have, but as something that people do together" (Burr, 1995: 9). In his book, *Social Constructionism*, Vivien Burr states:

What we regard as truth, which of course varies historically and cross-culturally, may be thought of as our current accepted ways of understanding the world. These are a product not of objective observation of the world, but of the social processes and interactions in which people are constantly engaged with each other. (Burr, 1995: 229).

Since the existence of socially constructed realities depend on unwritten agreements among people, these realities can cease to exist or change shapes once people's attitudes towards that reality change. For instance, though there was a time when discrimination against blacks was not questioned and the unequal treatments towards this race were normalized in America, this idea is condemned in our modern world and racism is considered to be a crime. Thus, when social attitudes change, the previously socially constructed reality changes as well. Moreover, the notion of racism can also change from culture to culture. According to Burr, this shows that the understandings and attitudes of people "are historically and culturally relative and are dependent upon the particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time" (Burr, 1995: 4).

Socially constructed realities in society are formed and shaped by the powerful group in society. According to Foucault, power "is a matter of the achievement of control over the bodies of human beings by subjecting them to the

normalizing practices of society” (Searle, 2010: 152). That is to say, the powerful group maintains their powerful status in society by normalizing the roles they want others to perform. Moreover, all the institutions and social practices, such as hospitals, schools or prisons, contribute to the normalization of certain roles and attitudes while excluding others since all these institutions and practices are under the influence of the powerful group. Hence, “there is a type of power in society that is not codified, is seldom explicit, and may even be largely unconscious” (Searle, 2010: 155).

In his book, *Making the Social World*, Searle summarizes the relationship between power and obedience as follows: “Individuals are socialized: they are oriented to roles and practices that are culturally and socially given; they internalize these and may experience them as freely chosen; indeed their freedom may, be the fruit of regulation—the outcome of disciplines and controls” (Searle, 2010: 154). That is to say, by complying with the rules and roles the powerful group favors, people yield into this invisible power and continue their lives by obeying and believing in the necessity of socially constructed realities which are transmitted from one generation to another through language.

Human beings believe in the reality of their everyday life collectively. They prove the existence of this reality to themselves not only by their actions but also by their thoughts. Thus, as Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, the writers of *The Social Construction of Reality* state: “Everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 33). Though more than one reality exists in our everyday lives, only one is the reality *par excellence*, that is to say, the reality of everyday life. Among the variety of realities, only that reality is collectively accepted and, therefore, becomes real. However, even this reality is socially constructed.

In order to form such a reality, people should be in continuous interaction with each other. As they interact and communicate with each other, they share everyday reality and believe in its reality more. Language functions as a means of communicating the version of socially constructing reality. Language strengthens the power of reality not only to the speaker but also to the listeners. Berger and Luckmann explain this in these words: “I hear *myself* speak; my own subjective

meanings are made objectively and continuously available to me and *ipso facto* become 'more real' to me" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 52).

Language is not only a means of communicating the constructed reality as reality but, more importantly, it is also responsible for constructing realities. In other words, as people speak, they construct realities. However, not everyone's reality is accepted as reality in society. Instead, only the powerful group, who has the power to lead the weak group in society, can shape and construct realities, which will serve to their benefits. Language forms the base of this process. Through language, we form "typifications" and "institutions" within the social order. "This order is a human product, or more precisely, an ongoing human product" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 69). Once this institutional order is transmitted to a new generation, it becomes more real and legitimate. In the end, this reality and legitimacy, which justifies the institutional order, are taken for granted. Thus, thanks to language, a world is socially constructed.

1.1. THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN A SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED WORLD

Language is magical, for it has the capacity not only to bring things into existence but also to dissolve them into nonexistence. It forms bridges among and actualizes the past, present and future as it calls the things of the past into the present and visualizes a certain version of future to become real, just as it deadens or revitalizes the past at will. It serves as a medium through which anything nonexistent can become real. Freedman and Combs lay stress on the power of language on our lives:

Because of its capacity to transcend the 'here and now,' language bridges different zones within the reality of everyday life and integrates them into a meaningful whole. [. . .] Language is capable of 'making present' a variety of objects that are spatially, temporally, and socially absent from the 'here and now'. [. . .] Through language an entire world can be actualized at any moment. (Freedman and Combs, 1996: 28)

Hence, language can make every abstract concept or concrete object present at any time. In addition to its capability to transcend *here and now*, language can also make anything that does not exist become existent and, therefore, real. It is capable of making things that do not exist, or things that we cannot see or hear, real. Due to these characteristics, language functions as a reality maker. Just as people share their

worlds through language, they also begin to believe in the reality they have constructed through language. Through this interactive process, they form their everyday reality and believe their ideas represent general truths about a fundamental, reality that everyone shares. As they utter words, they legitimate and reify worlds, and as more people do this, we start to accept it as reality. Through language, everyday reality is believed to be formed. In other words, "Every time we speak, we bring forth a reality. Each time we share words we give legitimacy to the distinctions those words bring forth" (Freedman and Combs, 1996: 29).

In his book, *The Construction of Reality*, John R. Searle makes a distinction between "brute facts" and "institutional facts." According to him, the ones that are dependent on human agreement are "institutional facts." He exemplifies this by saying: "in order that this piece of paper should be a five dollar bill, there has to be the human institution of money" (Searle, 1995: 1). On the other hand, "brute facts," which are natural facts, do not require institutions. They are independent facts. Language is a medium by which brute facts become institutional facts, for it is with language that we attach meaning to the natural world. While brute facts can exist without language, institutional facts are "language-dependent." These kinds of facts are expressed via sounds or symbols. That is to say, they require language to construct reality.

Language has several functions. To start with, language imposes "status-functions." However, in nature, where we can find brute facts, the concept of status-function does not exist. There is merely causal-function in nature. "It is, for example, intrinsic to nature that the heart pumps blood, and causes it to course through the body" (Searle, 1995: 14). In other words, the function of the heart is not imposed on the body by society. It is a causal-function making it possible for the organism to survive. While causal-function exists in nature, status-function only exists in our social world. Human beings are the ones who attribute functions to different apparatus. Therefore, they are the creators of status-functions. For instance, the original function of hammer is to hit nails into wood. However, people can give added functions to the hammer and use it as a paperweight. At this point, a new function is ascribed to the object and its function becomes "observer-relative," which means the users of the object decide on its function.

In order for status-functions to be imposed in the social world, there needs to be “collective intentionality.” Shared beliefs among people are needed for a mutual understanding of social facts. They should mutually believe in the status-functions that are valid in their society. For example, money should refer to the same meaning for all members of society and its function should be well known by each member. The socially constructed concepts become real only by forming this collective intentionality. In other words, these realities are accepted “as objective or obviously true only so because of negotiated agreement among people” (Gergen, 2009: 65).

Similarly, once a word is associated with a certain meaning, the arbitrariness is suspended. Thus, people are able to talk to each other by using the same words and referring to the same things. Saussure defines language as “a system of signs in which the one essential is the union of sense and sound pattern, both parts of the sign being psychological” (Searle, 1995: 81). He claims that the sign is a tie between a concept and a sound pattern, and, therefore, is composed of two parts; the *signifier* and the *signified*. According to Saussure, while the signifier is the sound pattern, the signified is the concept itself. However, there is no connection between the signifier and the signified. For instance, we name an object and call it *glass*, yet there is nothing common between the word (either as written word or the articulated sound) and the object. Though there is not a causal link or any other kind of relation between the signified and the signifier, once the signifier is believed to represent the signified collectively, the arbitrariness of the relationship between the signifier and the signified is suspended by the users of that language. In other words:

The sign is arbitrary only in the sense that the community could equally well have adopted a completely different signifier to connect with the same signified, but the individual has no choice over which signifier to use. For the individual, the choice of signifier is not arbitrary at all: If they wish to communicate, they must employ the signifier established by convention within their community as corresponding to the signified they wish to express. (Searle, 1995: 93)

Hence, as individuals, people forget the arbitrariness between the signified and the signifier in their daily lives. Since the connectedness between the signified and the signifier is accepted collectively, its arbitrariness is obscured behind the collective intentionality that puts it into use.

Language is a social occurrence. It appears as people exchange their ideas by speech, writing and reading. Language is a human construct, but more significantly,

once language is constructed, it also constructs its users, individuals and their relationships with each other. Thus, this is an ever-expanding and continuous circle.

Vivien Burr comments on this as follows:

Every time we telephone a friend, visit our bank manager, take part in a seminar, read a magazine or tell someone we love them we, and the other people either actively or implicitly involved in that exchange, are in the process of constructing and reconstructing ourselves. It is from all the myriad forms of language exchange between people that the person emerges. (Burr, 1995: 53)

Thus, language has an ultimate power on our existence. We are particular persons so long as the words allow us to be, and the social world exists as long as it can be explained via language.

Another function of language is its being “performative.” Austin describes this aspect of language in his “speech act theory.” Austin maintains that “some sentences and utterances are important not because they describe things but because of what they do” (Burr, 1995: 57). For instance, when the law proclaims “I now announce you husband and wife,” the sentence does not describe anything. Instead, it performs an act. People use the performative power of language in their interactions with each other. However, not everyone is authoritative enough to use the performative power of language. The performative power of language is closely linked to being an authority. That is to say, if an ordinary individual announces somebody as husband and wife, the performative act would be invalid since s/he does not have the authority to perform this act.

One other function of language is that it serves as “reality-maintenance.” The more one talks to another, the more real his subjectivity becomes. Through conversation, one strengthens his belief in the reality of the world he is living in. In other words, everyday language reassures the reality of the individual’s life. Being constantly reminded that one must go to work and hold a steady job, a person thinks these are universal realities for every individual everywhere. Therefore, he believes in the reality and necessity of going to work. In other words, he reaffirms his subjective reality by communicating with other people doing the same thing. Thus, “the others encountered by the individual in everyday life serve to reaffirm his subjective reality” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 169). Berger and Luckmann believe that much of reality-maintenance in conversation is implicit:

*Most conversation does not in so many words define the nature of the world. Rather, it takes place against the background of a world that is **silently** taken for granted. Thus an exchange such as, 'Well, it is time for me to get to the station,' and "Fine, darling, have a good day at the office," implies an entire world **within which** these apparently simple propositions make sense. By virtue of this implication the exchange confirms the subjective reality of this world. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 17; emphasis added)*

Moreover, one's subjective reality is not maintained unless s/he is in social contact with others. That is to say, one cannot identify her/himself as a businessman or a teacher if the others surrounding him do not confirm her/his identity.

1.2. DISCOURSE AND POWER

Language is intimately related with power: it is the tool of power and it is a power-making tool simultaneously. Searle claims that in any given society "provided that there is indeed a set of shared Background norms, *anybody* can exercise power over *anybody* else" (Searle, 2010: 156). That is to say, members of society have power over one another without being conscious of it. The exercise of power is not, however, as random as it might at first sight appear, for it is intimately bound up with the shared and prevalent codes of conduct. If someone breaks these unwritten social codes, social mechanisms intervene and place constraints on his/her actions and even thoughts. Because "the social Background norms function as power mechanisms," a large portion of society tries to conform to these norms to avoid disapproval (Searle, 2010: 158). Though people can exercise power over one another by making the other person, who acts contrary to socially accepted norms, conform to these norms, there is also a much bigger power group that is more than the sum of the society as a whole and has great influence over it. It is through discourse that this powerful mechanism aligns the Background norms in accordance with the benefits of the most powerful group(s).

Foucault defines discourse as "practices which form the objects of which they speak" (Burr, 1995: 63). A discourse is composed of "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events" (Burr, 1995: 63). As people speak, a variety of discourses can be formed about one particular topic. However, only one discourse, which is controlled, normalized and favored by the powerful group, becomes widely accepted in society. The powerful group, which has the influence on the prevailing

discourse, derives its power from knowledge—which they define and produce. Through knowledge, an individual increases his chance to have a good job, earn a decent salary and, therefore, have a higher status in society. In other words, knowledge indirectly enables him to exercise his power on the weak. Because it is the production of the powerful group, the content of this knowledge tends to change from society to society and from one time period to another. That is to say, while it was common to accuse some women of witchery in seventeenth century America, whereas now we are sure that the sole reason for the accusations and ensuing punishments was that these women posed threats of different sorts to the exercise of the dominant ideology. Yet this should not lead one to think that we are now living in a social environment in which ideological influences do not leak into individual thoughts and actions. Maybe today if a person claims an individual is possessed by evil spirits, this would not become a widely accepted discourse, but other sorts of labelings such as being “a race traitor” result in similar persecutions. In other words, though its content is liable to change, as long as human societies exist, knowledge has the power to shape the prevailing discourse. Moreover, people having power as a result of knowledge can even produce more knowledge that favors and stabilizes their power. For instance, in patriarchal societies, men have power over women and are thus able to produce the kind of knowledge to support this power, which is employed to convince women of the naturalness of their roles as wives and mothers. However, if women had power over men, they would shape knowledge and, therefore, the prevailing discourse.

According to Foucault, power is an effect of discourse. Foucault states: “When we define or represent something in a particular way we are producing a particular form of knowledge, which brings power with it” (Burr, 1995: 68). Thus, powerful people produce knowledge, which in turn adds to their power. That is to say, discourse is a creation of the powerful people, which in turn provides them with more power. Hence, the construction of the prevailing discourses on every aspect of social life is the business of those in power.

Throughout ages, patriarchal discourse has always been a perfect arena for men to show their strength over women. Patriarchy is a meta-narrative, which attributes certain roles to women and normalizes these roles in order to rule women.

Patriarchy and other grand narratives, which are prevailing discourses such as religion and mythology, serve to inform people into a desired arrangement. These meta-narratives create a second, parallel reality, which they push as *the* reality. They provide a view of the world, purpose of life, and models of behavior, implicitly shaping the individual's understanding of how to act as a man and a woman.

Greek mythology is one of the most important discourses and simultaneously both an effect and cause of gender formation in the western world. Its effect is so immense that the roles attributed to women in Greek mythology are still norms—albeit sometimes hidden—in the western world. The deeply misogynist attitudes of men towards women in Greek mythology have imposed certain roles on women. One of these roles is self-sacrifice. This role defines many mythological heroines. For example, when Iphigenia wants to sacrifice herself to save her lover's life in the *Agamemnon*, she says: "It is better for one man to live than ten thousand women" (Lefkowitz, 1986: 98). Thus, such a discourse establishes the true value of women as inferior to men and the expected behavior of women as sacrifice for their well-being. Being a devoted and faithful wife is another role attributed to women in the patriarchal narratives of Greek myths. Penelope's waiting for her husband, Odysseus, by stalling the suitors for many years shows that women are supposed to dedicate themselves to their husbands without losing faith in them. In addition to roles, patriarchal discourses also attribute to women derogatory labels in order to justify their inferior status. One of these stigmatizations is being a troublemaker. Men believed women would be troublemakers if they were left on their own. Therefore, men believed it was necessary for them to interfere with women's lives since the patriarchal system wanted obedient women who had no second thoughts about sacrificing themselves for their husbands. When Zeus wants to punish Prometheus for stealing fire for men, he creates Pandora, the first human woman. However, the first woman ends up being a destructive force. She brings misfortunes and evil on mankind. In addition, "Like the archetype created by the gods, Pandora's descendants are beautiful to look at, but destructive, a 'headlong trap'" (Lefkowitz, 1986: 115). Likewise, Medusa, who was once a very beautiful girl, is transformed into a monster by the goddess Athena due to her jealousy. After learning that Poseidon, Athena's lover, raped Medusa, Athena casts a spell over Medusa and

changes her into a monster that has thousands of snakes instead of hair on her head and that turns everyone she looks into a stone. Once again, women function as a means of punishment in Greek discourse. However, Greek mythology attributes many roles to women, whose traces can be seen in today's world.

It is possible to see the two seemingly contrasting tendencies towards women in their emerging inchoate state here: women as less-than-men and worthless beings and women as faithful and true supporters of men. Yet these two types of womanhood are in fact the result of the same discourse that regards women secondary to men. Although the sacrificial victim role is in fact a direct result of the worthlessness of women, in myths women who sacrifice themselves are praised, and their act provides a yardstick against which other women are measured. Thus, a seemingly sacred sort of womanhood that women are expected to aspire towards is created. One of the most desirable characteristics of these women is obedience to patriarchal authority. They do not question the actions of men, the authority. Exemplifying such characters, *Metamorphosis*, which is also quoted in Atwood's *Blind Assassin*, focuses on the gods and their interaction with mortals. The narrative centers on the theme of divine rape. It was believed that rape could be acceptable if it was done by the gods, that is to say, the powerful authority.

When all these roles played by women in Greek mythology are considered, it is seen that women's role in society has not essentially changed. Men construct prevailing discourses of femininity through all these stereotypes that they have attributed to women and, therefore, become more powerful. In his book, Vivien Burr states: "Prevailing discourses of femininity often construct women as, say, nurturant, close to nature, emotional, negatively affected by their hormones, emphatic, and vulnerable" (Burr, 1995: 74). Through their prevailing discourses, men *normalize* women stereotypes and expect women to accept them.

Not only gender discourse but also all other kinds of discourse are the products of the powerful, which are often constituted by white males in the Western world. Therefore, women see the world mediated by the alterations men make for them while failing to see their victimization as a result of being the inferior sex in these discourses. Similar to gender, "classes are socially constructed in a discursive process" (Elder-Vass, 2012: 181). Individuals sharing a similar economic, social, and

cultural position form a social and economic class in society. Just as in every class there exists a *norm circle*, which is “the group of people who are committed to endorsing and enforcing a particular norm,” the top class serves as a norm circle for all the classes below it (Elder-Vass, 2012: 22). Every member of class tends to follow and conform to standardized practices. The member belonging to a certain class knows what s/he can say and how s/he should behave. That is to say, s/he cannot violate the norm circle boundaries. Moreover, every member of different social classes is aware of the characteristics of other groups.

Since “a discourse is said to manifest itself in texts—in speech, say a conversation or interview, in written material such as novels, newspaper articles or letters, in visual images like magazine advertisements or films, or even in the meanings encoded in the clothes someone wears or the way they do their hair,” a person’s class positioning is inadvertently revealed to others in a variety of discourses, ranging from the written word to norms of behavior (Burr, 1995:66). For instance, clothes are an example of such unwritten discourse. One can understand the other’s status, age, subculture and class through clothes. Just as the members of the same class have a similar set of cultural practices, these practices are considerably different among different social and economic classes. According to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the reasons why members of different groups have different cultural practices are:

First, individuals are socialized into a set of dispositions—their habitatus—which arise from their class position, and as a result the dispositions of those sharing any given class position tend to be similar. Second, these dispositions tend to lead the individuals concerned to act the way they do—they are ‘practice generating.’ Third, the dispositions of different class groups reflect the possibilities that are open to them given the capital they possess. (Elder-Vass, 2012: 176)

Bourdieu refers to “cultural capital” which makes social mobility possible by using education, intellect or material belongings such as clothes and jewellery as means of power and status. As individuals share similar or same cultural capital, they belong to a particular social group and practice same or similar daily routines, have particular life views or wear clothings that define their social group. Hence, discourse does not always have to be in texts.

Moreover, discourses polarize people, at the same time as they mobilize them. Western discourse constructs reality through this polarization that lead to binary

oppositions. For instance, when some categories and roles are attributed to women, this clearly signals towards attributing their opposites to men. If claiming that women are vulnerable and sensitive means men, as a counter category, are powerful and sensible. A similar opposition exists between upper and lower classes: The fact that the members of the dominant class are powerful indicates that the lower class members are weaker. The association of power with men and wealth, however, is constructed socially. The moment people begin to talk, they start to construct realities by dividing the natural world into the categories of the social world. We classify the sounds and rhythms of nature as pop, rock, jazz or classical music. However, these differences do not exist in nature. A further example clearly demonstrates the constructedness of such categories, for natural objects are classified differently into different categories by different professional or interest groups. Some of these categories are related to each other as some are sub categories and some have intersecting areas among them. For instance, geologists classify stones according to their composition, their shapes or surfaces. Practicers of alternative medicine can classify them according to their healing characteristics, and jewelers can categorize particular stones in terms of their costs. Hence, many more different kinds of classifications can be constructed by other groups. Since, these classifications may change in time and different versions can become realities through time, there is no ultimate anchorage for them.

Thus, though it is possible to have a variety of discourses about one topic, only the powerful shapes the dominant discourse in society. Therefore, "every discourse is potentially dangerous," because it serves to the spread of the dominant group's ideology (Burr, 1995: 84). According to social constructionists, an idea cannot be ideological, whereas the way these ideas are used is ideological. That is to say, "the study of ideology is the study of the ways in which meaning is mobilised in the social world in the interests of powerful groups" (Burr, 1995: 84). Since the dominant group uses ideological discourses to preserve and intensify their power, all other kinds of discourse remain unaccepted. As human beings "we are the end product, the combination, of the particular versions of stories that are available to us. A young, black, unemployed man will have his identity constructed out of the raw materials of various discourses surrounding age, ethnicity, work and masculinity"

(Burr, 1995: 108). Hence, discourses construct identities, for they are irresistible forces that re-shape the reality that in turn defines individual identities living in them. The identities formed as such are thus bilaterally trapped in the discourses that generate them: they are constructed by these discourses, and they also help transmitting them. Though language and discourse are the two means through which a socially constructed world is formed, institutionalization of social structures is also required as it maintains the socially constructed order.

1.3. INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND LEGITIMIZATION OF SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann claim that habitualization precedes institutionalization. Any action that is repeated by an individual becomes a habit after some time. For instance, even a lonely individual on a deserted island can habitualize his daily activities. By performing his daily activities in a certain way rather than another, he saves time and energy. Hence, the next day, he repeats the same routine: he wakes up the same time and goes fishing or hunting the same time by mostly repeating the same methods he used the day before. By narrowing his choices, the solitary man spares himself from the burden of choice making, and, therefore, saves his time and energy. However, since he is all alone, habits do not turn into institutions. According to Berger and Luckmann, “institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 72). That is to say, both the actors and the actions that will be performed by these actors should be known to all the members of a particular society. For instance, schools are institutions where teachers (actors) teach students certain subjects (action). Every member of the society shares this knowledge and such typification of actors and actions form institutions.

Though the presence of at least two people is not enough for institutionalization as the actors cannot be typified, Berger and Luckmann claim that still the existence of these two people show that “institutionalization is already present *in nucleo*” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 74). For example, Robinson Crusoe’s routine changes when Friday appears on the island. With the division of labor, each of the parties knows what the other’s actions will be during the day. While Robinson constructs their house, Friday goes hunting. After some time, all

their actions become taken-for-granted routines by one another and, therefore, it becomes easier for them to guess each other's actions. They both save time and energy by performing actions they are supposed to do as actors.

Institutions become more objective when a third person gets included. For instance, when a man and a woman have a child, by transmitting the actions they separately conducted to another generation, they help the institutions become historical. That is to say, when parents teach the child how to do certain things by following certain behavioral patterns instead of others, the child knows that he should follow their advice since he believes "this is how these things are done" in an institutionalized world (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 77). For instance, children do not have first-hand knowledge about the institution of law when they are born; their ideas are based only on what they learn from their families. As parents try to tell their children about judges (actors) and their duties such as interpreting the law, assessing the evidence presented in the court or decision-making (actions), children understand the legal order, and, therefore, for the child the institutional order becomes reality. In other words, historical background serves as a legitimation, which is "the process of 'explaining' and 'justifying'" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 111). Since the child has not experienced or formed institutions himself, he needs explanation from his parents about the institutional world. First, his parents teach him the *knowledge* of right and wrong actions in certain institutions. For instance, while the child knows himself as a member of a clan, s/he also knows that it is not acceptable to have a kinship marriage in his clan:

This 'knowledge' comes to him through a tradition that 'explains' what clans are in general and what his clan is in particular. Such 'explanations' (which typically constitute a "history" and a "sociology" of collectivity, and which in the case of incest taboos probably contain an 'anthropology' as well) are much legitimating instruments as ethical elements of tradition. (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 111)

Thus, a child learns the typified roles and actors through legitimating elements. However, the same stories about institutions should be told to all children not only for the institutional order to continue consistently, but also to set institutions on a firm reality. While the institutional order is explained to children by their parents, parents begin to believe that the world they constructed is real because they are transmitting this reality to another generation. While the world into which the child is born appears to be a given reality for the child, "the objectivity of the institutional

world 'thickens' and 'hardens' for the parents" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 76). Once the institutional world becomes an objective reality, each member knows the typifications of habitualized actions by types of actors.

By the inclusion of a third party, institutions start to have a history and control over people. "Reciprocal typifications of actions are built up in the course of a shared history. They cannot be created instantaneously. Institutions always have a history, of which they are products" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 72). The moment parents explain the typified actors and actions in institutional order to the next generation, institutions begin to have a history. This historicity also enables institutions to control human conduct since institutions become authorities. For instance, the institution of marriage has a history for everyone in contemporary society as children are brought up by the teachings of parents on at what age girls should get married and why it is important to get married. While the societal order normalizes the necessity of the institution of marriage, as its procedures have been followed for centuries and formed a historical background, this institution can also "claim authority over the individual" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 80). By making other sorts of relationship between individuals, especially between two different sexes, socially unacceptable, the institution of marriage remains the only possible option excluding all other alternatives. Since "children must be 'taught to behave' and, once taught, 'must be kept in line' and so must the adults," the institution of marriage, together with other institutions, controls the individuals in society to prevent inconsistencies within societal and institutional order (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 80).

As institutions have control over individuals, the powerful social group also controls these institutions according to their own benefits. The powerful group—men in a patriarchal society—shapes the institutions, namely marriage, in a way that will serve to their benefits. That is to say, while having a sexual intercourse before marriage is socially unacceptable only for women in many cultures, there is neither a limitation nor a cultural norm for premarital chastity for men in patriarchal order. Since men are more powerful than women in patriarchy, by further twisting the institutional rules accordingly, they have control over the weak, that is, the women. According to Berger and Luckmann, "it is important to keep in mind that the

objectivity of the institutional world, however massive it may appear to the individual, is a humanly produced, constructed objectivity” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 78). In other words, our social world is constructed by people, and during this construction the powerful group feels free in shaping both the institutional and social order in a way that will serve to their benefits. In patriarchy, the more men shape and *normalize* the roles women will play in their lives, the more control men have over women. Institutions mask the *real* purpose of the powerful group by making people believe in and take for granted as realities such constructions. For instance, the discourse of “romantic love” is merely a cover used to persuade especially women to get married and start to perform their roles as devoted wives. In his book, *Social Constructionism*, Vivien Burr states:

The discourse of ‘romantic love’, ‘marriage’ and ‘the family’ may be seen as ways of talking about our lives, ways of constructing them, living them out and representing them to ourselves that mask iniquitous social arrangements. In other words, we may be entering into forms of life, which are not necessarily in our own interest, but are in the interests of relatively powerful groups in society. (Burr, 1995: 74)

By doing certain jobs such as cleaning the house, doing the laundry, cooking and taking care of both her children and husband free of charge, women ease the burden on men’s shoulders. When women willingly provide these services, they believe they are doing what they are supposed to do in a patriarchal society. Though the roles women play only help men to maintain their advantageous status, women fail to see this reality since their roles are normalized by men. By making it appear as “romantic love,” that leads to a “happy marriage,” patriarchy in fact masks its real motive, which is exploiting the weak group in society while normalizing the weak group’s roles and responsibilities. The powerful group is not always necessarily composed of men. When the dynamics of society change, the powerful group can also change. For instance, the institutional order can be against the benefits of the communists in a capitalist society. While the capitalist system favors the exploitation of labor force, yet tries to normalize the situation in order to maintain the system, the communists have no say on their conditions. That is to say, social reality and institutions can be constructed again and again by different power groups in different time periods.

Apart from historicity and control, roles and rules are the other characteristics of institutions. There are typified roles to be performed in every institution. According to Berger and Luckmann, the roles that are performed by actors represent two things: The first is that “performance of the role represents itself” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 92). That is to say, when an individual performs the roles of a doctor by examining his patient or writing prescriptions, this individual is representing the status of being a doctor, and therefore, the concept of being a doctor becomes more real. The second is that the role performance represents the whole institution. For instance, by performing the typified roles of becoming a doctor, the individual represents the institution of health service. Thus, “roles represent institutions” and “roles make it possible for institutions exist, ever again, as a real presence in the experience of living individuals” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 92). The actors in the institutions play their roles without questioning them. For instance, a woman functions as a wife and represents the institution of marriage. She does not hesitate about performing her roles as a wife since she believes “*she has* no choice in the matter, *she has* to act this way because of my position” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 108). In other words, the woman internalizes her roles as a wife and, therefore, believes more in the reality of societal and institutional order. The existence of roles also leads to the necessity and existence of rules. In his book *The Reality of Social Construction*, Dave Elder-Vass explains that institutions cannot exist without rules. He claims “institutions are systems of rules, that, in Fleetwood’s terms, ‘consist of’ rules” (Elder-Vass, 2012: 48). Hence, not only roles, but also rules are necessary for institutions to function. Vass believes these rules do not need to be written since “rules exist only insofar they exist in the shared discursive or practical consciousness of the actors who conform to them” (Elder-Vass, 2012: 48). That is to say, some rules have to be obeyed to maintain the consistency of the institutional order. For example, if a teacher’s role is to teach her students her expertise field, then this teacher must be at school at required times to give her lesson and check her progress. Thus, every role in the institutional order brings with it some rules to be obeyed.

Institutions are socially constructed by people, namely the powerful group, through language. Without language, the transmission of historical background of

institutions to the next generation, whose ideas of institutions are only based on things they have heard, would be impossible. Therefore, language functions as a legitimizing instrument for the new generation. Moreover, since language has performative function, it can create institutions through words in seconds. That is to say:

Institutional facts can be created with the performative utterance of such sentences as 'The meeting is adjourned,' 'I give and bequeath my entire fortune to my nephew,' 'I appoint you chairman,' 'War is hereby declared,' etc. These utterances create the very state of affairs that they represent; and in each case, the state of affairs is an institutional fact. (Searle, 1995: 33)

Through these words, people can create institutions concerning legal rights or governmental decisions. However, only creating these institutions is not enough for institutions to exist. People should also collectively believe in their existence. If people stop believing in an institution all together at once, the institution cannot exist anymore. Thus, language not only makes the consistency of institutions possible by enhancing their existence through performative utterances but also has the power to destroy them through words.

CHAPTER TWO

DISCURSIVE PATTERNS AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS: ACCOMPLICES IN VICTIMIZATION IN *THE BLIND ASSASSIN*

Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin* is one of the best representatives of patriarchal discourse, which is socially constructed and normalized. The prevalence of a patriarchal discourse throughout the book results in the victimization of women due to their docility and blindness towards the socially constructed rules and roles with which their gender is associated. In her book, Atwood shows how cleverly the patriarchal discourse molds women in order to maintain its system by selling patriarchal norms as taken-for-granted realities.

Our perception of the world is determined by discourses, whose invisible power justifies and naturalizes certain ideologies: "Descriptions or constructions of the world sustain some patterns of social action and exclude others. Our constructions of the world are therefore bound up with power relations because they have implications for what it is permissible for different people to do, and for how they may treat others" (Burr, 1995: 4). Not all of the versions of these discourses are accepted as discourses have implications for what we can do and what we should do. Instead, the prevalent discourse—in other words, the values and cultural norms of the powerful group—is collectively accepted often without an awareness of the fact that it has been imposed on the weak by the powerful in order to solidify their power. Discourse functions to normalize a certain set of values, norms and behavior patterns which will serve the benefits of the powerful in such a way that the imposition of a certain kind of discourse is never felt among the individuals. For example, the most widespread and affective discourses that have molded our understanding of the world can be exemplified by the discourses of femininity, marriage or motherhood. In *The Blind Assassin*, Atwood reveals the fact that these kinds of discourses expect women to exist for men or cease to exist by sacrificing themselves for men. Patriarchal discourse does not accept women as autonomous individuals; instead, it gives secondary roles to women and normalizes these roles in such a way that any challenge to or deviation from these patriarchally defined roles is seen as anomaly or threat to the social order. Hence, the powerful (the patriarchal order) shape the life of

the weak (women) by signaling the way they should behave through socially constructed realities. In other words, the powerful become the ones who construct everyday life and its concepts socially and expect the weak to accept it as it is. Since those who hold power on speech also have power on shaping ideologies, power becomes an effect of discourse.

2.1. VICTIMS OF PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY, VICTIMS OF LANGUAGE: THE WOMEN IN *THE BLIND ASSASSIN*

Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin* reveals how covertly and cleverly women are tortured both psychologically and physically under the guise of the roles with which patriarchy associates them. By cleverly interfering with every aspect of women's lives, ranging from their social manners, clothes to women's most private space, their physical selves, patriarchy blinds the "truth" and therefore, leads to the victimization of women through discourse. In her book *The Blind Assassin*, Margaret Atwood shows how the concept of "the female as sacrifice" is socially constructed by patriarchy, and, therefore, taken-for-granted by women, who belong to the dominated group in patriarchal social structures and who, therefore cannot produce dominant discourses that are taken for truth.

The Blind Assassin sheds light on the sacrifice or victimization of women through two sisters, Iris and Laura. Both Iris and Laura are willing or unwilling victims of patriarchal discourse throughout their lives. After the death of their mother, the elder sister, Iris, shoulders the burden of looking after her younger sister, Laura. However, taking such a huge responsibility at a very early age causes Iris to lead a life full of sacrifices in order to offer Laura a better life. After the bankruptcy of their father, Iris feels she has no choice but to marry Richard, a prominent businessman and a promising politician. With the encouragement of her father and in an attempt to provide Laura with better opportunities, Iris sacrifices her youth by marrying a man whom she does not love at all.

Patriarchy favors "good daughter" discourse since by normalizing such discourse, patriarchal order encourages the submissiveness and passiveness of women starting from an early age. The father, the first representative of patriarchy in the household, functions as a temporary authority figure who prepares his daughters for their future husbands by giving the girls the right education and training.

Likewise, Iris and Laura's father, Norval, serves as a caretaker whose job is to educate his daughters in accordance with patriarchal rules and the roles that are associated with women. He molds his daughters both physically and psychologically. That is to say, he not only teaches them how to dress up or talk, but also cleverly dictates his own decisions even about personal subjects to his daughter. For instance, when his business goes bankrupt, Norval sees Iris as a rescuer that will save the family from financial trouble by marrying the wealthy businessman, Richard. Though Norval appears to leave the last decision to Iris, he manipulates Iris' decision by leaving her no choice but to accept Richard's proposal:

'Richard will be asking you something,' said Father to me. His tone was apologetic.

'Oh?' I said. Probably something about ironing, but I didn't much care. As far as I was concerned Richard was a grown-up man. He was thirty-five, I was eighteen. He was well on the other side of being interesting.

'I have already given my consent,' said Father. 'So it's up to you.' Then he added: 'A certain amount depends on it.'

'A certain amount?'

'I have to consider your futures. In case anything should happen to me, that is, Laura's future, in particular.' What he was saying was that unless I married Richard, we wouldn't have any money. What he was also saying was that the two of us—me and especially Laura—would never be able to end for ourselves. 'I have to consider the factories as well' [. . .] He was leaning on his cane, gazing down at the carpet, and I saw how ashamed he was. How beaten down. 'I don't want it all to have been for nothing. Your grandfather, and then...Fifty, sixty years of hard work, down the drain.'

'Oh. I see.' I was cornered. It wasn't as if I had any alternatives to propose.

'A certain amount of resolve might be required. A certain amount of courage. Biting the bullet and so forth.'

I said nothing.

'But naturally,' he said, 'whatever decision you make will be your own concern'

I said nothing.

'I wouldn't want you doing anything you were dead set against,' he said, looking past me with his good eye, frowning a little, as if an object of great significance had just come into view. There was nothing behind me but a wall. (Atwood, 2001: 226)²

By abusing Iris emotionally and pressurizing her to marry Richard both for Laura's future and her father's business life, Iris feels she has to sacrifice herself by marrying Richard. Though Iris believes this marriage is a self-sacrifice, it is actually victimization. In other words, Norval victimizes Iris by leaving her with a decision, which is already taken by him. However, Iris remains blind to her

² Subsequent references to this edition will be entered parenthetically throughout this dissertation.

submissiveness and passiveness and therefore, cannot stand up to her father. Her inability to object, first to her father and then to her husband Richard, leads to her victimization.

Iris' victimization process starts with her father but does not end there, it continues with Richard. Through Richard, Atwood exemplifies how "good wife discourse" is taken-for-granted in patriarchal order. After fathers, the first patriarchs at home, prepare their daughters to act in accordance with patriarchal rules and the roles attributed to them in this system, they hand their daughters to their husbands, who attribute other roles to their "wives" that are already obedient to the authority. That is to say, under the "good wife discourse," women still continue to be obedient children whose ideas are often ridiculed or not even listened, yet they become sexually available children. Iris lives her life with deprivations. She is prevented from living her childhood, being free of responsibility as a child, making her own decisions, marrying the man she loves and raising her child. For instance, she obeys everything Richard says without raising an objection in most part of their marriage. Iris lives the life Richard designs for her. He wants Iris to remain passive like a child in order to give direction to her life and prevent her from involving in his personal affairs. By showing fake affection and appearing to care about Iris, Richard manages to limit her actions and make her dependant on him just like a child. He takes it upon himself the role of instructor proud to mold a docile student into his image and ready to look upon her occasional slowness with fake indulgence. Part of this instruction/learning process is exemplified during their visit to London, which serves as a site of Iris' education:

'What did you see today?' Richard would ask at dinner, and I would dutifully recite, ticking off one building or park or statue after another: The Tower of London, Buckingham Palace, Kensington, Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament. He did not encourage the visiting of museums, apart from the Natural History Museum. I wonder, now, why it was that he thought the sight of so many large stuffed animals would be conducive to my education? For it had become evident that this is what all of these visits were aimed at—my education. Why should the stuffed animals have been better for me, or better for his idea of what I should become, than a roomful of paintings, for instance? I think I know, but perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps the stuffed animals were more or less like a zoo—something you'd take a child to, for an outgoing. (302)

Richard does not want Iris to visit museums or galleries that are full of paintings because he believes Iris would be bored like a child as visiting these places required a certain kind of education and sophistication whereas Natural History Museums are interesting to new learners and children who find the images of eccentric animals fascinatingly interesting. Since Iris lacked that kind of education, Richard concluded that it would be better for her to visit places that were less sophisticated and more fun to visit. In other words, the places Iris was expected to visit were places that would not lead her to thinking or questioning. Instead, she would wander around places that Richard asks her to visit in order to kill some time. By treating Iris like that, Richard not only deprives Iris of the potential to become an adult, but also like the stuffed animals, Richard tries to *stuff* Iris in accordance with his patriarchal values. Iris cannot make her even petty decisions about her life and, therefore, always remain dependent on Richard. When Iris looks back, she understands she is infantilized and treated as a child who is only allowed to do the things that her parents give permission to. In other words, Iris is tailored to meet the demands of Richard, which she sees as she looks back on her past: "I myself was taking shape—the shape intended for me, by him" (302). Thus, her growth is not a result of self-determination but one of imposition by Richard and his standards. But such impositions are employed under the guise of what is best for Iris, thereby making her a willing disciple. In reality, though, by appearing to think about what is best for Iris, Richard holds her under his control. Iris states: "He hired a car and driver for me, and I was taken out to see what *in his view* ought to be seen" (301; emphasis added). Richard gradually entraps Iris by depriving her of the right to comment even on the simplest yet most essential matters such as her body, her ultimate territory. For instance, she does her hair the way Richard prefers: "On other occasions I had my hair done. He didn't want me to get it cut or marcelled, and so I didn't. A simple style was best for me, he said. It suited my youth" (302). Apart from every aspect of Iris' life Richard meddles in, he even wants to keep Iris' hair in order by cleverly dissuading her from the idea of having curly hair, which would somehow make Iris become aware of her feminine self. Iris is also blind to the fact that she is silenced and molded according to Richard's taste about her *own* body. That is to say, by using "women's body" as a

site of dominant discourse, patriarchy naturalizes men's interference in women's body.

Believing that Iris would not be able to form her true self, Richard approaches Iris like a project to be completed. Like a sculptor shaping his clay, Richard gradually shapes Iris through discourse. Richard creates Iris through words like God, who stated "Let there be light" and, therefore, created light (Genesis 1:3). However, Richard carries out his project, Iris, covertly. By appearing to care about Iris, he succeeds in entrapping Iris within his definitions. Every aspect of Iris' life is under Richard's control and, therefore, Iris lives Richard's story by performing the roles given to her by him.

Patriarchal authority has adherents and disciples from among women such as Richard's sister Winifred, who treats her like a child and continues Iris' patriarchal education in the absence of Richard by interfering in every aspect of Iris' life. She acts as a vicarious or acting patriarch that voices Richard's values. For instance, Winifred often takes Iris to the meetings and committees where she thinks she will be surrounded with examples of womanhood shaped by patriarchs like Richard. Winifred treats Iris as her equal neither at home nor in these meetings. Iris states: "In 1936, she was still affable enough, and I was still her protégée. She continued to haul me around from function to function—Junior League meetings, political bun-fests, committees for this and that—and park me on chairs and in corners, while she did the necessary socializing" (370). Winifred's infantilization of Iris is both an extension of Richard's and a message to Iris that implies that she will be able to actively participate in such events when she has absorbed, like Winifred, Richard's values. Winifred continues Richard's project, which is to shape Iris according to their wishes. Winifred seems to have this power over Iris because of her familial, economic and historical proximity to Richard, but though these aspects have their functions to strengthen her before Iris, actually her power is rather a result of having accepted and acting upon patriarchal norms. Iris gains her power not only from her family ties but also from her economic welfare. Being superior to Iris economically, Winifred also sees the right in herself to interfere in Iris' life. Such women may appear to have power, yet the power that they hold is by no means theirs; they are the standard bearers of patriarchal causes. In other words, although Winifred appears to

have power on Iris, Winifred actually does not have free will. She functions as a helper of Richard and tries to carry out Richard's project believing it is also her project. Ironically, Winifred is also blind to the fact that she is only performing tasks that Richard asks her to do and which are often time-consuming. For instance, before Richard and Iris get back from their honeymoon, Winifred decorates their house according to the tastes prescribed by the class and status they belong to, and, therefore, lifts the burden from Richard's shoulders. Since Richard is too busy to take care of petty things, such as decorating the house or organizing parties, he puts the entire burden on Winifred and does not waste his important time. Therefore, Winifred is not an authority without Richard. She is only a representative of Richard's authority and his substitute when Richard is physically nonexistent at home.

Richard, together with Winifred, treats Iris like a child tactfully until the very end. While both Richard and Winifred make decisions that concern the most intimate details of her life Iris is often uninformed and clueless about the decisions taken on her behalf. Excluded from every significant decision-making process, "not for the first time, she felt like a child excluded by its parents" (306). Not only is Iris deprived of her right to contribute to the decision-making mechanisms in the family, she is also kept ignorant of the events. Winifred hides her intrusiveness in decorating Iris' house under the guise of a nice surprise, yet there are other covert signs that testify to the exclusion and infantilization of Iris. The most extreme thing Richard hides from Iris is her father's death. By not mentioning the telegrams that inform of her father's death to Iris, Richard acts as an authority figure that believes it is his right to make a decision on behalf of her. At this very moment, he not only treats Iris as a child from whom he would spare the worry, but also he takes her right to mourn her father's death. When Iris learns the death of her father from Laura, Richard says:

I know I ought to have, but I wanted to spare you the worry, darling. There was nothing to be done, and no way we could get back in time for the funeral, and I didn't want things to be ruined for you. I guess I was selfish, too—I wanted you all to myself, if only for a little while. Now sit down and buck up, and have your drink, and forgive me. We'll deal with this in the morning. (308)

With a very clever answer, Richard appears to be the caring husband whose only aim is to protect her from everything that could upset her. By giving a diplomatic answer, Richard in a way ties Iris' hands. After hearing Richard, Iris says: "*Worry. Time.*

Ruined. Selfish. Forgive me. What could I say to that?” (308). Richard’s diplomatic answer is a perfect example of how discourse masquerades as unobjectionable truth by normalizing and naturalizing itself. Being a politician, Richard is good at giving soothing answers that do not reflect the reality but only save the day. By putting the blame on himself, Richard makes Iris speechless before him. However, while he soothes her, Richard continues to give orders to Iris. He wants her to sit down and “forgive” him. Though these sentences may appear to be normal utterances, they are actually cleverly chosen imperative statements, which oblige the agent to perform them. Yet hidden behind the façade of apology, they work towards the desired effect of making Richard out to be a considerate husband who knows what is best for his wife much better than she herself can. Both siblings thus silence and victimize Iris whose voice is muffled between theirs.

Patriarchal discourse throughout the book allows the normalization of Richard’s attitudes towards Iris. Richard not only has control over Iris’ actions by treating her like a child, but also he has control over Iris’ body. As a respected upper-class wife, Iris is expected to ignore and restrict her feminine sexual desires. She should not acknowledge her sexuality since it would not be appropriate for a good wife and a future mother. Moreover, the less Iris likes sexual intercourse with her husband, the less likely she is to betray her husband. Iris states Richard’s point of view on this matter as follows:

I didn’t yet know that my lack of enjoyment—my distaste, my suffering even—would be considered normal and even desirable by my husband. He was one of those men who felt that if a woman did not experience sexual pleasure this was all to the good, because then she would not be liable to wander off seeking it elsewhere. (240)

It is considered dangerous for women to *discover* their sexuality. In order to prevent that *threat*, men like Richard normalize women’s distaste towards sex. While it is expected of women to be chaste and sexually pure, such rules do not apply to men who, without risking their respectability, can have sexual intercourse freely and seek sexual pleasure both at home and outside. Since feeling sexual pleasure is an exclusively male privilege, inability to get this at home becomes a man’s excuse for seeking it outside whereas it is the duty of their wives to fulfill their desires even at the expense of their own pleasure. Richard, likewise, boasts of his knowledge and experience with women, for for the male members of society sexual experience, not

purity and reticence, is valued. While he categorizes women according to their body types, Richard not only gives evidence of his experience but also of his preference for young bodies, which drops heavy hints about his pedophilic tendencies. Iris recalls Richard's talk on women as follows: "Richard said women could be divided into apples and pears, according to the shapes of their bottoms. I was a pear, he said, but an unripe one. That was what he liked about me—my greenness, my hardness" (318). Speaking from the center of authority, Richard is vested with the power to practice and express sexual perversities, which are his privileges. His statement thus serves to normalize his pedophilia, which is a pathological condition.

In addition, while men freely divide women into categories, women, particularly socially accepted women, cannot do the same, for whatever their experience in marriage, they are condemned to remain pure and inexperienced as respectable wives. Actually, women are imprisoned in the stories created by men. Women only play their part in these man-made stories. Similar to many women, Iris is also brought up by the teachings of patriarchy that are against women's sexual awakening and awareness. She is imprisoned in the ideas that only benefit men. She discovers her sexuality and takes pleasure in sex only when she has an affair with Alex, the runaway communist with whom both sisters fall in love. Iris writes about her affair with Alex in her memoir through a science fiction story, which she writes together with Alex. However, instead of writing her name explicitly, Iris keeps the protagonist of the science fiction story unnamed by using the pronoun "she" until the very end. Iris' usage of the pronoun "she" in the science fiction story not only shows her unification with Laura, but also implies Iris' rebirth as she creates her own story instead of living in her father's or Richard's stories. The only time Iris can get away from the imposed roles is when she has an affair with Alex and writes about it in her memoir. In her affair with Alex, Iris feels free of all the social impositions and boundaries for the first time. Iris states: "There's no use resisting. She goes to him for amnesia, for oblivion. She renders herself up, is blotted out; enters the darkness of her own body, forgets her name. Immolation is what she wants, however briefly. To exist without boundaries" (261). By writing "*she*" in her alternative story, Iris refers to all women who discover their bodies and forget their titles as daughters, wives or sisters of men. With Alex Iris discovers her self, a new womanhood, which takes her

own desire as its center. She senses the feelings she was officially deprived of and, therefore, discerns what her body is as she writes the science fiction story collaboratively with Alex. Hence, the affair Iris has with Alex functions as “an assertion of a more open, free identity” for Iris and enables her to write an alternative discourse against patriarchy (Michael, 2010: 95).

Iris does not know she is physically and psychologically abused until the very end of the story. She functions as a woman who “nightly accedes to her husband’s savagery” and remains as “a wounded child impassively doing what she has to do” (Wineapple, 2000: 60). Iris is trapped in a marriage without love and physically abused more than once during sexual intercourse. The signs of her suffering in her private life are given implicitly. Iris states her physical torture by these words:

Sometimes—increasingly, as time went by—there were bruises, purple, then blue, then yellow. It was remarkable how easily I bruised, said Richard, smiling. A mere touch would do it. He had never known a woman to bruise so easily. It came from being so young and delicate. He favoured thighs, where it wouldn’t show. Anything over might get in the way of his ambitions. (371)

For the results of his downright brutal sexual behavior, Richard never puts the blame on himself. Instead, he blames Iris for bruising so easily. Though Iris is repeatedly exposed to violence, she remains silent about it since she does not understand that her life is controlled by the patriarchal ideology. She never questions her relationship with Richard no matter how much she hates him. The culture she is brought up in shapes her thoughts. Her habits of mind as to the roles of being a wife are set by patriarchal discourse represented by Richard. They require silence suffering on the part of the wife in the face of her husband’s abuse, which is defined as his birthright. Hence, she “recognizes the validity of the assigned function” of her role as a wife (Searle, 1995: 44).

This abusive relationship between Richard and Iris has the characteristics of one between carnivores and herbivores. While Richard is carnivorous in this affair waiting to consume Iris, Iris remains to be a herbivore that waits to be consumed by Richard. Throughout the memoir, Richard is portrayed as consuming Iris’ body as food in their repeated sexual relationships, in which only Richard takes pleasure. In his article “‘A Commemoration of Wounds Endured and Resented’: Margaret Atwood’s *The Blind Assassin* as Feminist Memoir,” Bouson states that Atwood’s female characters “exist within a political economy that seeks to consume them,

convert them into consumers in turn, shrink them, neutralize them, silence them, and contain them physically or metaphorically” (Bouson, 2010: 84). Since women exist so as to serve to their customers who will consume them, almost every woman in the book functions as sacrificial figures. Bouson indicates that Iris accepts the role of a sacrificial lamb after getting married to Richard. By enduring Richard’s violent sexual abuse for years, Iris is likened to a lamb ready to be eaten by a carnivore, Richard. Bouson comments on their one-sided sexual intercourse as follows: “As a kind of a Sadeian tiger, Richard clearly believes that ‘pleasure belongs to the eater, not to the eaten’” (Bouson, 2010: 84). Richard silences Iris, in other words, his prey, and seeks to contain her physically while Iris hates but bears the whole process. As long as Richard is pleased, Iris’ feelings are not important because as a rule all women’s sexual desire is framed by patriarchal order. By being put in the position of “the eaten” in the sexual intercourse, women function as pleasure givers while their desires are totally ignored. Such silence on the part of women turns their victimization into a socially acceptable, even desired, norm of behavior. Atwood thus demonstrates the normalization of men’s consumption of women’s bodies. In her article, “You Are What You Eat: The Politics of Eating in the Novels of Margaret Atwood,” Emma Parker comments on this issue as follows:

While Atwood explores the power dynamic of eating and non-eating, she simultaneously confronts the relationship between consumer and consumed. In her fiction, the powerful not only eat, they eat the powerless. Atwood's work is saturated with images of the body as food. She deconstructs the traditional metaphor of woman as food and explores the effects of symbolic cannibalism as a sanctioned cultural system [. . .] Atwood illustrates how symbolic cannibalism has become an institutionalized way of life and how the behavior this generates is perceived and socially endorsed as normal human behavior. The presentation of cannibalism as the governing social ethos exposes the disturbing underside of a violent relationship between the sexes that is only thinly disguised as civilization. (Parker, 1995: 363)

Since the vicious circle of patriarchal order in which women are symbolically consumed by men is normalized collectively, internalizing these norms, women do not think their bodies are consumed like food in their affairs. Hence, women continue to play their roles as objects of consumption, herbivores before carnivorous males, either as wives or mothers according to the dictates of patriarchal discourse.

Richard is a prime example of patriarchal figures that normalize men's consumption of women. It is actually the patriarchal discourse that favors such a division between men and women as carnivores and herbivores. His role in fact is no more than a continuation and crowning finale of a process that has started early in Iris' life. Dating back to her childhood, Iris is taught to learn ladylike manners. Therefore, she is repressed in every aspect of her life including her feminine appetites. Iris recalls the meal Richard and she ate in their honeymoon as follows: "The dinner was a steak, along with a salad. I ate mostly the salad" (241). Her choice of salad rather than steak testifies to her internalization of her role as herbivore and Richard's as carnivore, which are in fact part of the decorum in female and male appetites. The repression of women's appetites is the common denominator in these socially accepted rules. In order to behave in a ladylike manner, women must restrict their desires, dreams and even appetites. For instance, Iris' grandmother, Adelia, gives dinner parties but does not eat with her guests. Iris says: "Custom would have dictated that she only pick at her food while in company; chewing and swallowing were such blatant carnal activities. I expect she had a tray sent up to her room afterwards. Ate with ten fingers" (60). In order to appear ladylike, Adelia suppresses her carnal desires and appetites and tries to fit into the socially dictated ladylike figure. Like Adelia, Iris feels she has to repress her appetite especially after she gets married. However, in a dinner party given in her father's house, Iris confesses her urge to eat everything when she sees Winifred does not eat at all: "Winifred Prior was pushing things around on her plate as if playing dominoes. I felt a rage against her: I was determined to eat up everything, even the bones" (186). It is the dominant ideology that indoctrinates women as fragile and herbivore beings while depicting men as carnivores by nature. In other words, the dominant ideology sets the grounds for the acceptance of women's sacrificial lamb role though such a division between two sexes does not exist in reality.

What is common to women's repression of both sexual desire and appetite is that they are related to bodily needs. By defining the female body as desireless in either case, patriarchy brings into existence the image of an idealized female. In other words, it inscribes its meanings on the female body whose basic right, that of self-determination and existing for its own sake, is erased, ignored, and silenced. Hence,

“women’s bodies are important sites of cultural inscriptions; yet these markings have particularly devastating consequences for girls and women” (Driscoll, 1997: 90). Atwood exemplifies such devastating effects through Iris and Laura on whose psychology and body, patriarchy wields authority. For instance, due to Richard’s normalization of sexual harassment during sex, Iris is left with no choice but to endure the bruises she has while having sex with Richard. Thus, patriarchy naturalizes the fact that both women’s psyche and their body should be in the grip of patriarchal norms. Naturally, the image of idealized female also affects Laura since as a representative of counter discourse, both Laura’s body and her thoughts should be restrained by patriarchy. After sexually abusing Laura and impregnating her, Richard sends her to a mental clinic not only in an attempt to prove Laura’s mental illness and therefore come clean about his abuse, but also to get rid of the baby whose father is supposed to be unknown. In other words, by watching over Richard, patriarchy normalizes women’s psychological and physical torture due to men. For instance, apart from the psychological trauma Laura suffers due to Richard’s sexual abuse, the letter from the director of the mental clinic where Laura stays reveals that she will also suffer physically because of her delusions which are actually nothing but reality itself. In the letter, which the head of the Bella Vista Sanctuary sends to Richard, it says:

I am sorry to report that the condition of your young sister-in-law, Miss Laura Chase, has not improved; if anything it has worsened somewhat. The delusions from which she suffers are well entrenched. In our opinion she remains a danger to herself and must be kept under constant observation, with sedation when necessary [. . .] We continue to do all in our power. Several new treatments are available that we hope to use with positive effect, in particular the ‘electro-shock therapy,’ for which we will have equipment soon. With your permission we will add this to the insulin treatment. (405)

Hence, Laura’s body shows how patriarchy intervenes in women’s lives, particularly in their bodies. However, being the ultimate authority that avoids divergence from the patriarchal discourse, patriarchy exploits women’s bodily rights in every circumstance. That is to say, while Richard cruelly harms Iris’ body by naturalizing his act, he also sexually abuses Laura and becomes the only authority who speaks for Laura’s body.

In patriarchy, men *own* women in many ways; for instance, they degrade women by treating them as a *child* whose ideas are often ridiculed for not being sophisticated or men have authority over women's *bodies* on which women should actually be the ultimate authority. The ownership of women is not a new concept as according to Thorstein Veblen:

it begins in the lower barbarian stages of culture, apparently with the seizure of female captives. The original reason for seizure and appropriation of women seems to have been their usefulness as trophies. The practice of seizing women from the enemy as trophies, gave rise to a form of ownership-marriage, resulting in a household with a male head. (Veblen, 1899: 31)

Since women are regarded as *trophies*, it is men who deserve the right to *exploit* these trophies, women. For Veblen, marriage and ownership are intertwined concepts as “both arise from the desire of the successful men to put their prowess in evidence by exhibiting some durable result of their exploits [and] both also minister propensity for mastery” (Veblen, 1899: 31). Hence, the rules that prevail in predatory communities pave the way to today's patriarchal order as like the former, the patriarchal system regards women as commodities ready to be *bought* from their fathers and *exploited* afterwards.

Atwood shows how Iris is treated as a commodity together with her sister, Laura by Richard, whose sexist and perverse interest in both sisters extends their consumption to that of commodities. Richard treats the sisters as commodities while playing the role of a property owner. In her memoir, Iris comments on this as follows: “a bargain—two for the price of one” (506). Once the girls' father dies, Richard believes he has a right to have also Laura to himself. Richard thinks he has the right to *own* the two sisters as his commodity. Although his silent contract with Norman allows him to have only Iris, he feels no qualms about extending his property rights to have also Laura, for the social and cultural norms establish the basis of the relationship of a male with a female as that of ownership. Therefore, Richard feels it is his right to *own* Laura after the death of her father. Moreover, until the modification of the property law in America in the nineteenth century, every piece of property a woman had before she got married belonged to her husband once she married him. Women did not have the right to acquire a property unless their husbands approved it:

Any property a woman owned when entering a marriage became her husband's; he could not sell it, but any money earned from the property became his. As well, a woman could neither sign a contract unless her husband co-signed nor create a will without her husband's consent—and he could revoke his consent at any time. (Whidden, 2004: 6)

In other words, women were also deprived of their economic freedom by law. Hence, while property laws of the civil code warrants Richard as the owner of both Iris and her property, patriarchal societal order warrants his sexual and psychological abuse of not only his wife but also her sister, who he thinks he has inherited from Norman, her previous owner. Thus, not only does all their property belong to Richard but also Richard treats Iris and Laura as commodities. Since it is unthinkable for property to own property, it is only Richard who can have all the property to himself since he is the only legal property owner. Since the girls are financially dependant on Richard and especially Iris does not have the courage to start her life once again without having any capital, she submits to Richard and, therefore, absorbs the teachings of patriarchy that turn her into a powerless infant. Such double standards that define women as physically and mentally inferior to men lead to an increase in male dominance on women and, consequently, legalize and authorize the status of women as commodities.

Iris and Laura are treated as commodities not only in Richard's house but also in their father's house. That is to say, Richard is not the only authority figure under whose domain the girls have lived their lives and have been treated as commodities rather than as autonomous beings since before Richard, Laura and Iris were under the patriarchal control of their father. The house of the Chase family is like a capitalist estate in which Iris and Laura are treated as commodities that will be sold to the highest bidder one day. In the article, "Margaret Atwood's Feminist Ethics of Gracious Housewifery," Tammy Amiel Houser comments on the Chase's family home as follows:

The oppressive capitalist modus is worked out in the domestic Avilion— Iris' childhood residence— portrayed as a fancy mansion rather than a cozy home. For the young Iris and Laura, Avilion is a lonely place where their mother died in childbirth, leaving them in their father's hands 'as if we were some kind of a smear'. Their sense of abandonment is compounded by the emotional and physical violence they suffer in this unprotecting house. (Houser, 2013: 119)

Even in their house, where they should be feeling secure, Iris and Laura feel unprotected. Actually, they are unprotected from their own father who always keeps them at a distance. As a member of patriarchy, Laura and Iris' father, who never loves his daughters tenderly, only instructs and orders the girls how they should behave under the rules of patriarchy. In other words, the house functions as a microcosm of patriarchal societal order. If the girls behave properly under the roof of their father's patriarchal order, they will adapt themselves to the macrocosm easily. Hence, as a passionate believer and follower of patriarchy, the girls' father, Norval, favors patriarchy more than his girls. While writing her memoir, Iris recalls some scenes from her childhood that give away Norval's authoritative manners. For instance, Iris remembers a photo shoot when Iris was thirteen and Laura was just nine. After so many years, Iris feels their father's presence can be sensed though he is not pictured in the portrait. Iris states:

There's a studio portrait of Laura and me, taken this time. I'm wearing the regulation dark velvet dress, a style too young for me. [. . .] Laura sits besides me, in an identical dress. We both have white knee socks, patent-leather Mary Janes; our legs are crossed decorously at the ankle, right over left, as instructed. I have my arm around Laura, but tentatively, as if ordered to place it there. Laura on her part has folded in her lap. Each of us has her light hair parted in the middle and pulled back tightly from her face. Both of us were smiling, in that apprehensive way of children has when told they must be good and smile, as if the two things are the same: it's a smile imposed by the threat of disapproval. The threat and the disapproval would have been Father's. We were afraid of them, but did not know how to avoid them. (159)

Throughout their childhood and early adulthood, their father tells the girls how to behave and even how to pose in a picture. As a representative of patriarchal order, Norval wants the girls to be *uniform* by wearing identical clothes and giving the same pose as *instructed* by him. He shapes not only the appearance but also the attitude of the girls in accordance with the expectations of patriarchal society. However, while doing this, his tone is strict and bossy. He dictates the girls how they are supposed to dress and act in order to be a good girl and therefore, he believes teaching them how to be good girls will guarantee their being good wives and good mothers. Patriarchy wants to keep this order as much as possible without leaving any chance for women to question their status within society. Therefore, through representatives like Iris and Laura's father, the patriarchal order favors the teaching of appropriate manners at early ages. Thus, Norval is the pioneer of educating both

Iris and Laura and Richard takes over that responsibility upon his death. It is as if there is a blood tie between Norval and Richard and ruling the girls is handed down from father to son. Norval's presence can be felt in every aspect of the girls' lives even if he is not present there physically. "Everything about this passage denotes the symbolic paternal order that keeps the sisters in place. However unique and privileged in their upbringing, they are typically 'instructed,' 'ordered,' 'folded,' and 'pulled back'" (Barzilai, 2010: 109). Thus, from an early age, the sisters are taught to obey first to their father and then to their husbands. Since "woman is simply a name for the unrepresented and repressed of patriarchal culture," living under the teachings of such ideology suffocates both Iris and Laura in every aspect (Driscoll, 1997: 93).

It is the patriarchal ideology that favors women's being treated as children and commodities, benefits from their physical and psychological consumption and supports the invasion of women's space. Throughout history women are regarded as second sex. "Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered as autonomous being" (Beauvoir, 1949: 5). Since women are not considered as autonomous beings, they need the care of men, who will treat them as children or commodities and often regard them as soulless bodies. As men have control over women, the patriarchal system easily oppresses women while its representatives like Norval and Richard renew and strengthen this vicious circle. Iris faces the dominant ideology as an oppressive force represented by Richard and her father who try to make women, dependant on men. Through her memoir, Iris helps lay bare the sexist aspect of the class-based Canadian society of the 1930s and 1940s in which women remain nameless. Iris' name is never stated in the newspaper clippings; instead, she is referred to as Mrs. Richard Griffen since a woman in patriarchal order cannot define herself unless a man defines her. Gilbert and Gubar say: "marriage is crucial because it is the only accessible form of self-definition for girls" (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000: 224). Similarly, Margaret Atwood shows the reader that it is only after her marriage that Iris starts to have status in public as the wife of Richard Griffen. The moment a woman gets her husband's surname, she gives up her own identity. Hence, women speak their husbands' thoughts through their husbands' words once they get married. In other words, while men are given the power of speech, women are silenced. They remain obedient and

face the damaging consequences of living in a culture shaped by men in which they cannot make their voices heard. As a result, their inability to prevent their oppression leads to their victimization. In one of the newspapers in the year 1936, which is before the death of Richard, it is clearly seen that all the women, who would be attending a costume ball, are addressed by their husband's names: "On the reception committee were Mrs. Richard Chase Griffen, an Abyssinian in green and silver, Mrs. Oliver MacDonnell, in Chinese red, and Mrs. Hugh N. Hillert, imposing as a Sultanness in magenta" (273). It is as if women do not exist. The presence of women is nullified for they are not called by their first names until their husbands die. For instance, Iris is addressed as Mrs. Iris Chase Griffen only when her husband dies: "Mr. Griffen was the brother-in-law of the late Laura Chase, who made her posthumous debut as a novelist this spring, and is survived by his sister Mrs. Winifred (Griffen), the noted socialite, and by his wife, Mrs. Iris (Chase) Griffen" (14).

While Iris, together with many women, suffer from being passive by remaining under the control of men, Laura's situation is even worse when compared to these women. In the newspaper clippings, Laura is mostly addressed by her first name, which is a kind of a degrading attitude since being a Mrs. was a way of showing one's status in patriarchy. *The Port Ticonderoga Herald and Banner*, the newspaper that made news upon the death of Iris in 1999, stated: "Mrs. Griffen was the sister of noted authoress Laura Chase" (519). In another newspaper, which reports the news about their daughter, Aimee Griffen's death, Laura is again addressed by her name: "Aimee Griffen, thirty-eight, daughter of the late Richard E. Griffen, the eminent industrialist, and niece of noted authoress Laura Chase, was found dead in her Church St. Basement apartment on Wednesday" (19). Laura does not have a title before her name in an era when it is better for a woman to be a Mrs. rather than a Miss. However, while it is widely believed to be degrading not to have a title before her name for a woman, it also gives Laura a chance to be free. She can use her full name while most women are called by their husbands' name. In other words, Laura becomes strong through language and reverses the restriction that patriarchal order uses in order to imprison women in their husbands' names while making it appear as a way of showing status within society. Laura succeeds in being

free of any men's title and she manages to be referred as a "noted authoress" instead of being referred as someone's "wife." Yet, ironically, Laura gains the title of "noted authoress" only after her death. In other words, Laura is not given credit while alive since she would gain power as a result of her status as an author. As Laura could no longer be a threat to the male-dominant order when she is dead, gaining a title would neither disturb the balance of patriarchal order nor make Laura powerful. The codes of patriarchy are so well embedded in the system that women do not tend to question them. Although being single gives women the chance to hold property inherited from their fathers and, therefore, makes them powerful, the patriarchal order makes women believe that it is respectable for them to wed and give all their belongings to their husbands with consent. The patriarchal system is so convincing that women become willing slaves of the system. The persuasiveness of patriarchy derives from its power since it has the power to make women appear weak and convince them into their weakness. Though Laura is economically powerful as a single woman as she has the right to hold property, the patriarchal system degrades her power by showing her as a woman who has lost her dignity as a result of remaining single. The patriarchal order successfully reverses the reality and women are left with no choice but to believe in the imposed reality of patriarchy. Since men want the continuation of patriarchal order in order to keep ruling over women, they alter the order according to their benefits by adding some amendments into the system. That is to say, if men see an abyss in the system that would wake women up from their deep sleep, they try to fix this by reversing the situation. Though the sexist attitudes towards women are obvious, most women do not protest against it since they collectively believe the roles they are performing are their natural duties. Hence, they pity Laura, who lacks a title, and they appreciate the value of bearing their husbands' names and surnames. In other words, the dominant ideology makes women believe that they are supposed to be performing certain roles while remaining passive in the male-dominant society.

Sexist ideas are made part of the collective consciousness of the women of Iris' time by integrating highly sexist teachings into the education of young girls, which eventually lead to their tragic endings. Reenie, a member of the working class, gets in charge of the upbringing of both Iris and Laura. She functions as a mother

figure who tries to warn the girls against the dangers they might face if they do not live in accordance with patriarchal rules. Due to Reenie's warnings, "in Iris' mind, the victim is always speechless and helpless to save herself" (Showalter, 2000: 53). Reenie's warnings to both Iris and Laura, dictate the girls to be passive and speechless in a men's world where women are weak and *paralyzed* before men:

In Reenie's descriptions the girl or woman would always be inert, but with many handholds on her, like a jungle gym. She would be magically deprived of the ability to scream or move. She would be transfixed, she would be paralyzed—with shock, or outrage, or shame. She could have no recourse. (200)

Years later, Iris observes the devastating effects of Reenie's indoctrination. While writing her memoir, Iris not only "sees her adolescence as a kind of paralysis" since she feels paralyzed not only before her father but also feels *transfixed* in her relationship with Richard in which she lives the life tailored to her by Richard (Showalter, 2000: 53).

Although she herself suffers from patriarchal norms both as a woman and as a working class member, instead of resisting and opposing this ideology, Reenie tells stories to the girls that reflect the ideas of the dominant ideology which favor sexist attitudes:

She also teaches them about the dangers of sexual misbehaviour, expressing in her characteristically clichéd speech, her social disapproval of women who overtly display their sexuality. 'Curtain's up, where's the show?' ... 'It's dirt that gets swept, and it's into the dustbin,' Reenie says of women who sexually disgrace themselves. (Bouson, 2010: 256)

As Reenie has internalized the patriarchal rules herself, she transmits these rules to both Iris and Laura. Like Reenie, almost every other woman believes and produces that such kinds of advice will help girls live an honorable life. Hence, the discriminatory and sexist ideas become more strongly and deeply ingrained in individual consciousness of people, making them a collective reality, that even the women themselves remain blind to them. In a conversation with Iris and Laura, Reenie warns the girls about how their lives would be like if they did not get married:

*'I'm not going to have a husband anyway,' said Laura. 'I'm going to live in the garage.'
'I'm not going to have one either,' I said, not to be outdone.
'Fat chance of that,' said Reenie. 'You like your nice soft bed. You'd have to sleep on the cement and get all covered in grease and oil.'*

*'I'm going to live in the conservatory,' I said.
'It's not heated any more,' said Reenie. 'You'd freeze to death in the winters.'
'I'll sleep in one of the motor cars,' said Laura. (87)*

As young as they may be the sisters with their dialogue above exemplify the societal perception of unmarried women. Unmarried, women are doomed a wretched life. Actually, this perception is not totally wrong, for women's economic independence was not granted as their legal right at Iris' and Laura's childhoods. Therefore, women had to depend on a male guardian, be it their father or husband, even if they had inherited wealth. But the dialogue above does more than portray a reality; it justifies it and prescribes marriage as prevention from living in wretched conditions. Indoctrinated from a malleable young age, neither Iris nor Reenie can imagine a world in which they can live independently with relative comfort.

In case the threat of economic difficulties that a single woman will face does not work efficiently to silence women, social and moral codes come into the picture as accompaniments. Women believe they will be isolated from society and will not deserve to be respected as an individual unless they get married. Thus, in order to remain as respected members of society, women are locked within a system that threatens, patronizes and suffocates them. It is as if the patriarchal system drugs women and does not let them awaken to reality. Since "it is in the interest of relatively powerful groups that some discourses and not others receive the stamp of truth," patriarchy hinders women from seeing alternative discourses, and thus makes women believe and teach the next generation that the prevailing discourse is the "Truth" (Burr, 1995: 76).

In the novel, many women, like Reenie, are under the influence of male hegemony and are obedient to the rules imposed by patriarchy. Since these socially constructed rules masquerade as reality, women are left with no choice but to believe in the rules' reality and truth. That is to say, the patriarchal ideology actually appears under the guise of normalcy. For instance, *the lady image*, presented in *The Boston Cooking-School Cookbook*, is deliberately *invented* in order to represent women as angelic, hospitable and selfless loaf-givers. The cookbook actually belongs to Iris and Laura's grandmother Adelia, yet Reenie inherits it upon the girls' mother's death. As the cookbook also promotes the prevailing image of women as servers, middle-class women of the era believe it is their "natural" duty to serve the men

hospitably. That is to say, women are made to believe that the roles and duties imposed and normalized by the patriarchal system are their *inborn* and *natural* duties. However, no duty or role of women, which is claimed as natural by patriarchal ideology, is actually related to the women's body. Like men, women have two arms and two legs, yet the system delegates women to perform such duties as their natural roles and duties. In other words, patriarchal system silently and intelligently defines and conceptualizes women and womanhood in accordance with men's interests. The epigraph in front of the book by Josh Ruskin shows how cleverly patriarchal ideology imposes some roles on women and how willingly women accept these:

Cookery means the knowledge of Medea and of Circe and of Helen and of the Queen of Sheba. It means the knowledge of all herbs and fruits and balms and spices, and all that is healing and sweet in the fields and groves and savory in meats. It means carefulness and inventiveness and willingness and readiness of appliances it means the economy of your grandmothers and the science of modern chemist; it means testing and no wasting; it means English thoroughness and French and Arabian hospitality; and, in fine, it means that you are to be perfectly and always ladies—loaf givers. (180)

By this epigraph, Ruskin determines the domestic roles of women in private sphere. He makes the cookbook function as a holy book that is handed down from mother to daughter. Ruskin shows women the secrets of housewifery by making it appear as something divine. The epigraph also shows how discourse is twisted in favour of patriarchy. At the beginning of his epigraph Ruskin mentions the names of important and powerful Greek mythological women figures, such as Circe and Medea, who are both respected and feared. While Circe is known to be a witch who can transform her enemies into animals thanks to her knowledge of various herbs, her niece Medea also has a reputation of being a witch. Both Circe and Medea's power derive from their ability to collect poisonous or healing herbs from nature and, therefore, both of these mythological figures reinforce the idea that women are actually powerful beings who can either cure or kill. Their connectedness to nature makes women the first chemists in history. As Ruskin ends his epigraph, he states that women's true nature transcends all boundaries. That is to say, every woman, regardless of time, geography and culture, has this power in her "true nature." However, with his last sentence, Ruskin twists every single thing he has said and concludes his epigraph by labeling women as *ladies* and *loaf givers*. Since patriarchal discourse does not

favor powerful women and consider them as uncanny characters, Ruskin successfully concludes his epigraph by announcing women as *ladies*. Though he ends his epigraph contrary to everything he has claimed until then, no women reading the cookbook understands the contradictory ending. Thanks to patriarchal discourse, women do not attribute any meaning to the previously stated sentences and only focus on being ladies and loaf givers. The patriarchal system is such a threat to women that it can slyly change every discourse against the system. In short, the Victorian image of women as “loaf-givers” and “ladies” make most women believe that it is their “natural” duty to serve to men.

While women, such as Reenie, contribute to the victimization of their own sex without knowing by transmitting patriarchal teachings to new generations, the male characters embody different ways of victimization of the two sisters in the novel. Patriarchal system exploits and oppresses women sexually and otherwise and therefore, deprives them of the right to live their autonomous lives. Patriarchy achieves this goal via its advocates that proudly internalize and represent the ultimate patriarchal ideology. Apart from Norval and Richard, Mr. Erskine, Iris and Laura’s home tutor, functions as another patriarchal authority to exercise power on Laura and Iris in order to keep them in line. He abuses the girls while engraving patriarchal rules and their roles in their heads. When Norval, no longer finds the previous tutor, Miss. Violence’s teaching methods strict enough, he hires Mr. Erskine, who formerly has taught in a boy’s school. Since according to Norval, Miss. Violence’s lessons do not dictate harsh patriarchal norms but instead are more related with literature which would broaden Iris and Laura’s horizons, he prefers a male teacher who would pull the girls out of the fantasy world and teach the patriarchal requirements they should meet. “Education for Norval Chase is equivalent to inhibiting female sexuality and subduing it under the control of the patriarch, either as the father or the male tutor” (Koyuncu, 2007: 77). Iris recalls Mr. Erskine’s degrading attitude towards them as follows:

First of all he gave us tests, to determine what we knew. Not much, it appeared, though more than we saw fit to divulge. He then told Father that we had the brains of insects or marmots. We were nothing short of deplorable, and it was a wonder we were not cretins. We had developed slothful mental habits—we had been allowed to develop them, he added reprovingly. Happily, it was not too late. My father said in that case Mr. Erskine should work us up into shape. (161)

Mr. Erskine degrades both Iris and Laura by likening them to insects and blames Miss.Violence, who teaches the purity of romantic love through novels and poems, for the girls' poor education. For Mr. Erskine, the girls do not need to acquire critical thinking abilities. Therefore, his motive is to educate the girls with certain manners that patriarchy favors:

To us, Mr. Erskine said that our laziness, our arrogance, our tendency to lollygag, and daydream, our sloppy sentimentality had all but ruined us for the serious business of life. No one expected us to be geniuses, and it would be conferring no favours if we were, but there was surely a minimum, even for girls: we would be nothing but encumbrances to any man foolish enough to marry us unless we were made to pull up our socks (161).

According to Mr. Erskine, the girls' only goal should be learning how to be good wives and supporting their husbands' pursuits in life. Women's aspirations in life are not given importance in the patriarchal system. In her article, *Revising Scripts of Femininity in Margaret Atwood's The Blind Assassin*, Nevin Yıldırım Koyuncu comments on Mr. Erskine's ideas about the girls' education as follows:

Education for girls is compulsory only to prepare them for 'the serious business of life' which appears to be nothing but marriage itself. Pursuit of another alternative is out of the question for a girl. Education is used as a powerful means to perpetuate unequal gender relationships. (Koyuncu, 2007: 78)

According to the representatives of patriarchy like Mr. Erskine, women should be kept in line starting from early age. Mr. Erskine believes he can *shape* the girls in accordance with the needs of patriarchal order through his strict teaching method: "Mr. Erskine's methods were direct. He was a hair-puller, an ear-twister. He would whack the desks beside our fingers with his ruler, and the actual fingers too, or cuff us across the back of the head when exasperated, or, as a last resort, hurl books at us across the backs of our legs" (161). Thus, the patriarchal education system's process is as harsh as its consequences in terms of women. That is to say, women not only suffer while learning their roles but also suffer after they have learned them.

Mr. Erskine acts as an authority figure by oppressing Iris and Laura physically and emotionally during his lessons. When he feels that Laura is not interested in what he is teaching, he shakes her and uses brutal force. Years later, Iris remembers his brutal treatment of Laura:

He took to shaking her— to snap her out of it, he said. You're not the Sleeping Beauty, he would yell. Sometimes he threw her against the wall, or shook her with

his hands around her neck. [...] At first I tried to intervene, but it did no good. I would simply be pushed aside with one swipe of his tweedy, malodorous arm. (164)

Laura believes Mr. Erskine enjoys giving harm to her physically because it is an opportunity for him to touch her. Behind his violence lays his sexual desire for the girls. Laura says to Iris that Mr. Erskine likes putting his hand up her blouse when Iris is not looking. Since violence is justified and normalized as part of the training of the young, especially the young girls, Mr. Erskine hides his sexual advances behind the normalcy of a teacher's disciplinary violence. He can act that way even when the girls' father is at home since the girls' father does not see any harm in handing his daughters over to patriarchal authority. Since Norval believes in the unchallenged supremacy of patriarchy, he is loyal to patriarchy rather than his daughters. Atwood shows the powerlessness of the two sisters before a member of patriarchal society starting from their childhood and emphasises Laura's helplessness against sexual abuse.

Mr. Erskine functions as the embodiment of patriarchy. When he teaches them Latin from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, he focuses the girls' attention on the Gods' unpleasant rapes: "The rape of Europa by a large white bull, of Leda by a swan, of Danae by a shower of gold—these would at least hold our attention, he said, with his ironic smile" (163). There is always a hidden threat in his lectures. He likes being in charge of the girls and enjoys oppressing them physically and sexually. J. Brooks Bouson states that Mr. Erskine's lecture on women characters' rape under the cover of teaching Latin serves as "a textual rehearsal of the sisters' later victimization at the hands of Richard Griffen" (Bouson, 2010: 257).

All the sexist attitudes of male characters underlie the victimization of women characters in the book. Atwood not only shows the victimization of women in her multi-layered story but also in the science fiction story, which is within her main story. While Atwood presents her fictional story through the eyes of Iris, she also blends a science fiction story depicted by Alex within her main fictional story. When Alex meets Iris secretly in different places, he makes up a story about a planet named Zycron. He fills his story with the doubles of the characters in his everyday life and continues his science fiction story every time they meet. In his story, he mentions a city, Sakiel-Norn, which was destroyed in a battle. He divides the inhabitants of the city into two categories; the aristocrats called the Snilfards and the slaves named the

Ygnirods. Since Alex believes Iris' father has forced her to marry Richard, the wealthy industrialist, when he went out of business, Alex tells his science fiction story by likening the aristocrat fathers, who sell their wives or children when they go bankrupt, to Iris' father. As Alex continues his story, he includes human sacrifice to the Gods to refer to Iris' metaphorical sacrifice by marrying Richard. He talks about the slave girls whose tongues are cut off three months before they are offered as a sacrifice to the gods. Throughout his science fiction story, Alex reflects what he sees in real life to his story. He forms parallels between the muted girls whose throats would be cut and Iris' contemporaries who are brought up so as to serve their husbands. While the virgins in the science fiction story are trained to be killed by the High Priest at the altar under the guise of a ritual parade "as a lip service to an outworn concept," Iris and her contemporaries are trained for a similar end (28). In order to prevent the virgins from screaming and make them accept their fate, the patriarchal order on the science fiction planet requires that the virgins should be muted by having their tongues cut:

Tongueless and swollen with words she could never again pronounce, each girl would be led in procession to the sound of solemn music, wrapped in veils and garlanded with flowers, up the winding steps to the city's ninth door. Nowadays you might say she looked like a pampered society bride. (29)

By likening the muted virgins to today's pampered society brides, Atwood shows the similarity between the women in her fiction and the science fiction story through Alex. While the tongues of the women are literally cut in the science fiction story, the tongues of Iris and Laura are cut ideologically by leaving them speechless before the patriarchal system. Neither the women in the science fiction story nor the women in the fictional story raise questions about the necessity of their victimization. Therefore, the victimization process takes place automatically without questioning. This victimization is believed to be necessary collectively and, as a result, its origin and "necessity" are forgotten through years or centuries. Such rituals are held either literally or metaphorically in different cultures in different eras. The more people accept this ritual, the more its existence becomes real and, therefore, transmitted from generation to generation. Even when the cultural or economic dynamics disappear, this practice continues as the powerful keeps this ideology alive.

The similarity between the muted girl and Iris is not the only one in the novel. Alex “fictionalizes the painful facts of Iris’ life” (Staels, 2010: 8). The characters in Alex’s story are the imaginary doubles of the characters in Iris’ life. In other words, he mirrors the facts repressed in her daily life. Alex presents parallels between Iris’ father and the Sniflards, the aristocrats. In his science fiction story, he says: “If a Snilfard should become bankrupt, he might be demoted to an Ygnirod. Or he might avoid such a fate by selling his wife or children in order to redeem his debt” (17). Alex clearly accuses Iris’ father of selling his daughter to the rich businessman, Richard Griffen. Alex also continues finding resemblances between the everyday life of the era and the life in Sakiel-Norn:

In Sakiel-Norn, everything was for sale. The dedicated girls were shut up inside the temple compound, fed the best of everything to keep them sleek and healthy, and rigorously trained so they would be ready for the great day—able to fulfill their duties with decorum, and without quailing. The ideal sacrifice should be like a dance, was the theory: stately and lyrical, harmonious and graceful. They were not animals, to be crudely butchered; their lives were to be given by them freely. (28)

Thus, similar to Iris, who gives herself up to Richard without any resistance, the young girls sacrifice themselves as they are brought up for this day. Interestingly, both the muted virgins and Iris *freely* offer their lives to the patriral system, which imprison them. Women both in the fiction and science fiction story are made to internalize the normalcy of self-sacrifice as the patriarchal system pushes them to give away their lives willingly for the sake of the system. Similar to the muted virgins, Iris is also trained for her wedding day. Starting from her childhood she has been taught proper manners so that in the end she would act properly beside her husband. A girl should be trained in order to represent her husband in public in the most fitting manner. After all, she will be bearing and wearing his name, not hers, once she gets married. She performs her role as a devoted wife or daughter. The most striking thing is that though these roles are imposed on women, they believe they have made their own free choice. Hence, the power of the ideology derives from its ability to make people accept one view rather than another without making them aware of their decisions. That is to say, people do not notice that ideology is at work; instead, they are subject to ideological concepts or beliefs starting from very early ages. As people are surrounded with ideological terms the moment they are born, they do not realize that they are brought up with the teachings of a certain ideology rather than another.

Thus, they accept the normalcy of the ideology they have been subject to and internalize it unconsciously. For instance, Iris does not question the patriarchal ideology since she does not realize that she has been under the threat of it. Iris encounters the patriarchal ideology, which engulfs her at an early age, first via her mother and Reenie. Through their teachings that only serve to the benefits of patriarchal order, Iris learns her role first as an obedient girl and then as an obedient and devoted wife. As a devoted member of patriarchy, Norval continuously shapes Iris' attitudes according to the requirements of patriarchal order. The patriarchal teachings continue with Mr. Erskine, who homeschools both Iris and Laura by abusing them physically and sexually. Through his harsh teaching method, he engraves the patriarchal teachings in the girls' minds. When Iris gets married to Richard, Richard takes over the responsibility from Iris' father and continues teaching and maintaining Iris in accordance with patriarchal norms. All these members of patriarchy, including the volunteering female members, who give huge support to the maintenance of patriarchal order without noticing doing so, can shape Iris and many other women like her thanks to the patriarchal discourse. The patriarchal ideology is so well established in the language that any member, male or female, helps to maintain the patriarchal order without knowing. Thus, the patriarchal ideology establishes itself via language so strong through years that Iris and her contemporaries do not notice the threat.

Iris and Laura are two sides of one coin who experience their tragic lives through similar stages. Therefore, like the similarities between Iris and the muted girls, there are also obvious analogies between Laura and the muted virgins in the science-fiction story. While Iris can keep her suffering and sacrificial roles within the private sphere as she is a wife, Laura's sacrifice leaks out of private sphere when the scandal becomes public with the release of *her* book. Despite the fact that he is married to Iris, Richard sexually abuses Laura on a boat named Water Nixie when they go to spend some family time in Avilion. Although Iris feels the tension between Richard and Laura after they sail together, she does not think of a possibility of sexual abuse. Iris fails to see the signs Laura gives to reveal the truth. In the novel, Laura's victimization precedes her self-sacrifice. First, she is victimized by Richard with his rape and then she sacrifices herself by remaining silent about it for the sake

of Alex. Laura is convinced that she has made a covenant with God to save Alex's life. She strongly believes if she sacrificed herself by being with Richard for the welfare of Alex, Alex would return home safe and sound. Finally, Laura sacrifices herself literally upon learning that her sacrifice has not saved Alex's life. Thus, Laura sacrifices her life more than once and remains selfless. Though Laura is not muted physically, "she remains a mystery, a vacancy in the center of the novel" (Hite, 2001: 3). Iris tries to give voice to her sister's speech, but the sentences that she remembers do not make a meaningful whole. Since Laura is often stubborn and inquisitive about almost every topic from the beginning of the novel, Laura is presented as a character that does not belong to patriarchal society and its institutions. Instead, she is committed to her emotions and rejects every thought that is imposed on her.

While Norval, Richard and Mr. Erskine are real advocates of patriarchal norms who set their minds on the system, ironically, Alex, who covertly criticizes the patriarchal system through his science fiction story, also ends up being the voice of patriarchy. Since Alex mainly focuses on the political oppression of the powerful on the weak, he misses the sight of women's oppression under the patriarchal system. In other words; Alex fails to see gender dynamics while seeing and reacting against class dynamics. As he is also a member of patriarchy, he fails to see the patriarchal oppression of women. While trying to put an end to the corrupt capitalist system, Alex includes sexist stereotypes in his science fiction story. In his article, Bouson emphasizes Alex's use of sexist stereotypes by giving examples:

[H]e also invokes stereotypes in his depiction of women characters he refers to as B, which stands, variously, for Beyond Belief, or Bird Brain, or Beautiful Blonde; or the Peach Women, whose sole function is to satisfy the sexual fantasies of the earthmen marooned on their planet; or the dead women with lithe, curvaceous figures and ruby-red lips who prey on men; or the sacrificial veiled of Zycron who are passively sacrificed by men. (Bouson, 2010: 262)

The patriarchal order divides women into certain categories by labelling them as seductive women, who not only fulfill the fantasies of men but also are a threat to men due to their feminine power, or as mothers, who are selfless loaf-givers, and obedient ladies, who are expected to sacrifice themselves when the time comes for the sake of their husbands. Hence, for these stereotypes prevail in the consciousness of men in patriarchy, Alex cannot avoid pointing them out in his science fiction story. Though Alex opposes Richard and everything he thinks Richard represents,

namely capitalism, due to his internalization of patriarchy, he shares the same worldview with him about women. While Richard and Mr. Erskine abuse and victimize Iris and Laura in a more explicit way, Alex, an orphan brought up with the teachings of patriarchy, also represents his time by writing a sexist narrative. Thus, in terms of his attitude towards women, Alex is similar to Richard.

The problem Atwood implies to the reader is women's blindness to the patriarchal roles that they internalize. Iris' blindness to Alex's sexist narrative is just one example of this fact. When Alex mentions the unmarried or betrayed women who find men at night time and suck their essence in his story, her reply is: "What bad luck for the young men. Is there no defence against these vicious creatures?" (115). Alex's sexist narrative prevents her from seeing the negative representation of women characters. She sides with men and pities them. However, she cannot see that this story is narrated from a patriarchal perspective and women are the ones to be pitied. Moreover, as Alex tells his story to Iris, he likens Iris to the pampered brides. He says when there is a riot in the imaginary planet, the nobles will be killed and "[. . .] their daughters will be married off to the victors to legitimize the seizure of their families' wealth, and their pampered and no doubt adulterous wives will be tossed to the mob" (119). As clearly seen in Alex's science fiction story, women have no say on their will. The only time a woman acts according to her will is when she commits adultery. However, when she does that, she is both labeled as adulterous and excluded from the patriarchal society. It is as if Alex emphasizes adultery on purpose. He wants to make Iris feel bad about it. Though he is also involved in this adulterous affair, he can easily exclude himself from it and implicitly put all the blame on his partner, Iris. The women stereotypes Alex uses in his story always have negative connotations. They are sacrificial figures, sexual tools or adulterous human beings. In other words, Alex verbally victimizes Iris by writing fiction in which there are no wholesome role models for female readers. By telling his story from a sexist perspective, Alex contributes to the internalization of women stereotypes that are linguistically determined and imposed on women by the patriarchal system. However, Iris cannot see the truth before her eyes. Like Iris, almost all women are mute about the oppression to which they are exposed and, therefore, cannot stand up to the patriarchal society that victimizes them.

The victimization of women in patriarchal society is reinforced with their silence. Women are silenced throughout the story for even they speak they cannot make themselves heard. It is as if no language can express the agony of women. Since language is socially constructed by patriarchy, women's utterances do not fit in this construction. There is not even a possibility of another language spoken by women in the patriarchal order. It is as if women are talking a totally different language through which they cannot even communicate among themselves. For instance, Iris fails to understand Laura's sexual abuse no matter how many times Laura gives her the signs for it. Since women lack a language through which they can communicate, Laura cannot state what she went through explicitly. On the one hand, it can be stated that she avoids Iris' confrontation with the truth as Laura loves her so much; on the other hand, Laura cannot put her shame into words since she is silenced in the patriarchal system.

Even when women are allowed to speak through patriarchal discourse, they cannot convey their messages through their speeches since the patriarchal discourse does not give women any space to communicate or express their agony to one another. It is as if women live in a foreign land, a land where men rule, while speaking a foreign language. Hence, women never feel at home. Hite comments on women's being silenced in the patriarchal order through Laura: "While not exactly tongueless, Laura is the inarticulate character in her own story... Her subjectivity is as inaccessible as that of a saint or a god or an infant or a visitor from another planet. She could be retarded, a genius, divinely inspired or psychotic" (Hite, 2001: 3). As Hite states, Laura is like a visitor from another planet who speaks a different language and fails to communicate in this world. Laura cannot communicate through patriarchal discourse as it does not offer women words through which they can communicate. Though Laura perceives the world like a saint, who sees and understands things that ordinary people cannot or sees the world like an infant, who has a totally different worldview, she has no language to express herself. That is to say, Laura has access to a world, which others cannot understand. Therefore, she is sometimes considered as retarded by her family. Even her sister, Iris questions her sanity and, therefore, remains silent when her sister is put in a clinic. In the collective intentionality of both men and women of the era, a woman having such inconsistent

behavioural patterns cannot be considered normal. Hence, she must be kept under control. From the patriarchal point of view, madness categorically belongs to women. It is women who are put outside the public domain as their patterns of thought are not in parallel with the patriarchal ideologies. The patriarchal system has certain rules to which women should obey. Anyone breaking the rules is engulfed by the system. Since there are unwritten rules about how a young woman should be like, anyone in contrast to these rules is not accepted. Laura cannot fit in her kind of society and, therefore, is always on the margins. She is both a genius and a psychotic. In other words, she is the combination of contradictory adjectives that oppose each other. As she cannot blend in the patriarchal society with her oppositional nature, she remains first to be discarded from it.

The patriarchal system makes women believe in the socially constructed stories like being a mother, acting like a lady or sacrificing one's self for the sake of her husband so well that women collectively believe in the truthfulness of these patriarchal stories and shut their eyes to the *truth*. Whenever women doubt these stories, they open their eyes but they fear what they see. They see that they cannot *exist* outside the stories created by men. In other words, women are trapped and imprisoned in these stories. Therefore, they choose to continue believing in the stories constructed by patriarchal ideology as men do not give space to women where they can live freely and are away from man's domain. Though most women are aware of their victimization in the patriarchal society, they choose to remain blind to it since they cannot do anything to prevent their victimization in such a powerful system. Women do not know how to protest against misogynist ideas. Instead, they endure their oppression silently. The male authority figure in their lives shapes their destiny. It is as if the authoritarian patriarchal figure, who often happens to be their father first and then their husband, writes their life story on behalf of them. In other words, as Gilbert and Gubar state in the book *The Mad Women in the Attic*, the "authority" figure in their lives *authors* them. In their book, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar state: "If the author/father is the owner of his text, he is also, of course, owner/possessor of the subjects of his text, that is to say of those figures, scenes, and events. [. . .] Thus, because he is an author, 'a man of letters' is simultaneously a father, a master or ruler, and an owner: the spiritual type of patriarch" (Gilbert and

Gubar, 2000: 53). Similar to an author, he sets the roles that women are expected to play. The authority figure in a patriarchal order frames women as he wishes. He imprisons them in his version of story, which becomes their life. As women are expected to behave according to the teachings of patriarchy, they are deprived of making autonomous decisions. Throughout their lives, they try to live up to the expectations of the patriarchal order. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that women's stories both in real life and fictional ones are constructed by men in patriarchal system and such stories continuously lead to their victimization.

2.2. FAMILIAL AUTHORSHIP AND VICTIMS AT HOME

Since "families are our first culture, and family stories are the cornerstones of family culture," new generations believe in the teachings that they derive from their familial stories without questioning (Langellier and Peterson, 2004: 35). As the patriarchal order shapes everyday realities, patriarchy favors the teachings of its own ideology and, therefore, families become a medium which "culture uses to produce more culture" (Langellier and Peterson, 2004: 35). Hence, familial stories become a very useful strategy for patriarchal culture since these stories successfully and covertly fill women's subconscious and, as a result, keep them in the legitimized patriarchal order.

As Patricia F. Goldblatt claims in her article *Reconstructing Atwood's Protagonists*, "from little girls to sophisticated women, Atwood's protagonists have not yet discerned that trust can be perverted, that they can be reeled in, taken advantage of, constantly abused, if they are not careful of lurking predators in their landscapes" (Goldblatt, 1999: 277). Nearly all women characters, except for Laura, fail to notice the lurking predators, who are first their fathers, husbands or brothers in the household and then almost all men outside. Women fail to see their psychological and physical victimization since they are taught to remain passive at early ages by faithfully submitting to their socially determined roles first within the household and then in the outer sphere. Although women believe that they are secure in their protected houses under the authority of their fathers, ironically these households become places where the patriarchal stories that promote the inequality between men and women are normalized and transmitted from one generation to another.

“During the premythic era of infancy and childhood, we gather material for the stories we will someday construct” (McAdams, 1993: 277). Since the stories we are born into are manipulated and normalized by patriarchy, women have no choice but to submit to the big story, which is the so-called reality that has been taught to them beginning from their infancy. Laura and Iris are not the only characters in the book who fall victim to patriarchal power as almost all women in the novel are victimized in the patriarchal order, which internalizes women’s passiveness, self-sacrifice and being malleable since childhood.

To begin with, Adelia, Iris and Laura’s grandmother, predates the two sisters in terms of sacrifice. Though she is a member of an established family once, she becomes the first person to be discarded when the family started to suffer from financial problems. Atwood states: “[. . .] when time had begun to run out on Adelia with no really acceptable husband in sight, she’d married money— crude money, button money” (58). Upon talking to Reenie about Adelia’s marriage, Iris learns that Adelia does not agree to get married of her own free will; instead, she is married off by her family. Reenie says: “In any case, Adelia Montfort did her duty, and lucky to have the chance, as she was getting long in the tooth by then— she must have been twenty-three, which was counted over the hill in those days” (59). As clearly seen, marriage is considered as a kind of obligatory duty in which women have certain roles to perform. Like the military service, in which the government recruits men without waiting for their consent when there is war, women are not asked for their consent of their own free will in marriage. That is to say, both men and women cannot object to such duties as the rules are set forth by law. However, while men are only recruited in case of a war, marriage is like a fixed, continuous compulsory service that should be performed by women.

Moreover, since society sets a marriageable age limit via an unwritten socially accepted agreement, girls are married off at very early ages. As a result, men can gain dominance over women who are too young to question the misogynistic attitudes towards them. As girls, they show respect to their fathers and as wives they are expected to respect their husbands once they get married. In other words, the husband figure is like a father figure for women. They bite their tongues against first their fathers and then their husbands and endure the sufferings in their lives while

being respectful to both of them. Though Adelia is treated as commodity ready to be sold, Iris' marriage that takes place decades after, also indicates that such attitude against women still prevails within the male-dominated society. Although Adelia appears to manage to have a way of life, which she can partly enjoy because of doing things she likes, such as sculpture and designing Christmas cards, she hides and controls her real emotions in order to lead the life she is supposed to live. For instance, Adelia avoids going to Europe without her husband, Benjamin as she knows she would like to settle down there alone once she goes. Hence, almost all women characters in different time periods fall victim to the patriarchal order in some way as they cannot create their alternative stories. Women are afraid of the stories they are going to make because the patriarchal system has never given them the opportunity to create and live in their own stories. Instead, the patriarchal system imprisons women in its own absolute stories filled with traditions. As a result, women cannot break the chain of victimization.

Their mother, Liliana, is another female character who is victimized by the patriarchal society. Liliana is a dutiful woman who tries to keep the family together after the return of her husband, Norval, from the war. Having lost his two brothers in the war, Norval returns home in a depressed and pessimistic mood. He starts drinking and problems in the family arise. However, Liliana functions as a devoted woman and never complains about her life. Exhibiting the classic female selflessness of the sacrificial 'good' woman, Liliana tirelessly devotes herself to comforting and mending the broken Norval, forgives her husband, and never utters a word of complaint.

The course of her life also sets an example for Iris who is left to be the caretaker of her younger sister at the age of nine. As Iris grows up seeing her mother's sacrifice, she knows that she will be supposed to sacrifice herself when necessary. Hence, that is exactly what she does. She sacrifices herself by marrying Richard not only to please her father, but also to provide a better future to Laura. Actually, there is a specific moment in the novel that signifies Iris' inevitable sacrifice. The moment Iris inherits her father's war medals given for courage and bravery under fire and noble gestures of sacrifice, Iris is aware of the fact that she should sacrifice herself when time comes. The idea of sacrifice is like a family

tradition for the Chases. While Liliana sacrifices herself for the happiness of her family, it is clearly understood from the medals that their father has not got any second thoughts about sacrificing himself for the welfare of the nation. In other words, while the former serves to the domestic welfare, the latter serves to the national welfare. In contrast to men's prestigious cause, which is protecting their country at the cost of their lives while receiving medals or being a veteran in the end, women sacrifice themselves without any noble cause. Though men receive medals for their bravery and courage, which make their sacrifice more important and memorable, women are not given anything in return for their self-sacrifice. Instead, women are taught to internalize the normalcy of their sacrifice. It is the power of patriarchal system that makes women believe in the necessity of their self-sacrifice while not making a fuss about it. The system covers up the importance of women's self-sacrifice since it does not want women to open their eyes to the truth before their eyes. No matter for what both sexes sacrifice them, the idea of sacrifice is firm. While men sacrifice their lives for their countries, women sacrifice their lives for their husbands. Hence, children learn and continue this pattern of life.

Though she is not a family member, their teacher, Miss. Goreham, who is later nicknamed by Iris as Miss. Violence, also teaches the girls the need for self-sacrifice in the patriarchal order like the female figures preceding her. Although she is not a strict teacher figure, Miss. Goreham's ideas on sacrifice are still placed in the subconscious of the two sisters. Feeling doomed and scorned throughout her life as a spinster, Miss. Goreham seeks happiness through romantic poems. "As a failure and victim of of the romantic plot, she teaches Iris and Laura poems covering the theme of unrequited love and concomitant death to which Laura is preemptive" (Koyuncu, 2007: 76). Being unaware of the fact that she is contributing to the welfare of the patriarchal order, Miss. Goreham firmly teaches the girls "that the only possible end of unrequited love for a woman is death, literally or metaphorically" (76). These beliefs that will later serve to the benefits of the patriarchal order, are sneakily placed in the subconscious of both Iris and Laura. In the end, Laura, whose mind is filled with these kinds of misguided beliefs, sacrifices herself as a result of her unrequited love for Alex. Hence, the patriarchal order first teaches and then constantly reminds Iris and Laura the idea of self-sacrifice through different characters.

Laura becomes aware of the idea of sacrifice through patriarchal teachings dating back to her childhood. Though Laura is very young when her mother dies, even she understands how sacrifice is imposed on women as something they have to do. Though her understanding of the idea of sacrifice starts with the death of her mother, Laura's real grasp of the concept of sacrifice emerges on the Remembrance Day, which is held to commemorate the soldiers who have died in the war. In the town where Laura lives, there is a statue of a mythic figure named the *Weary Soldier*, which is built to show respect and commemorate the ones who have sacrificed themselves to save the town. When a large crowd gathers around the Weary Soldier On a Remembrance Day in 1928, Laura starts to raise questions about the definition and necessity of sacrifice. After the ceremony, when Laura and Iris assemble in the kitchen, Laura starts asking questions to Reenie on the idea of sacrifice:

'Why is it called a memorial?' said Laura
'It is for us to remember the dead,' said Reenie.
'Why?' said Laura. 'What for? Do they like it?'
'It's not for them, it's more for us,' said Reenie. 'You'll understand when you're older.' (150)

This conversation is like a revelation to Laura since Reenie implies that Laura will also be forced to sacrifice herself when the time comes. It is as if the Weary Soldier figure has a hidden meaning. In the conversation, Reenie refers to men by using the pronoun "them" while she refers to women by saying "us." Reenie hints that it is women who should understand the idea of sacrifice by looking at the monument. The monument is not placed there to commemorate the soldiers, who have died long ago. Instead, the monument is situated there for women, the living ones, in order to remind them the idea of sacrifice. In other words, though it is at first thought to be built to commemorate the soldiers that have lost their lives, the monument's main function is to remind women that they should also be willing to sacrifice their lives for their families like the soldiers who have sacrificed themselves to their nations. Hence, national sacrifice goes parallel with family sacrifice.

During the conversation between Laura and Reenie, another interesting comment on the matter of sacrifice is made by Mrs. Hillcoate, a friend of their family. When Laura questions the reason why the soldiers have given their lives, Mrs. Hillcoate replies: "They gave their lives to God, because that's what God wants. It's like Jesus, who died for all of our sins" (150). The utterance of this sentence

becomes a turning point in Laura's life as it is at this very point that she starts to think of the possibility of making a covenant with God like the one Jesus made. Upon Mrs. Hillcoate's religious reply, Laura starts to believe the idea of sacrifice is also necessary religiously and she thinks of sacrificing her life to save her beloved ones. Therefore, a week after this conversation, while Laura and Iris are walking along the path beside the Louveteau, Laura jumps into the river to sacrifice herself to God in order to get her mother back. Hence, the idea of sacrifice is well placed and solidified in the subconscious of women because it is not only imposed by males but also the idea is ironically imposed by females.

Like many women, Laura normalizes and internalizes the idea of sacrifice thanks to the patriarchal roles that are *twisted* and *authored* by men. Therefore, Laura's sacrificial attempts continue as she ages. In order to make sure Alex returns home safely, she sacrifices herself to Richard by submitting to his rape. Like the deal she thinks she has made with God to save her mother by giving up her life formerly, Laura renews her covenant with God by remaining silent to Richard's rape this time and believes this sacrifice will save Alex. In a conversation with Iris about the reason why she has let Richard abuse her sexually, Laura says: "It was horrible, but I had to do it. I had to make the sacrifice. I had to take the pain and suffering onto myself. That's what I promised God. I knew if I did that, it would save Alex" (594). Laura produces her own version of a sacrifice story and believes in it. However, the patriarchal order changes the course of her story by making Laura a player in her own story. The patriarchal order first makes Laura believe in the necessity of sacrifice starting from her early childhood so firmly that Laura produces her story of sacrifice. However, when Laura's and the patriarchy's idea of sacrifice do not match one another, the powerful system ruins Laura's story causing her death. For the patriarchal order, sacrifice of women means manipulating women in accordance with men's needs. Through their sacrifice, women should not gain anything in return. Since Laura's story is not appropriate in such a system, Laura ends up being a victim in a story which she writes as the system does not give any place to women's stories. In other words, women cannot exist in their own stories as the patriarchal order does not allow them. That is why, women have no other choice but believe in widely accepted stories created by the dominant ideology and, therefore, remain blind and

passive to their victimization. J. Brooks Bouson comments on the blindness of women characters to their victimization as follows:

In pointedly connecting the traumatic sexual sacrifice of the two sisters, Iris and Laura Chase, to the sacrifice of the virgin in 'The Blind Assassin' science fiction tale, Atwood, through repetitive retellings of the story of women's sexual victimization, probes the cultural-and historical-repetition of sexual violence against women, showing the link between industrialized misogyny and the sexual traumatization of women. Atwood also underscores the damage that can result from the cultural and literary idealization of female self-sacrifice as she illustrates not only the historical oppression of women in a patriarchal system but also women's cultural blindness to, and thus collusion with, their own victimization as well as the victimization of other women. (Bouson, 2010: 251)

The blindness of Laura towards her sister's sacrifice does not stem from her inability to see Iris' victimization. Laura *sees* Iris' sacrifice, yet she is unable to stop her victimization. Though Laura is able to see Iris' sacrifice by marrying Richard, Iris fails to see Laura's victimization by Richard. While Laura can see Iris' sacrifice but fails to prevent it, Iris fails to see Laura's sacrifice before her eyes. In both cases the result is the same: women end up being imprisoned within the patriarchal system. Since women are brought up learning the necessity of female submission to men for survival, women cannot stand up to their fathers and husbands. It is as if they are buried in patriarchal system.

Women cannot interpret overt and covert signs given to them because the patriarchal system is so clever that it does not allow women to become aware of the fact that they are being victimized. For instance, Iris accepts failing to see the covert signs given by Laura in her memoir. The most striking sign Laura gives is that she colors two of Iris and Richard's wedding pictures. Laura paints the pictures by using her own color codes. While she colors Richard and Miss. Griffen in green, she colors Iris in blue. While the former color refers to the Griffen's lust for money, the latter one refers Iris' being in sleep. In the second picture, Laura colors Richard's hands in red, which refers to her fear of Richard. She wants to emphasize the fact that Richard's hands are bloody. He is guilty of abusing the two sisters. She associates the color red with Richard because she also equates him with Satan and Satanic fire.

Another covert sign Laura gives to Iris is cutting herself out from the picture of Iris and Alex, which is taken during a picnic on Labor Day. Laura makes two different copies of the photograph: one is for Iris and the other is for herself. Since

Alex is in the middle of the two sisters in the picture, Laura cuts Iris' picture and creates a new one in which she is all alone with Alex, the man she loves. However, as Laura is aware of the fact that Iris also has feelings for Alex, she also makes another copy for Iris by leaving herself out of the picture. In this version of the photograph, Iris is alone with Alex. Though Laura manages to cut herself out of Iris' picture, the sight of Laura's hand can be seen in it. Iris recalls the conversation she has with Laura about her picture as follows:

I didn't know whether to be angry or alarmed. Cutting up the picture like that was a very strange thing to have done. The sight of Laura's light-yellow hand, creeping towards Alex across the grass like an incandescent crab, gave me a chill down the back of my spine. 'Why on earth did you do that?' 'Because that's what you want to remember,' she said. This was so audacious that I gasped. She gave me a direct look, which in anyone else would have been a challenge. But this was Laura: her tone was neither sulky nor jealous. As far as she was concerned she was simply stating a fact. 'And I'm not in yours?' 'No,' she said. 'You're not. None of you but your hand.' This was the closest she ever came, in my hearing, to a confession of love for Alex Thomas. (220)

Laura tries to show Iris that both of them have feelings for Alex. By including the hands of sisters in both pictures, Laura makes explicit that both Iris and Laura will always remind one another of their existence in their love affair with Alex. In her article "'If You Look Long Enough:' Photography, Memory and Mourning in *The Blind Assassin*," Shuli Barzilai comments on the cropped versions of the photograph as follows: "In Atwood's variation on the eternal triangle, the passion of two sisters for one man, the man precisely between them in the picture, unalterably conjoins and disjoins them. Even in this cropped version, something is always there to remind the other of the other" (Barzilai, 2010: 119). The sisters will always see a sign of one another in their affair with Alex because the stories of the two sisters are joint and Alex is their intersection point. Though Laura tries to show Iris the person she is actually in love with, Iris ignores the signs and marries Richard. Laura sees Iris' victimization but cannot help her once again. Although Laura loves Alex, she also tries to open Iris' eyes and make her realize her true feelings about Alex.

One other covert sign Laura tries to give to Iris is when she is put into a mental hospital, Bella Vista. When Richard explains to Iris why he put Laura into the clinic, he says: "She appeared to believe that the baby you're going to have is actually hers, in some way she was unable to explain" (430). Iris once again fails to understand this

sign and thinks Laura also has an affair with Alex. Her blindness and silence to the infidelity of her husband prevents her from seeing the truth. The mirroring of the two sisters is really ironic. In his article, Alan Robinson comments on this irony as follows:

Laura presumably feels that the baby is 'actually hers' because she accurately intuits that the father is Alex Thomas, with whom she feels that she rather than Iris might appropriately have a child, whereas, in an ironic mirroring of the sisters' situations, Laura herself is presumably carrying Richard's baby, which would be more properly be Iris'. (Robinson, 2006: 356)

It is as if both sisters are jointed souls. By choosing to be blind to Laura's covert signs, Iris not only hurts herself but also her sister. Consequently, neither of them can resist being victimized silently.

The final sign Laura leaves in Iris' drawer is the Mathematics notebook that Laura used to have during Mr. Erskine's lessons. Iris becomes suspicious of the Mathematics notebook Laura leaves in the drawer because Iris knows Laura hates Mathematics the most. By leaving covert signs, Laura wants Iris to become aware of the "endured multiple assaults by Richard [by] recording them in somewhat cryptic code in her mathematics school notebook" (Sheckels, 2012: 136). Iris states:

*Mathematics had a long column of numbers, with words opposite some of them. It took me a few minutes to realize what kinds of numbers they were. They were dates. The first date coincided with my return from Europe, the last was three months or so before Laura's departure for BellaVista. The words were these: Avilion, no. No. Sunnyside. No. Xanadu, no. No. Queen Mary, no no. New York, no. Avilion. No at first.
Water Nixie, X. "Besotted."
Toronto again. X.
X.X.X.X.
That was the whole story. Everything was known. It had been there all along, right before my very eyes. How could I have been so blind? (500)*

Thus, Iris opens her eyes to the harsh reality before her eyes in the end. All the signs Laura tries to give suddenly unveil the "abuse," "betrayed deals" and "veiled threats" Richard has made (Sheckels, 2012: 139).

Throughout their lives, women are brought up with stories of sacrifice. At the top of all sacrifice stories, there is religious sacrifice when Jesus sacrificed himself for the welfare of all Christians. Second, there is sacrifice for a more earthly cause, which favors the sacrifice of soldiers for the welfare of their country. As the scale narrows, it is the women who sacrifice themselves for their husbands. All these

religious, patriotic and familial sacrifice stories contribute to the roles of future mothers and wives as selfless sacrificial figures. The idea of sacrifice is so well built in the subconscious of women characters that they cannot think of any other option to lead their lives in a different way. They believe in the necessity of sacrifice and being selfless as they are brought up by listening to sacrifice stories ranging from divine to earthly causes. They are silenced throughout their lives and expected to obey the socially constructed realities. Since the majority of people have a certain understanding of the world due to social construction, they believe in the necessity of certain concepts and stop questioning their essence.

The female characters in *The Blind Assassin* are victimized by the representatives of the patriarchal order starting from their childhood. These women are trapped in the dominant ideology and are not given personal space. The patriarchal ideology imprisons women by trapping them in its own stories. While doing this, patriarchy also manipulates the institutions that maintain the continuity of patriarchal ideology. Since institutions make the roles and rules that are favored by patriarchy more official and, therefore, inalterable, patriarchal ideology becomes more powerful. Hence, patriarchy reproduces institutions, which in return officially support its ideology while causing the victimization of women.

The familial stories, prior to societal stories, which lead to victimization of women, also derive their power from the institutions that stand by the patriarchal system. Institutions are important because they claim to present an objective reality. The more people experience them as reality, the more real they become. The institutions do not have to be concrete. For instance, marriage and parenthood are institutions. The more the actors act in these institutions, the more their reality thickens. Atwood shows how “marriage” as an institution reveals unequal gender roles that women are supposed to accept as natural. She shows that the patriarchal ideology does not want women to open their eyes and see the fact the system actually palms off these roles as natural to women. Through Iris and Laura, Atwood reveals how sneakily patriarchy keeps women’s eyes and ears to the *truth*. As Richard is the ultimate decision maker in the lives of the two sisters, Iris and Laura, both sisters end up following his instructions and leading his way of life. Though Iris is more passive and obedient to her husband than her sister, Laura, Richard’s effect on Laura’s life is

also immense. Laura tries more than once to discourage Iris from marrying someone she does not love. Laura believes Iris is like a sleepwalker. She knows that Iris is sacrificing herself for their father and their welfare. Laura is not only against the idea of marrying someone she does not love, but also she is against other institutions based on money or status. Before the night Iris gets married to Richard, Laura suggests to her that they should break off and run away:

'We could get jobs,' she said.

'Don't be stupid,' I said. 'What would we do?'

'Oh, we could do lots of things,' she said vaguely. 'We could be waitresses.'

'We couldn't live on that. Waitresses make next to nothing. They have to grovel for tips. They all get flat feet. (236)

Laura believes they can earn their living by working anywhere. According to her, social status or money should not be as great an importance as their father assumes them to be. Laura is an existentialist, who believes in the meaninglessness of the world, whereas Iris is more concerned about her socio-economic status. Iris states the necessity of this marriage by these words: "The factories are closed, Avilion is falling to pieces, they're going to sell it; the banks are out for blood. Haven't you looked at Father? Haven't you *seen* him? He's like an old man" (237). Upon these words, Laura understands the fact that the sacrifice is actually for their father. However, from Iris' perspective, her marriage is both for her father and Laura's future, which ironically Laura does not want for herself. Hence, although Laura does not understand or accept the reality of institutions, such institutions do not disappear only because one ceases to believe in their existence. They remain to be everyday reality and the ones believing in them continue to shape their lives according to the rules of these unseen institutions.

Though Iris and Richard unite under the roof of marriage, this institution collapses in their togetherness. As institutions are created verbally, they can be fragile. Marriage is thought to be a peaceful and holy togetherness in which a family is formed. However, Atwood lays out the collapse of this institution by showing the involvement of rape and adultery in a loveless marriage. While Richard rapes Laura and silences her by putting her in a clinic, Iris has a secret love affair with Alex, the Bolshevik fugitive. Hence, the novel makes explicit that though both Richard and Iris

remain to be spouses living under the same roof, marriage as an institution has fallen apart.

Although Laura does not believe in socially constructed institutions, like social status, arranged marriages or even gender, she is victimized as a consequence of these. As stated, gender is also an institution. In other words, different from sex, “gender is an achieved status which is constructed through psychological, cultural and social means” (West and Zimmerman, 1991: 21). That is to say, as people interact with one another in society, they learn the roles that society attributes neutral to their gender. Female gender learns how to behave as women through her interaction with the outside world while men learn the roles of his gender the same way. As two genders learn their roles, they begin to *perform* them through their social interactions:

If a gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. Moreover, one does not 'do' one's gender alone. One is always 'doing' with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary. What I call my 'own' gender appears perhaps at times as something that I author, or, indeed own. But the terms that make up one's own gender are, from the start, outside oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author. (Butler, 2004: 1)

Since people can attribute characteristics and roles to their genders so long as the societal order lets them, it can be concluded that the dominant ideology holds power to attribute more powerful characteristics and roles to the gender it favors. Hence, when patriarchy is the dominant ideology in society, it enables men to naturalize the degradation of women. That is to say, man “does being masculine” by treating the women as people having lower status, while “woman does being feminine by consenting to be guided by men” (West and Zimmerman, 1991: 22). Simply put, gender performance is a form of role-play in which both genders act their roles. Although both men and women are born into their gender roles, the role assigned to male gender is defined rather privileged whereas that assigned to the female gender is defined by submission, obedience, sacrifice and silence. Thus, social construction of gender leads to more powerful man and weak woman, who are in need of men's assistance to survive. This construction leads to the victimization of women such as Laura, who resists the submissive role assigned to them. Even if Laura believes in the equality between men and women, she cannot help falling victim to the

patriarchal system as the members of the system are the ones who hold the power. For example, Laura is put in a clinic after she is sexually abused by Richard. Her being put in a clinic does not cause so much controversy since she is believed to be very different from the mainstream female figure of the era. That is to say, the patriarchal system successfully labels women, who transcend the boundaries drawn for them by patriarchy, as mad. It does not let these women tell their stories. Instead, the system thinks of such women as mad or hysterical and normalizes these kinds of labels for these women since they do not fit in their gender roles. Hence, the ones holding the power are the ones who construct and reconstruct the realities. However, once the story is revealed from Iris' perspective, the reality is reconstructed via written discourse from the perspective of the marginalized figures whose positions question and reject gender roles.

Family is one other institution that causes the victimization of female gender. There are certain roles in a nuclear family where the actors, who happen to be father, mother and child, should play. As these roles are transmitted from one generation to another, they begin to be considered as historical, and, therefore more acceptable since these roles have been played by the actors for ages. For instance, before Iris and Laura's mother dies, she advises Iris to be a *good girl* and a *good sister* to Laura. In other words, being obedient to her father is what Iris *learns* from her mother. This role sticks to Iris throughout her life and she obeys first to her father's and then her husband's rules. A mother's roles within a patriarchal family are not that different from a daughter's. The only difference between daughter and mother in terms of their roles within the patriarchal family is that while the former learns to be selfless and obedient through patriarchal teachings, the latter has already largely experienced it. Iris states: "What fabrications they are, mothers. Sacrecrows, wax dolls for us to stick pins into, crude diagrams. We deny them an existence of their own, we make them up to suit ourselves—our own hungers, our own wishes, our own deficiencies. Now that I've been one myself, I know" (93). The pronoun "our" can both refer to children, who mostly unintentionally try to get all the attention of their devoted mothers to themselves by invading their personal space and husbands, who try to shape mothers in accordance with the benefits of patriarchal order. Hence, these roles go parallel with the benefits of patriarchy. For instance, since Laura and Iris are

brought up with the teachings attributed to women by the patriarchy, first they learn their role as obedient girls in their father's house and then continue playing their role by being obedient and silenced wives. Consequently, in order for institutional order to exist, roles are essential. That is to say, when one acts as an appropriate father figure, intentionally or unintentionally he serves to the existence of the family institution. Hence, "[. . .] the roles *represent* the institutional order" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 92). One plays the role of a wife, daughter or businessman within the boundaries drawn by the societal order. Each individual subjectively performs his or her own roles, and in the end the reality of institutional order is strengthened.

Moreover, the roles, which are played by individuals and are necessary for institutional order, can be both public and private. That is to say, when an individual faces a choice of profiled identities, s/he is likely to choose publicly approved identities, which stem from patriarchal teachings that are transmitted through generations. However, in their private life, they can have a different version of themselves. That's why, most of the time, there is a distinction between public and private roles and lives. For instance, Iris' father is a capitalist owning a factory. He supports this system and acts this way because he was brought up believing in this system. He believes this is the role he is supposed to play in public. However, in his private life, he has a communist girlfriend and he shares his house with her. This shows that he prefers to play another role when left alone. Similarly, Iris is married to Richard Griffen, yet she has a secret affair with Alex, a runaway communist. In public life, Iris performs the publicly approved roles, yet when she excludes herself from public, she acts differently. Though both characters appear to act their public roles without failure, in their private lives they just experience the counter version of their lives. Hence, "there may be a socially concealed asymmetry between 'public' and 'private' biography" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 189).

Apart from roles, there are also unwritten rules to be obeyed and followed in the patriarchal family. Certain rules need to be taken up by people in order to form an institution. For example, Norval is the arbiter of every issue within the family. He holds the power to shape the girls' lives in accordance with his devotion to patriarchy. He is the ultimate authority in the girls' lives before they get married. He is the one who gives the last decision on the subjects ranging from Iris and Laura's

clothes to their spouses. Although there is not a written rule about fathers' having absolute power over their daughters' and wives' lives, if this rule is *collectively* believed by the "norm circle, who is a group of people committed to endorsing and enforcing a particular norm," it becomes real (Elder-Vass, 2012: 49). Since Norval is a part of the norm circle, "he takes part in the collective endorsement of the norm" (Elder-Vass, 2012: 27). If a norm circle stops following certain norms, then the institution cannot be formed. Moreover, if this group of people were isolated from each other, they would tend to think and act differently. That's why, it is necessary for a norm circle to follow certain rules and roles collectively for an institution to function. For instance, there would not be an arranged marriage between Iris and Richard if Iris were not brought up by certain rules about the ways girls should behave. However, Laura who can be claimed to be isolated from the societal rules, does not feel an obligation to enforce the norms supported by the same society. Yet, since the patriarchal system wants to normalize the rules that strengthen the power of men in domestic sphere, it endorses them and expects everyone to believe in them. Hence, "what *constitutes* a rule is our *collective* use of it" (Elder-Vass, 2012: 50).

Familial stories become more powerful and real as they are transmitted from one generation to another. By doing this, the socially constructed realities become more real as it acquires historical background and in the end they are taken for granted. Such is also the case in *The Blind Assassin*. Since family is a patriarchal formation, the teachings of patriarchy are initially transmitted to new generations in the family. For example, as a member of family, Reenie teaches the girls how to behave ladylike as a socially constructed but unwritten rule that has been obeyed for a long time. Iris recalls: "We wore hats for excursions. We had the idea that they were a protection; that made us in a way, invisible. A lady never went out without her hat, said Reenie" (153). Under the guise of *protection*, which is ironically from the patriarchal order that gives more power to men, lies the motive of making women *invisible*. Since outside is not the space of women, they should be be invisible and keep low profile in men's space. From an early age, Iris and Laura's subconscious begin to be filled with the term *lady*, which is invented by patriarchy in an attempt to keep women's attitudes in line. The more ladylike attitudes that are associated with female gender are transmitted to the new generation, the more women continue to

believe in its reality without questioning and, therefore, the more they become secondary sex.

Women's secondary position within the family, which eventually paves the way to their victimization, is socially constructed as hard reality as the roles attributed to female gender is transmitted to the new generation. For instance, Iris and Laura's father, Norval, is brought up by certain patriarchal values about money, status and gender. When he becomes a father, he also wants to provide a life in the light of these socially constructed teachings and values. In other words, Norval transmits the rules and roles he has been taught to the new generation. This is the underlying reason for his actions towards his children. He provides them home tuition as he believes it is not necessary to send girls to school. Actually, they do not need to be as educated as men since they will not be the breadwinners in their families. Thus, while Richard runs for the Congress, Iris sits at home and supports her. Even Richard's sister, Miss. Griffen, who is supposed to be ranked higher in status than Iris, cannot be as powerful as her brother, Richard. However, Miss. Griffen accepts this and becomes her brother's strongest supporter. In short, every character apart from Laura feel obliged to act in the way they are taught to be by socially constructed realities because when "knowledge is transmitted to the next generation, it is learned as objective truth in the course of socialization and thus internalized as subjective reality. This reality in turn has power to shape the individual" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 84). Thus, the roles the patriarchal order attributes to female gender are calcified with every new generation since it continues to maintain its power.

All in all, the patriarchal system produces institutions that serve to its benefits while strengthening its own maintenance and, therefore, causing the victimization of women. The patriarchal order also makes the institutional world more real by enabling the transmission of institutions' historical background to new generations. By doing this, patriarchy sneakily traps women in its order and tends to keep them there for long by spreading the thoughts that are in favor of the system from one generation to another.

CHAPTER THREE

COMPETING STORIES: WINNERS AND LOSERS IN *THE TIME REGULATING INSTITUTE*

3.1. GROWING UP IN THE STORIES OF OTHERS

“This is what fools people: a man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them; and he tries to live his life as if he were telling a story” (Sartre, 1938: 62). That is to say, people either author and live in their own stories or perform their roles in the stories of others. For Hayri İrdal, Tanpınar’s protagonist, the latter is true because Hayri ends up living in the stories of others instead of creating his own story, which, if he could compose it, would counter the prevailing version. That is to say, though it is believed that “in the end, we [individuals] *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we tell about our lives,” Hayri fails to narrate his own life (story) and ends up living in other people’s stories (Strawson, 2004: 435). Hence, Hayri can never become a storyteller and functions as an actor in the stories of others.

Throughout his childhood, Hayri İrdal is brought up listening to stories that are told first by his family members in the household and then by his father’s friends. Since he has repeatedly listened to stories, he gets swept away in the stories to which he listens at the moment. In other words, Hayri can never construct his own version of reality but lives in a world veiled by the stories of others. The first story he is exposed to in his family is the story of a weird clock in his house which never shows the right time. Hayri grows up in a house where the household names the clock that they have inherited from Hayri’s grandfather the “Blessed One” or “Calamity.” The clock had been bought for a mosque that would have been built by his grandfather. Since the family gradually becomes impoverished, his grandfather cannot afford to build the mosque. Hence, in the next generations to come, the clock becomes associated with the family’s failure to live up to this holy promise; therefore, its original meaning which is attached to a sacred place is transformed: the clock itself begins to be regarded by some family members as the reason for every domestic failure; thus, its original sacred associations turn into curse. In both of these

interpretations, one thing remains the same, however. According to everyone this clock has supernatural powers; for that reason it needs to be approached with caution. The family agrees that Hayri's father cannot become the executor of his grandfather's will because of inadvertently violating the sanctity of the clock. Through the "Blessed One," Tanpınar shows how two opposing concepts, namely curse and sacredness, can blend into one another; hence he implies the slipperiness of meanings and linguistic constructions. Since the clock is bought for a mosque, first the household believes it is sacred. However, when they see that the clock never shows the right time and strikes abruptly at weird moments, all the family members start to suspect that there is something sinister about the clock and associate it with a curse. Both cases, however, depend on stories people create related to the clock. They attribute their opposing feelings to an object and start to live in these stories while simply ignoring the fact that the clock is *only* out of order.

Although behind the conversion of the clock from "blessed" to "cursed" there lies the declining history of the İrdal family, it is exactly the same weird characteristic of the clock's willfulness that is responsible for both references. Hayri's account of how the clock came to be called the "Blessed One" will also be the rationale for its opposite meaning:

It was a beautiful clock. It sauntered by itself like a stray packhorse out of a caravan. What calendar did it mark, what year did it tag after, what was it that suddenly stopped it short for days on end and then what caused it to thunder forth its big important secret quite unexpectedly with a sonorous, grave, and deep note? We didn't know. For this clock admitted no regulation, no setting, no repair. It was the impersonation of a special time out of the sphere of man. Sometimes it would abruptly start to strike, and a long time would elapse before it stopped. Then months would pass by with no more than the swing of its pendulum. My mother thought that these autocratic attitudes foretold nothing good! According to her the clock was either a Saint or was possessed by evil spirits. This obsession took root in all of us, more especially on the night when İbrahim Bey passed away, for, perhaps at the very hour of his decease, the clock, which had been standing idle for weeks, began suddenly to strike with its deepest tone. After that day, my mother referred to the clock, the Blessed One. (Tanpınar, 1961: 45)³

Tanpınar implies that the "Blessed One" symbolizes myth saturated Ottoman tradition's resistance towards the new Republic established on the principles of Rationalism and Enlightenment. By dividing the day into twenty-four hours, the clock brings standardization to the modern life. However, since most people do not

³ Subsequent references to this edition will be entered parenthetically throughout this dissertation.

have such a notion of time, they continue attributing irrational and supernatural meanings to a clock, which only needs to be fixed. These people actually represent the facet of society that resists enlightenment. Instead of seeking a rational explanation for the unruliness of a clock that never shows the right time, they either label it as sacred or cursed. However, both of these attributions are contrary to the idea of new Republic as the new era supports scientific and rational explanations, which are in fact other fictions or narratives humanity has created. Being one of the oldest stories of mankind, *time* is only a perception that is created and categorized by man. For Mircea Eliade, there is only *sacred time* “which is *the time of origins*, the stupendous instant in which reality was created and for the first time fully manifested” (Eliade, 1957: 81). However, in modern world since people are drifted towards *profane time*, which is categorized according to their earthly needs, they have eventually lost their touch with *original* or *sacred* time. Thus, in an attempt to regain sacred time which is eternal and circular, man tries to hold on to festivals and rituals which “reactualize the *illiud tempus*⁴” and therefore, bring people closer to sacred time (Eliade, 1957: 81). Hence, Tanpinar reveals the contradiction between the characters living in the profane time of modern world and the ones, though in minority, living in sacred or mythical time.

The clock is only the start of the imaginary stories to which Hayri İrdal listens. As a child, he is exposed to stories told by his father’s friends, namely Seyit Lütfullah, the so-called Messiah; Abdüsselam Bey, the wealthy businessman; Aristidi Efendi, the chemist and Naşit Efendi, the hunter. Although Hayri grows up listening to the stories of these four men, Seyit Lütfullah and Abdüsselam Bey’s stories have greater impact on his life as these figures imprison Hayri in their stories the most. Seyit Lütfullah, who is believed to be in contact with the other world, is one of his father’s four friends. Seyit Lütfullah’s stories are about the treasure of Caesar Andronicos and Aselban, who is Seyit Lütfullah’s beautiful lover living in another world. Seyit Lütfullah believes that one day he will find Caesar Andronicos’ treasure through prayer and live happily with Aselban. According to the story Seyit Lütfullah tells everyone, he has to find the treasure to break the spell, which Aselban is under. Hayri recounts his story as follows:

⁴ *Illud tempus* is the time in which the world had first came to existence.

First, Ceasar Andronicos's treasure was to be found. The discovery of this treasure was the condition stipulated to attain to the lady he loved by the creatures of the beyond, namely by the parents of Aselban, and more especially by the ireful sister whose beauty matched her sister's. The image of the so-called treasure was the result of a spell. This stipulation was the only reason why Seyit Lütfullah—who, in actual fact, was not particularly in need of a future, or who obtained all his requirements from the beyond—was preoccupied with this treasure. Once the spell was broken and she was anthropomorphized, Seyit Lütfullah would assume his true appearance, which shone like the sun, and those two peerless beauties would be united for evermore to exist in our world, in full power. (59)

Seyit Lütfullah's stories are not only limited with the stories he tells about his lover, Aselban. He is good at telling stories about every aspect of his life. He also makes up a story about his deformed body. He suffered from a cataract in one eye and his mouth was drooping as a result of a stroke. He also had tics which affected his daily life. The only explanation he gives about his physical appearance is that it is caused as a result of his wrestlings with the beyond. Hayri recalls the story Seyit Lütfullah had told him: "According to him, at the time he had been a guest in which particular dervish lodge at Savuç Bulak I know not, he had done everything in his power to conjure up spirits to serve him, but the spirits invoked must have been of a cantankerous nature as they had rendered him a cripple" (56). Hence, Seyit Lütfullah tells stories about his life, and people, even the ones who seem not to believe in his stories, gradually come to believe them as a result of some funny coincidences. One day, Abdüselam Bey says his golden watch is lost and wants Seyit Lütfullah to detect where it could be. Seyit Lütfullah says: "Watch in lady's chest, chest in hold of vessel, vessel in the middle of the sea. Cable immediately. Otherwise..." (60). Three days afterwards, a watch is found in the pocket of a waistcoat in a wardrobe which is in the room of the female slave whom Abdüselam Bey's second wife imported from Egypt. Although Abdüselam Bey's watch was found somewhere else and Seyit Lütfullah's prophecy did not work, a funny event that happened in the following days leads everyone to believe it instead of the actual story. Initially Abdüselam Bey and his family had been suspicious of a servant girl who left to visit her family immediately after the loss of the watch. A cable was received after the departure of the servant girl from Ünye who had left home on those days and it stated: "Woman found. In her chest was discovered an ordinary clock of the kind sold in open markets. Both clock and woman are in detention at the police headquarters" (61). Although Abdüselam Bey's *watch* is found in the pocket of a

waistcoat, the other story, albeit about a *clock* is believed to be true as it matches the details Seyit Lütfullah had foreseen. Every detail in the discovery of the clock fits Seyit Lütfullah's prediction except that the clock *is not* the watch that Abdüselam had lost and the two gadgets found actually had nothing in common. Thanks to "this minor error in essence," Seyit Lütfullah is believed to foresee some events and makes a reputation as a spiritual figure (61). Despite the fact that no one had seen any of his stories come true, people tend to believe in them.

Abdüselam Bey, a wealthy man living in a mansion with a large family, was also a friend of Hayri İrdal's father. Since he was not as well off as he used to be, Abdüselam Bey was trying to make gold in the laboratory of Aristidi Efendi, the pharmacist. Abdüselam Bey contributed to the experiment of making gold by finding formulas from ancient manuscripts because he was after the treasure Seyit Lütfullah would bring as a result of his contact with the invisible world. Abdüselam Bey also believed in the world he created. His fiction is related to his fear of loneliness and, therefore, his love of large families. All his relatives used to live in his mansion, and he would pay for all their expenses. He believes that everyone living under his roof was fond of their lives. Yet what he fails to see is that with the modern era, the time for extended families has come to an end and now a new family called the nuclear family is born. Therefore, once he suffers from financial problems, everyone except for Hayri and Emine leaves him. Unable to see the turn of the tide from large families of the days begone towards nuclear families of the modern world, he mistakenly believes that all he has to do to recover the good old days and keep the family together under his roof is to make gold. Gold, in other words, will help gain him a victory against loneliness by recovering the lost times with his family. As Abdüselam Bey cannot succeed in making gold or recovering the so-called treasure, his house never gets as full as it had been in the old days. However, he keeps on believing that his whole extended family members will at least come and visit him on holidays. That's why he continuously buys presents for members who lived in the house and stores them in a room when they do not show up. In other words, like the disciples of Seyit Lütfullah, he *chooses* to believe in the story he creates and lives his life accordingly.

While Hayri functions as a listener in Seyit Lütfullah's stories, he serves both as a listener and a character or actor in Abdüsselam Bey's story. Abdüsselam Bey tries to shape the lives of Emine and Hayri in accordance with his life story, and, therefore, asks for their participation in his story. Since there is nobody in the house except for Emine and Hayri, Abdüsselam Bey interferes in every aspect of Hayri and Emine's lives. Before Abdüsselam Bey decides that Hayri should marry Emine, he had also concluded that Hayri should enroll in the Postal and Telegraph School since not only the school term was short but also the telegraph and the clock were similar to one another in that both had gadgets to be used. By telling Hayri what to do, Abdüsselam Bey serves as one of the molders of Hayri's life to fit his own view of life. He takes liberties in influencing Hayri in the two most important choices of his life, namely his wife and his profession. Actually, the motive behind Abdüsselam Bey's interference in Hayri's life lies in his reluctance to let him go away from his house. As Abdüsselam Bey does not want to be alone in his house, he acts selfishly and makes decisions related with Hayri and Emine's lives on behalf of them. In other words, he acts as an author writing Hayri and Emine's lives and watching them play their roles. Therefore, both Emine and Hayri are like prisoners in Abdüsselam Bey's house as they perform the roles he gives them. For instance, they are silent before Abdüsselam Bey when he accidentally names Hayri and Emine's child after his mother's name, Zehra, instead of giving the child Hayri's mother's name, Zahide. No matter how many times Hayri and his wife, Emine, make up their minds to leave the house at the first opportunity and settle down in Hayri's childhood house to lead the rest of their lives free from Abdüsselam Bey's dictations, they cannot succeed in their attempts. Hence, Abdüsselam Bey imprisons Hayri and Emine in his story.

Emine can clearly discern their entrapment in Abdüsselam Bey's house. Hayri recalls Emine's thoughts about their imprisonment in Abdüsselam Bey's house as follows: "Emine, without having an idea of the cinema jargon of the day, called us 'slaves of love,' judging from our life at Abdüsselam Bey's house" (89). Emine desperately wishes "to be freed of this thralldom of love" (89). However, she sees Hayri's tendency in remaining passive in the face of the roles given to him in other people's stories. Therefore, she wants to keep Hayri in the reality of their own making and make him author his own reality, *his story*. However, doing this is

almost impossible for Emine since wherever they turn they meet nothing but stories that beckon to them and suppress their voices. Hayri, whose contact with external reality had been extremely weak since his childhood, cannot help being sucked into those stories, if not one, the other for sure.

The stories that trap Hayri İrdal from his childhood are those that resist the modernization efforts of the young Republic, which have their roots in nineteenth century Ottoman rebels, who had taken it upon themselves to bring the rules of reason to the declining Empire. Hence, throughout his childhood, Hayri İrdal is surrounded with thoughts that go in the face of rational thinking as he is stuck in an environment that relies on irrational and supernatural elements. After the death of Aristidi Efendi and the arrest of Seyit Lütfullah upon claiming his being the Messiah in a period of political turmoil, Hayri and his father lose all their hopes in finding the treasures of Caesar Andronicos, and Hayri begins to be interested in theatre where he could be anyone he liked. Since Hayri is used to the stories about imaginary lives due to his father's friends, he chooses to continue living under the shade of these stories long after his father's friends disappear from his life. It was as if he is hypnotized by the stories of his father's friends and does not want to wake up to reality. For these stories serve as opium on his psyche, he wants to enjoy its effects longer.

After listening to these imaginary stories throughout his childhood, Hayri starts to believe that "life was a tale invented by a lackadaisical character" (83). This Shakespearean description of life is based on the idea that life is a metaphor for theatre in which people perform their roles and act in accordance with the script. In other words, as Shakespeare states in Macbeth:

*Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing. (Shakespeare, 1623, p.2)*

As Shakespeare states, players or actors fill in their time by fulfilling the *insignificant* and *meaningless* roles given to them in the stories whose authors are fools shaping the stories the way they want. Being imprudent and escapist, Hayri is stuck in the meaningless roles tailored for him from an early age. In fact he acts in others' stories as an amateur actor in a theater group which he joins after visiting one of the theaters in Şehzadebaşı because he enjoys living in the illusion of the roles he

plays and observing ordinary people transform into totally different characters under the spotlights as they play different roles. Hayri recalls those days as follows:

Everything looked shabby, antiquated, helpless, and miserly. But because I had graduated from Seyit Lütfullah's school, these poor and helpless things seemed beautiful to me precisely because they were lies. The first costume I put on, the pants of an aristocrat from the period of Napoleon III, was torn in three places. The woman, or rather the countess, I was in love with might well have been my grandmother. But so what? The important thing was that, at that particular moment, my name was not Hayri and I was beyond reality. It was nothing but evasion. I was surrounded by the magical line of deceit. (84)

Theatre gives Hayri a chance to avoid reality. He can be anyone he wants until the play ends and he enjoys that freedom. It is ironic that Hayri acknowledges that he is playing a role in these plays, yet he fails to see the fact that he is also playing the roles given to him by other people for the rest of his life. In other words, Hayri believes he is only acting on stage while failing to see his imprisonment in other people's stories in real life. Hayri has to free himself from this illusory world with the outbreak of World War I, only to reassume his position as a player of roles in stories authored by others on his return.

Among the stories that Hayri is told, Halit the Regulator's story was the one that changed Hayri's life entirely. After Dr. Ramiz introduces Hayri to Halit the Regulator, Hayri becomes a contributor to Halit the Regulator's *grand narrative*. When Hayri talks about Nuri Efendi, the time master, and tells Halit of the importance Nuri Efendi attaches to the synchronization of ill-set clocks as these clocks not only "spoil his awareness of prayers" but also "interferes with his plans of work" to Halit the Regulator, Halit the Regulator as a pragmatist uses this idea to his advantage and comes with the idea of setting up an institute that would synchronize clocks nationwide and, therefore, "rectify the self-destructive tendency in Turkish economic life" (Feldman, 1998: 46). Though the Institute is the big story that changes Hayri's world, it is actually the stories Halit the Regulator produces under the name of the Institute that imprison Hayri. Halit the Regulator creates stories in order to establish a basis for the Institute. First, he invents Ahmet the Timely, the spiritual figure who provides the basis for the Institute. Then, he changes Halit's family dynamics by making every member except for Hayri's son, Ahmet, believe in his fantasy world. For instance, Halit the Regulator makes Hayri's sister-in-law famous though she has no talent in singing. In short, he offers a fantasy world that

appeals to everyone, and everyone participates in this fantasy world because it makes them happy. For instance, Hayri's second wife, Pakize, also becomes a great supporter of Halit the Regulator since he offers her a Hollywood style of life by providing a status to Hayri in the Institute. Actually, Halit the Regulator creates a story through which the players create their own little stories. Hayri's second wife, Pakize is under the influence of Hollywood characters and acts like one whenever she can. For instance, in an interview Pakize says: "When you marry a man like Hayri, you get used to sacrificing yourself willingly. Before the opening of Time Regulation Institute, that is, at the time when its establishment was being planned, I had received two proposals. One from Hollywood ... Yes, from Hollywood ... for an oriental film" (248). She is under the delusion that she can lead a Hollywood star life. However, she believes she can lead such a life as long as she believes in the reality of the institution and Hayri's position in it because she can give interviews and feel like a star only as long as both the Institute and Hayri's position in it are guaranteed. She can achieve her goal by performing tasks that contribute to the reality of the Institution. She takes part in the meetings held by the Institution and has the chance to wear nice clothes and boast about her life there. She functions as a supporter of Halit the Regulator's story. Since Hayri does not believe in the usefulness of the Institution as heartily as she does, Pakize and the other members of the family try to keep his faith in its reality alive. Meanwhile, Hayri plays along the lines of Pakize's story and functions as a character supporting her version of story.

Another character who also tries to convince Hayri in the Institution's necessity, is his daughter from his first marriage, Zehra. She also works in the Institution and believes in this fake reality in order to continue to live her life within decent life standards that Halit the Regulator's story offers. Zehra also becomes part of the illusion that Halit Ayarç, the founder of the Time Regulation Institute, creates. She sides with her stepmother, Pakize on certain points. For instance, when Pakize gives a journalist an interview about her life with her husband, Hayri, she talks about unreal fantasies. She not only states some delusional stories about her life, but also projects a different version of Hayri. She says his hobbies were horseback riding, swimming, and tennis and adds that he was a connoisseur of women's fashions and elegance. Moreover, she states he loved both Turkish and classical music and worked

at a theatre in his youth. She also claims that he featured in a recent film. Though Hayri remains the only one to acknowledge the falsity of all these claims, he cannot do anything about them since even the ones who know their falsity believe in them. Zehra also sides with Pakize and believes in the delusion Pakize creates. After reading the interview, Zehra embraces his father and says: "Father dear! I knew that you were such a man! Why on earth have you been keeping it from us? How could it be otherwise! God bless mother!" (250). Similar to Pakize, Zehra loves the delusion they live in. In a conversation with her father, she says to Hayri: "I am happy the way I live. I imagine myself in an operetta or a musical. I've started to acquire a taste for what they call living" (251). As Zehra does not want to change her lifestyle, she willingly accepts this delusion as reality and does not question it. By believing in this socially and linguistically constructed reality, both Pakize and Zehra rewrite their life stories and expect Hayri to perform the roles given to him. Since Hayri cannot make anyone believe in the reality, he acts the roles given to him by the creator, Halit Ayarçı, and his supporters, who happen to be Pakize and Zehra. Thus, Hayri functions both as a player in Halit the Regulator's story and a supporter of both Pakize's and Zehra's stories. He plays the roles they want him to play.

Moreover, Hayri is not only imprisoned in the stories of his family, but also in the stories of society. Similar to Laura in *The Blind Assassin*, Hayri remains as an outsider the moment he rejects the versions imposed by the socially dominant narrators. Like Laura, he is excluded unless he becomes part of the society that favours one story. Thus, there is no room for alternative stories voiced by Laura and Hayri. Though these characters in different books are similar in terms of victimization, they differ in terms of choice. While Laura rejects the imposed "selves" and "reality," Hayri holds on to his "preferred self" and survives.

In the book *Narrative Therapy*, Freedman and Combs comment on "selves" and "preferred selves" as follows:

'Selves' are socially constructed through language and maintained in narrative. We think of a self not as a thing inside an individual, but as a process or activity that occurs in the space between people [. . .] We think that people are continually constituting each other's 'selves,' and there are many possible stories about myself, your-self, and other people's selves [...] While no self is 'truer' than any other, it is true that particular presentations are preferred by particular people within particular cultures. (Freedman and Combs, 1996: 35)

Accordingly, Hayri İrdal forms his “self” by following the directions Halit Ayarçı gives him. He feels he has to hold on to this new self not only to have a decent life but also to be accepted by society. Since everyone around him except himself and his son, believes in this delusion, he ends up being part of it. He continues to ask questions to Halit the Regulator in order to be convinced about the so-called reality. However, his attempts are futile since he still holds on to his “preferred self” though he is not totally convinced of the authenticity of this self.

No matter how badly Hayri thinks he wants to quit Halit the Regulator’s game, he cannot do it because it brings him social and economic advantages he does not want to let go. In a conversation with Halit the Regulator, Hayri understands how his entrapment in Halit’s story makes his life easier. Hayri recalls the conversation he held with Halit the Regulator as follows:

*‘I’m just longing to be as I used to.’
 ‘Then do so! If you’re longing for your former state, go back then!’ But his voice suddenly changed. ‘But you cannot. You’ve made a certain assessment. I saw through you. You said: ‘I’m now reconciled with my aunt. I’m well-off. This can go on at least for a few years. Why put an end to everything right now? Didn’t you think like this? But then you gave up... You felt afraid of future. Let me tell you your own truth! You cannot go back. For you can renounce nothing. Despite your criticisms and underestimations you have an easy-going and beautiful wife and you have a mistress about whom you are crazy. I am sure you’re ever ready to sacrifice yourself for your daughter and son. Moreover, you like fame, and even in things which you consider to be absurd, you like to be involved. In brief you have embraced the world with innumerable arms like an octopus! You can renounce nothing! How are you going to go back?’
 ‘I don’t want to go back, it’s just some more logical...’. (301)*

Though Hayri criticizes the absurdity of the events he witnesses in his surroundings, he cannot go back to his former state. As Halit says, “once you take part in the game you’re done for” (301). Since Hayri enjoys the luxurious life and welfare Halit’s stories offer to him, he cannot take the risk of leaving this abundance and going back to his former state. That is to say, unable to create his alternative story within Halit’s story, Hayri has to play the game by the rules of the Regulator. Thus, Hayri chooses to be imprisoned in the stories recounted to him starting from his childhood. He either becomes a listener or a player in the stories of other people while always failing to author and enact *his story*.

3.2. FROM AUDIENCE TO INCOMPETENT AUTHOR: THE EXAMPLE OF HAYRI İRDAL

Throughout his life, Hayri İrdal grows up listening to other people's stories. Though most of the time Hayri plays his part in other people's stories, from time to time, he also creates his own stories. For instance, Hayri creates an imaginary story about a diamond and people believe in it. Born and brought up in a poor family, Hayri İrdal experiences difficulties until he meets Halit Ayarç, the entrepreneur, who gives shape to the rest of Hayri İrdal's life. Hayri is brought up in a traditional family. He spends his childhood as an apprentice in a clock shop as he is not good at schoolwork. At school Hayri is not interested in the curricula designed by the new republic on rational facts. Instead, he is attracted to imaginary stories.

In fact Hayri İrdal is squeezed between the worlds of *mythos* and *logos*. While he can find nothing entertaining in the *logos* of the young republic, he is only lost in the world of *mythos* of which he is unable to make heads or tails. He misses the lessons of the best of this world while he is swept by its mediocre reflections. While helping Nuri Efendi in his shop, Hayri *hears from* Nuri Efendi how to fix clocks, yet he neither manages to fix the clocks properly for the rest of his life nor learns the philosophy behind clocks. That is to say, Hayri not only fails to understand *mythos* that Nur Efendi fully comprehends, but also, fails to realize *logos* of the new republic in which clock functions as the symbol of enlightenment.

However, the routine of his life changes one day. When he is still married to Emine, his first wife, he makes up a story in a conversation with his friend, Sabri Efendi. Since Abdüsselam Bey, a friend of Hayri's father, had been bankrupt for six years, Sabri Efendi wonders how Abdüsselam Bey is able to get so much credit and asks Hayri about that. Hayri jokingly says to his friend, Sabri Efendi, that Abdüsselam Bey, whose house Hayri and his family are living in, might have the Sherbet Maker's Diamond and people might have lent him so much money knowing this. Though Hayri makes up this story only for fun while they are drinking in a tavern, his friend Sabri Efendi believes the story. Although there is not a diamond in the world that is named Sherbet Maker's Diamond, Hayri's speech makes such an impact on Sabri Efendi that he immediately starts to spread the rumour. According to

the story Hayri makes up, the Sherbet Maker's Diamond belongs to Abdüsselam Bey. However, in his will, Abdüsselam Bey leaves his available possessions to Hayri and Emine's daughter Zehra, whom Abdüssellam Bey thinks to be his mother as he becomes mentally ill in his old age. This leads to other complications in Hayri and Emine's lives, for these rumors reach Abdüsselam Bey's relatives who sue Hayri and his family for insulting their benefactor, Abdüsselam Bey and disparaging his memory. Consequently the will is rejected by the court, leaving Hayri İrdal in debt. Moreover, since the rumour of Sherbet Maker's Diamond begins to spread, everyone who had previously lent him money demands their money back as they believe Hayri might have the diamond. No matter how much he tries, Hayri İrdal cannot explain the fact that his statements were not real and he had made it up all. As a result, a misunderstanding leads to legal prosecution and after that he is sent to a clinic. The power of words on the individuals' lives is once again proven in this tragicomic incident. Once something is constructed as truth collectively by society, its reality is never questioned. While some stories take on the shape of reality due to being transmitted through generations and believed by many for a long time, some assume reality immediately after they are told simply because most of the people in society believe in its existence. In Hayri's case, the latter is true. His statements are believed because the content of the story with a diamond falls into an environment of ready believers who grab it after years of rehearsals with Lütfullah Efendi's hidden treasure.

The course of Hayri's life changes after making up the story of Sherbet Maker's Diamond. In order to provide the Time Regulation Institute with history, Hayri makes up another story with the encouragement of Halit the Regulator. The so-called Institution is so phony that, even the philosopher, on whom the Institution is based does not exist. From the teachings of Nuri Efendi, there emerges an imaginary historical figure and they name him Ahmet the Timely. This imaginary figure serves as an historical background to the Institution. Though he is not real, the majority of the people in that era, except for Hayri, begin to believe in his existence. Overwhelmed by the collective gullibility of the public, Hayri watches the birth of an imaginary historical figure with amazement and puzzlement. Yet he says nothing about the fictitiousness of the figure at critical moments; instead he becomes the

central figure in fixing Ahmet the Timely into history. Hayri İrdal states the emergence of the fictive character, Ahmet the Timely, as follows:

*As a matter of fact, the things I said about Nuri the Time Setter, to whom I was once apprenticed, and the lectures I gave Halit the Regulator about the art of—watchmaking had quickly led him to the **discovery**—a **discovery**⁵ as astounding as the discovery of our institute—of Sheyh Ahmet the Timely, who most probably flourished during the time of Mehmet IV. (28; emphasis added)*

Just as they create an Institute, which has no real function, both Halit the Regulator and Hayri İrdal “invent” a fictitious figure. Both of them manage to persuade the state authorities as well as their public audiences that such an Institution is really necessary. In order to strengthen the construction of the Institute with a traditional foundation, they further create a fictitious figure like a saint. Though Halit the Regulator comes up with the idea that such a historical, holy figure is necessary for the Institute, it is Hayri who is employed to make a story out of it. He invents everything about Ahmet the Timely. He imagines a physical appearance for Ahmet the Timely and creates him according to his own wish. It is Hayri who describes him to the mayor, visiting the Institute one day: “He was tall, fair, with a brownish beard, and with black eyes. He used to stammer in his youth. But they say that he cured himself thanks to his own will. More exactly, my late teacher Nuri Efendi used to say so” (239). Together with Halit the Regulator, Hayri fills in the gaps in Ahmet the Timely’s life as he wishes. However, while inventing this fictitious figure, he violates the memory of Nuri Efendi, for he had never told Hayri about such a divine figure. In order to base his argument on firm foundations, Hayri uses Nuri Efendi’s name and in a way betrays his teacher for the sake of the hollow Institution and its imaginary historical figure, Ahmet the Timely. Therefore, Hayri never understands the philosophy behind Nuri Efendi’s wise sayings. He cannot comprehend the deep meaning underlying Nuri Efendi’s sayings, which could have helped Hayri become a totally different person. Instead, Hayri carries out Halit the Regulator’s order and creates a saint-like figure that is only a poor and inadequate imitation of Nuri Efendi. As Hayri talks about Ahmet the Timely, he invents more details about his life. Hayri states: “He was a müezzın at a small mosque at Çengelköy. But he was discharged

⁵ Though in the translation of Ender Guroı, the word ‘discovery’ is used for the entity of the Institute, it would be more appropriate to use the word ‘invention’ as the Time Regulation Institute is not something that already existed and then discovered; rather it is a foundation that is *invented* or *created*.

from his position because of his opinions on marriage. So he withdrew to the seclusion of his home, opened a section of his house to his male guests and conducted evening prayers there” (240). Moreover, as Hayri details Ahmet the Timely’s life, the mayor contributes to Hayri’s story without even noticing the fact that he is also collaborating in Hayri’s story. When the mayor asks why Ahmet the Timely died, Hayri cannot answer it immediately and the mayor fills in the gap: “Let me tell you whether I am right in my guess. Diabetes, I know, because I am afflicted by the same misery” (240). Hayri İrdal does not contradict the mayor’s contribution to the story as he believes his collaboration is more important. The mayor contributes to Hayri’s authorship and therefore, produces minor stories that extend Hayri’s story. Hence, the stories are contagious and even when people do not author stories, they contribute to the major story by providing with their minor stories. Hayri states: “Since everybody died of something, Ahmet the Timely also would have succumbed to a fatal illness. What difference did it make whether he had actually died of boredom or of a disease? The important thing was the goodwill and the collaboration of the authoritative gentleman” (240).

Yet there are other problems that need the creative minds of inventors and storytellers. Since Ahmet the Timely had been dead for a long time, both Hayri and Halit the Regulator need a grave to prove his existence and, therefore, death. They even find a grave for Ahmet the Timely and take their foreign visitors from abroad to his grave. Visiting the grave not only strengthens the idea that Ahmet the Timely had really existed but also he was a divine figure. In Turkish tradition, it is common for people to visit the graves of divine people. They either pray or make a wish on their visits. Ahmet the Timely’s grave is also visited after he is “invented” and “sainted” by Hayri İrdal. People from abroad want to take pictures of the grave of such an important divine person. Even Van Humbert, who is a great scientist of the era, comes from Holland to visit the grave of Ahmet the Timely. Everyone believes such a figure existed since they are standing in front of his grave. However, Hayri İrdal reveals the reality behind the so-called Ahmet the Timely’s grave as follows:

After a few visits to the cemeteries of Edirne kapı and Eyüp, and the martyrism of Karacaahmet, an Ahmet the Timely would necessarily be found. And find one we eventually did. Nor am I particularly contrite for having devised such a minor amendment to the identity of a person beyond the grave. After all, the poor soul got his tomb renovated and his name made known. (29)

Though Ahmet the Timely was a holy figure that never existed, his existence is thus invented and advertised really convincingly by finding him a grave, which in fact belongs to another person, and by Hayri's biography and teachings of Ahmet the Timely, which is translated into eighteen languages. Hence, when everyone believes in a lie, this lie becomes real. As the existence of Ahmet the Timely is proved by linguistic and other contributory evidence, it is considered to be real. However, Ahmet the Timely's ideas, his grave, "the particular age which he *should have lived*" are all invented by Halit the Regulator (28; emphasis added). Halit the Regulator suddenly comes up with the idea of "inventing" Ahmet the Timely. By trying to form firm foundations to his fictitious "historical" personage, Halit the Regulator needs a story from Hayri. Meanwhile, Hayri İrdal plays his role given by Halit the Regulator. He is only a medium who is supposed to confirm Ahmet the Timely's existence and convince people in it.

Hence, the novel illustrates the almost-magical quality of the social construction of not only the Institute and but also its history. Reality is formed once people believe the truth of a story and uniformly make it into a publicly held fact. During this hysterical reality formation process, hardly anyone has the courage to question the essence of this construction. Likewise, although the Institution is without essence from head to toe, its reality is not questioned by the majority of people.

History is written in parallel with the needs and perspectives of the eras. Therefore, every era examines history from a different perspective. This aspect of history becomes clear when Halit the Regulator explains Hayri why they need the publication of the book that is about the life and the works of Ahmet the Timely now:

My dear Hayri İrdal, you'll see that the book will be a great success. You think that there is such a thing in the world as lies. You're mistaken. There can be no lie in such matters. Ahmet the Timely cannot be considered as a lie. He is the truth itself. Do you know when this would be a lie, and a horrible lie at that? If he had lived at the end of the seventeenth century with the ideas and works we have attributed to him, then it would be a lie. Then he would be in conflict with his century. He would have pierced through the century he lived in, which is of course impossible. There is no such thing as lies or truths in such matters. The question is to adapt oneself to one's century and to be its representative. Ahmet the Timely is the requirement of our age. He satisfies this need at the end of the seventeenth century. That is all. Therefore, he is the truth itself. Last evening we listened to your aunt together. According to her Ahmet the Approximate's dynasty went back as far as the

Conqueror's times. Has anybody objected to it? No. Everybody accepted it quite naturally. Why? Because this idea was based on two living realities, you and your aunt! (266).

Hence, according to Halit the Regulator, today's perspective requires the existence of Ahmet the Timely now. Thus, though Halit the Regulator acknowledges the fact that Ahmet the Timely has never existed, he thinks pragmatically and creates his story by inventing this spiritual figure and making him function as the historical record of the Institute. As Halit the Regulator says to Hayri, the important thing is to adapt the past to the present century and its needs. If this century needs Ahmet the Timely, then Halit the Regulator sees no harm in asking Hayri İrdal's help in inventing him.

Moreover, the idea of the invention of a spiritual figure that in fact had never lived is embraced so quickly and sincerely that some people even claim to have communicated with the spirit of Ahmet the Timely. Tanpınar takes up another institution that creates its own myths in the Spiritualists Association so much so that the whole association is in fact based on mythmakers and storytellers who are ready believers and contributors to pre-existing stories with their embellishments and support. The Association lays bare the mythmaking process and demonstrates the irrationality that pervades our most rational-appearing institutions. Some of the members of the Spiritualists Association conjure up the spirit of Ahmet the Timely and have a conversation with him. Hayri states: "In the conversation it was reported that Ahmet the Timely objected to certain parts of my book. In brief he refuted his stuttering and gave more detailed information about his scope and sect" (267). Most people in the Association do not question the reality of Ahmet the Timely. Instead, they believe in this story and create their own roles in it. The social construction of reality is so powerful that these people believe they have communicated with the spirit of a man, who had in fact never existed. Unlike Halit the Regulator, though, these second-degree storytellers and believers do not have immediate economic or public interests in retaining these narrative constructions. While there are ones who "invent" people and events in a way that would serve to their own benefits, there are others who support the so-called existence of either these imaginary people or events blindly.

After Halit the Regulator makes Hayri believe in the necessity of Ahmet the Timely's existence, Hayri creates his second story. Though Halit the Regulator was a

huge contributor to Ahmet the Timely's story, it is Hayri who fills in the major gaps and makes up the story. Besides being imprisoned in the stories of others, Hayri also manages to create two stories, namely The Sherbet Maker's Diamond and Ahmet the Timely. Hence, Hayri lives in a fantasy world which he also contributes with his stories, though his stories can never become master stories and constantly fail.

3.3. STORIES RELATED TO INSTITUTIONS

Through certain so-called modern, non-governmental or governmental institutes in his novel, *Time Regulation Institute*, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar criticizes both modernization and its mistaken applications. Through certain characters in the book, Tanpınar implies that there are people who take advantage of the system and its loopholes in the past just as there are in the present and will be in the future such people, who manipulate the system without understanding the philosophy behind it. Tanpınar claims that while there were some people in pre-modern times who corrupted and distorted the *mythos* of their period, there are some people in modern times who corrupt and distort the *logos* of their time. That is to say, such people, whose agendas are based on self-interest and opportunism, twist the real philosophy behind the way of thinking or paradigm that has in fact years of wisdom behind. Tanpınar reveals the attitudes of such people both in pre-modern and modern times through his satiric and comic narration by referring to governmental, non-governmental and even universal institutions.

3.3.1. Governmental Institutions: The Time Regulation Institute

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's novel, *The Time Regulation Institute*, centers on an institute, which is built to set the clocks in every corner of the country by Halit the Regulator, the entrepreneur. Halit the Regulator is an opportunist whose only purpose is to increase his self-interest by authoring stories and making as many people as possible believe in them. He is a pragmatist who does not see the fact that he has established an institute on a concept as ambiguous as time. Time itself is subject to human conceptualization; therefore, after being conceptualized as a cyclical pattern in former times, with the advent of Judaism has given a linear bent. Linear time has brought revolutionary ideas such as the unrepeatability of events and the idea of endless progress. It is responsible for the rise of history as the recording

of events of an irrevocable past. Historical time is based on the ends and beginnings of eras and periods, which are often thought of as discontinuous with one-another. In other words, time becomes a concept that represents the closure of one period and the start of another. For instance, historically, it is used to refer to the closure of medieval time and the beginning of New Age. Therefore, in such an understanding of time and history, one always feels s/he has to rush in order not to lag behind. Public and household clocks and later their more personalized versions, watches, are responses to the need to keep people in time. Tanpınar's fictional universe is a parody of this human construct of time and the craze that centers on it. Tanpınar shows that one cannot prevent falling behind time by synchronizing his clock. Instead, s/he should understand the philosophy behind it. Since Halit the Regulator does not have any clue about what modernity in its essence is, he twists the time concept and benefits from it while appearing to be a modern and new man. He seems to believe people can adjust to modernity by synchronizing their clocks and watches as this thought serves to his own benefit.

Halit the Regulator is an inventor who suddenly establishes Time Regulation Institute upon hearing but definitely not understanding Nuri Efendi's philosophical statements on time concept from Hayri İrdal. At the moment of speech, Halit the Regulator decides to establish the institute thinking of it like a game. He even includes government officers in his game by making them believe in the necessity of the institute and requiring allowances from them. Halit the Regulator establishes commissions and subbranches of the institute. For instance, as he talks to the mayor who visits the office of the institute, he states they are thinking of establishing the Social Coordination and Work Statistics Departments following the establishment of the Spring, Pin and Minute Departments and adds:

All these departments will be run by specialists. As a matter of fact Hayri İrdal himself will take charge of the Work Statistics Department. I'll look after the Social Coordination Section. We have even contemplated obtaining our allocation from this budget. Thus, the salaries of the director will not exceed the levels foreseen by law. Clearly this building will no longer be big enough for our organization. The best thing would be to have a new building" (215)

As Halit the Regulator talks, Hayri is shocked as he was assigned with the duty of being in charge of a department which he does not know would exist, while having no idea about what the institute is for. Through his eloquent speech, Halit the

Regulator shows how easily he manages to make the institute official by associating the payments with law and asking for a bigger building from a government agent. Halit the Regulator invents everything via words. He makes people believe in the need for such an institute through words or expands his institute with departments as he talks.

“The way the Time Regulation Institute works is an interesting example for showing the fact that institutions in modern societies work with ‘innovations’ and ‘inventions’ to continue their existence and actualities” (Aytaç, 1981: 316)⁶. Therefore, Halit the Regulator makes endless efforts to actualize innovations though these innovations never align themselves with reality and, therefore, remain inapplicable. Halit the Regulator’s “innovations” and “inventions” function to persuade people as to the necessity and even vitality of his Institute. In order to keep this state of necessity and vitality, innovations have to continue. Therefore, no matter how slippery the ground on which the Institute is founded, Halit the Regulator somehow manages to continue his innovations even in the state of the liquidation of the Institute. This time his innovation project involves the process of liquidation, which is to continue for an unspecified time. He never gives up and continues acting as if whatever he does is great importance and needs the same procedures and innovations that every modern Institution needs. In fact, as a master of innovative thinking, Halit the Regulator *invents* innovations.

Being created through language, Time Regulation Institute also requires history and control. Since the Institution is set up all of a sudden, its construction aims at covering hollowness inside. As a shared history is required for an institution, the founder of the Institution, Halit the Regulator, asks Hayri İrdal to write a book on Sheyh Ahmet the Timely, an imaginary philosopher on whose ideas the Institution would be based. By writing this book, not only is the necessity for this institution once more revealed to public but also a bond is formed within the actors of the Institution. The members of the Institution begin to have a history and a necessary background, and as a result, they are united under a shared history.

Hayri can quickly adapt to the historical background of the Institute since he has already undergone historical processes or practices of the stories to which he

⁶ All the translations of the Turkish sources in this dissertation are mine unless stated otherwise.

listened and partly participated. Though childhood stories, to which everyone, as well as Hayri, is exposed, are in his case about a fictional treasure and hopes of being rich, the stories in which Hayri was given an active role by the storytellers in his early adulthood and middle age become imprisoning and, therefore, dangerous for him. Among the roles given to Hayri to perform in other people's stories, Hayri finds Halit the Regulator's assignments most difficult to resist. Hayri is trapped in Halit the Regulator's stories. Actually, Halit the Regulator himself turns into a *story*. Like his invention, The Time Regulating Institute, Halit the Regulator also invents himself as an entrepreneur. He is capable of influencing people around him and dictating the roles these people should perform in his story. With his charismatic personality, he even succeeds in including Hayri's aunt in his story, who had hated Hayri and his wife until then. Through his eloquent speech and charming character, he successfully convinces Hayri's aunt, Zarife Hanım, and many others about the necessity and importance of the institution by giving them certain passions of authority in the institution. Halit the Regulator convinces Zarife with his sharp wit and successfully turns an unpleasant scene into his advantage. When Zarife Hanım comes to the institution to reprimand Hayri and his wife for telling lies about their past in a newspaper interview, Halit the Regulator sees it as a chance to bring her into the fold. Halit the Regulator says to Zarife Hanım:

We were just discussing it. I'll tell you. We are in need of an association which will support the activities of the Time Regulation Institute, which will spread its ideas among the people and issue publications. We decided a long time ago to establish a Watch and Clock Lovers Association. Today we have been discussing the founding members of this association. That was the aim of our meeting today. It was our intention to ask this association to find members mainly from among the female population. The president of this association should, to our mind, be a lady a respectable one. . . we have been meditating on this question since this morning, but could not think of anyone worthy of this position, having a sufficiently distinguished personality. Finally Hayri Bey said "My aunt is the best person for this position. She is the 'distinguished personality' itself." (255)

By tactfully handling her, Halit the Regulator not only convinces Zarife Hanım as to the importance of the institution, but also smooths over the problems between Hayri and his aunt. Either by finding people's weakpoints or by boosting people's egos, Halit the Regulator manages to include and keep everyone in his game. Halit the Regulator is the one who cleverly invents the Time Regulating Institute upon Hayri's fancy words which he recalls from the conversations he had had with Nuri Efendi,

his childhood master, and convinces in the necessity of this institution one by one. However, it is ironic that the employees in the institution hardly do any productive work in an institution, which is set up in order not to lose time. In order to overcome such criticisms about not performing any tangible tasks, instead of increasing and inventing some line of productive work, Halit the Regulator comes up with even the more absurd idea of adding sub-branches to keep up the appearances as a growing and efficient institution whose services are high in demand. He can thus think of every alternative plan that would help maintain the course of his story. For instance, by employing Hayri, who is urgently in need of money at that time, and promoting him in the institution, Halit the Regulator cleverly wins a captive and committed employee as long as his services are required. Though Hayri sees the absurdity of Halit the Regulator's institution and such other ideas on some important matters some time later, he cannot free himself from Halit's world as this new world brings comforts and other advantages to his life.

As in the case of Hayri, other people's roles are important for the continuation of Halit the Regulator's story; therefore, he often has to tamper with reality in order to include more people in the game. However, in time his stories take on such a life of their own that the players continue to both author and perform their roles, which turns Halit into a by product of the history that he had initiated. When Halit the Regulator sees that people are making their own decisions and resisting the roles he assigns them, he quits the game. When Halit the Regulator puts Hayri in charge of the clock-housing scheme, one that will provide lodgings for the employees, everyone shows their true colors and states their distrust in Hayri's ability to build these houses. Though Hayri is once applauded for drawing the schemes of the main building and praised about their originality, he is left alone in this work. One of his acquaintances would say: "These are private residences to be inherited by our children. They don't have to be original. It will suffice if they are *solid, inexpensive, and safe*" (319; emphasis added). Another would say: "With the money we've economized with the greatest difficulty, we cannot venture to support such experiments. What we want is a house, not the work of a genius" (319). Even Doctor Ramiz would say: "No my dear, you can't do this. Just suppose you were to place the staircase on the wrong side? No!" (319). For the first time, nobody listens

to Halit the Regulator since harsh reality strikes people. Once reality disturbs people by touching their secure living spaces, they free themselves from Halit the Regulator's story. After some time, most are financially secure as a result of their "hard work" in the institution and do not feel the need to continue playing Halit the Regulator's game for continuing his game could lead to their helplessness and devastation before harsh reality. Facing this harsh reality, Halit the Regulator becomes devastated and feels betrayed in his own story. As a result, since he is the playmaker, he rejects being a mere player in other people's game and, therefore, quits. Before Halit the Regulator quits, Hayri explains to him what really happened as Halit the Regulator seems shocked at the change in people's attitude. Hayri states the conversation he had with Halit the Regulator after people's protests against Hayri's construction of their houses:

'How can it be?' he said. 'How can it ever be? How comes it that these people, who work under perfect and new conditions and among such innovations in the most modern establishment in the world, do not understand the matter? If they don't, what are they doing in the institute? Why did they congratulate us on it? So they lied!'

I tried to explain the situation to him.

'No, they didn't lie! They were sincere. They loved innovations provided that they remained apart from them. In fact they still live them. The only thing is that during their lifetime they prefer to be on the safe side.'

'How can it be? How can a person have two different minds? Two different kinds of logic?'

Halit the Regulator was indeed crestfallen.

'It is possible when interests change in their course, the path of logic also becomes diverted.'

'I just don't understand it! My whole lifetime's work has crumbled. This establishment is no longer mine.' (320)

Halit the Regulator, the opportunist, who hunts easy prey for performing other people in his story, provides the institution with everything that is necessary for an institute ranging from roles he attributes to the players in the institute to an imaginary historical background. However, when he understands that it cannot compete with reality, Halit the Regulator quits the game. Hence, the game is over for Halit the Regulator. Unless he has enough devoted players, he quits the game. In other words, once people cease believing in the illusion he has created, he becomes the first to quit the game he himself has created.

All in all, while telling The Time Regulation Institute's story and history, Hayri cleverly authors Halit the Regulator's story; thus, imprisons Halit in his own

story. Though Hayri seems to write Halit the Regulator's story in an attempt to praise the death of this legendary figure, Hayri actually imprisons Halit the Regulator in his own story. Hence, there is a very thin line between the motives of Hayri; however, in both assumptions stories *produce* more stories and in the end the reader is subject to hear only Hayri's version of Halit the Regulator's grand narrative and several other minor stories.

3.3.2. Non-governmental Institutions: The Spritualists Association

Governmental institutions such as the Time Regulation Institute are only one and newer facets of the human tendency to create stories. In fact, all our institutions, governmental and otherwise, result from the stories that we participate in telling and performing. The Spiritualists' Association in *The Time Regulation Institute* is another institute that encourages major and minor stories under its roof. While the stories Hayri had listened to prior to these two institutes were made up stories in which the tellers are the heroes or heroines, the institutes that these stories bring into existence demonstrate the priority of the word and the imaginative faculty to hard reality. These institutes assume such appearance of reality that they take the appearance of unshakeable reality. Both the Time Regulation Institute and the Spiritualists Association have written rules and are officially recognized by the government. In other words, the existence of both the institute and the association is protected and guaranteed by governmental support. Thus, they give the impression that they have to be real since the most reliable institutions credit the validity of these institutions. The stories Hayri listens to as a child and the story he creates about "Sherbet Maker's Diamond" in his adulthood, are stories out of which no institutions come into being. However, once he starts to work in the Spiritualists Association and mainly the Time Regulation Institute, Hayri witnesses that it is also possible to create institutions out of stories. Like all tangible and abstract things, institutions could also be created via discourse.

When Hayri becomes a member of Spiritualists Association, he keeps listening to supernatural stories involving spirits. However, this time people are telling their stories under the roof of an association or an institution. Each individual story of the members of this association becomes a building block for a larger than life construct. Tanpınar demonstrates that while some individual stories remain as

parts of personal history with their limited circle of influence, some other stories merge with others and become parts of a collective construct such as this institute. Though the association is a uniting place where people could freely lie to each other by making up stories, the members believe they are performing important duties. They publish communiqués and some of the members claim to be mediums and nearly all are busy with conducting experiments and debating on “important” matters. Hayri is the association’s accountant who writes letters and keeps books. Ironically, these people believe they perform important tasks. However, in reality they secure themselves a site or venue where they could tell their most outrageous stories that would be branded as absurd anywhere outside the borders of this site.

There are different stories in the association. For instance, one of the members of the association, Nevzat Hanım, tells about a spirit that lives in her house. His name is Murat, an authoritarian spirit who often intervenes in Nevzat Hanım’s life by answering the phone and talking to Nevzat Hanım’s friends when she is not at home. Many of Nevzat Hanım’s friends claim to have talked to Murat. Nail Bey, the lawyer of the association, narrates the conversation he held with Murat as follows:

‘It was strange! First there was a terrible uproar. Whistles were blowing and bells were ringing, it seemed to be the end of the world. Then I heard a voice saying, ‘Wrong number.’ So I hung up and tried again. It was the same story. On my third attempt the voice said: ‘Can’t you understand, my lady cannot answer your call. . .She is occupied.’ ‘But,’ I retorted, ‘it’s something very important. I wanted to talk to her about the flat,’ The voice had explicitly become reproachful, ‘But you’re acting as if you didn’t know her character. She just cannot come. She is rapport now with spirits! So, don’t insist!’ ‘But who the hell are you?’ I inquired. ‘Didn’t you recognize me, it’s Murat!’ he said. (150)

When these dialogues with Murat become more frequent, people add new stories in order to explain this unusual phenomenon and, therefore, Murat’s existence becomes all the more real to the people in the Spiritualists Association. However, as it is revealed at the end, Murat is just an invention of Nevzat Hanım’s mother-in-law who, after her son’s death, wants to seclude Nevzat Hanım from admirers or suitors around her. Although Nevzat Hanım’s mother-in-law answers the phones and acts as if she is Murat, almost everyone in the association believes in Murat’s existence without doubt until the truth is revealed beyond any reasonable doubt.

Murat’s story is not the only story recounted in the Spiritualists Association. Another member of the association, Aphrodite also believes she is a psychic who has

contacted her dead aunt once. The members of the association even name Aphrodite's aunt "the Will." Her aunt is given this name not only because she wants to inform Aphrodite about her family's inheritance, but also because Aphrodite *wills* to see the spirit of her aunt again. In other words, it is Aphrodite's *will* that metaphorically raises her aunt out of her grave and summons her into the world of the living.

One other member of the association is Sabriye Hanım, who is also a psychic. "Sabriye Hanım's success lay in her ability to leave her body and walk around in her astral body" (162). Sabriye Hanım is actually obsessed with her friend, Zeynep Hanım's death. Though the police said she has committed suicide, Sabriye Hanım believes Zeynep Hanım has been murdered. Therefore, she tries to identify suspects by using her psychic skills. Interestingly, she turns out to be right in her suspicions. At the end of the book, the reader learns the fact that Zeynep Hanım's husband, Tayfur Bey, who is in love with Nevzat Hanım, has murdered Zeynep Hanım.

In contrast to the other members of the association, Cemal Bey, the member and manager of the Spiritualists Association, is one of the most interesting characters who challenges others' stories as mere inventions or lies with his own fictitious stories. For instance, he successfully challenges the story of Ahmet the Timely, which is a big lie, by creating his own lie. Instead of rejecting the existence of Ahmet the Timely, Cemal Bey cleverly substitutes Ahmet the Timely with another imaginary figure named Timeling. Although Cemal Bey spreads his own version of the story in order to take his revenge on Hayri whom he hates for having an affair with his ex-wife Selma Hanım, he succeeds in raising doubts in people's minds with his story. Cemal Bey is clever since he knows how to make his moves against a lie. By partly objecting to Hayri's book on Ahmet the Timely's life, Cemal Bey leaves his opponents disarmed. Halit the Regulator comments on Cemal Bey's move as follows: "I would have never thought of it. Cemal Bey does know how to cope with lies, doesn't he? You can fight lies only with lies. In this matter, insistence on the truth would be a poor line to take. He is shooting us with our own rifle" (270). Hence, Cemal Bey demonstrates that the only way to fight stories is invent another story, which leaves no way for what lies beyond the confines of this narrative world.

Like the stories told in the Spiritualists Association, Hayri's aunt's resurrection story also shows people's tendency to believe in spiritual stories rather than seeking rational or scientific explanations. According to the story, his aunt arises from the dead when the funeral cannot be carried out in time. Hayri's father and aunt are never on good terms with each other, for Hayri's aunt is obsessed with money and never spends her money as she believes his brother and children are after it. She does not believe in the sincerity of her brother's feelings and often accuses him of being after her money. Hayri states: "My father took pity on her, he even wished her to be happy" (73). However, Hayri's aunt does not believe her brother could have any brotherly feelings for her. Hayri also acknowledges the fact that after some time his father begins to see his sister's estate as a means of salvation for his escalating financial problems. It is during those times that he hears about the death of his sister. Instead of taking care of the arrangement of the funeral, he leaves such procedures to İbrahim Efendi, Hayri's neighbor and rushes to his dead sister's mansion to lay hands on her properties. However, as she is about to be buried, Hayri's aunt opens the lid of the coffin and asks the imam to take her home immediately. When she wakes from the lethargic sleep which convinces everyone that she had died, everyone in the town is shocked to see the strange sight of a resurrected body eating a piece of cake in her coffin on her way home. When she comes home, she sees her brother collecting all her jewels and gold coins. Hence, she is confirmed in her conviction that everything she believes about her brother all these years is true: Her brother is really after her money. Seeing this, she immediately asks him and Hayri to leave her home by dropping everything they have taken from her house. This funny story is in fact no more believable than the made-up or invented stories that the characters recount. Yet, the reaction of the people to this lived experience shows the human tendency towards the mythical and legendary rather than versions supported by rational proofs. Though Zarife Hanım is thought to be dead due to her lethargic sleep, the story still becomes known as Zarife Hanım's "resurrection." Like the ghost stories told and partly believed in the Spiritualists Association, Zarife Hanım's resurrection story is also believed in public. Though people after some time learn that Murat, the spirit, is actually Nevzat Hanım's mother-in-law and Zarife Hanım actually does not rise from dead, for she only

suffers from lethargic sleep, they still choose to believe in the spiritual versions of these stories. Hence, in a time when modernity is thought to be at its peak, people still live in mythos, not logos.

Hayri İrdal is in the middle of these people. He continuously listens to or even experiences some of the stories. Since different kinds of stories dominate Hayri's childhood and adolescence, he forms a habit of listening to these stories and believing them. That's why, though he questions the existence and necessity of the Time Regulation Institute from time to time as well as other fictional stories, he ends up being a part of it. Hayri's belief and participation in the imaginary stories throughout his childhood provides a basis for believing in other imaginary stories for the rest of his life.

In the Republican era, when the young Republic is at pains to establish *reason*, long-time habits of people to believe in the irrational show themselves in associations such as the Spiritualists Association. Like the Time Regulation Institute, whose members together with its founder, undermine the modernizing efforts of the Republic, the members of the Spiritualists Association both resist and fail to understand the philosophy of the Republican era as they are stuck with the mythos of pre-modern times. Ironically, Tanpınar also implies that the Spiritualists Association members cannot even comprehend the mythos of pre-modern times.

3.3.3. Scientific Discourse as Stories: Psychoanalysis Community

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar indicates how science, which abounds with logos, can be manipulated by people like Dr. Ramiz, whose subconscious is filled with mythos. Not fully comprehending the scientific theories he learned in Europe, Dr. Ramiz longs for applying them to his patients. Though he does not understand the logic behind these theories, he appears to be a man of science while not being able to get rid of mythos in his subconscious. When Hayri İrdal makes up a story related to the existence of "Sherbet Maker's Diamond," the people who want him to pay back his debts take him to the court. No matter how hard he tries to say to the judge that he was telling a lie, he is considered to be mentally ill and therefore is sent to a clinic.

Upon the tragic arrival of Hayri İrdal at the clinic, Dr. Ramiz, who studied psychoanalysis in Europe and was largely influenced by Freud, starts analyzing him.

“Inflamed with passion for the new gospel of Freud, Dr. Ramiz takes on the air of a new convert, bringing the good news of psychoanalysis back with him for the good of the backward Orient” (Almond, 2006: 131). Since Dr. Ramiz is wildly eager to solve all sorts of traditional Turkish people’s problems through psychoanalysis, which is a modern technique, his main concern becomes associating every dream or everyday activity no matter how absurd it is with psychoanalysis. That is to say, although Hayri İrdal is totally sane, Dr. Ramiz is so determined to apply all psychoanalytical theories on him that in the end he manages to make him his first patient that suffers from “Oedipus complex.” In other words, Dr. Ramiz creates his own patient and scientific discourse that labels Hayri as a mad person needing to be cured through scientific methods. Similarly, in *The Blind Assassin*, Laura is labeled as a mad woman and put into a clinic. Like Hayri’s, Laura’s sanity is not questioned as both are diagnosed with mental illness by scientific discourse. After being released from the hospital, Hayri’s perception of reality changes and he becomes a different person. It is at this very point that Hayri İrdal starts to confuse reality and fiction. Since he has been exposed to fictional stories throughout his childhood, Dr. Ramiz’s weird techniques that are not actually based on scientific knowledge have a huge impact on his perception of reality.

Doctor Ramiz feels both alienated and frustrated after he comes back from Europe. He feels alienated because he believes “[his] new identity elevates him in his eyes not just epistemologically but even chronologically above his fellow Turks; his return from Vienna to Istanbul is a trip back from the future to an unenlightened past” (Almond, 2006: 99). Besides alienation, Dr. Ramiz is frustrated since society does not understand and appreciate the importance of psychoanalysis. Dr. Ramiz “becomes the lonely proselyte in a city full of ignorance, a man who could ease the burden of millions if only they would understand” (Almond, 2006: 100). Thus, in an attempt to show his fellow citizens that psychoanalysis is “the only way of salvation for the world,” Doctor Ramiz sets up the Psychoanalytical Association none of whose members is a medical doctor (104). Like Time Regulation Institute and the Spiritualists Association, the Psychoanalytical Association is a hollow institute. Hayri states the foundation of the association as follows:

Dr. Ramiz had put into execution the project on which he had been working for the last six years, and opened the Psychoanalytical Association. Among its twenty- one members—none of whom was a medical doctor—I also figured, and what is more, in the capacity of the director of the establishment. I must acknowledge, however, that when I was appointed as deputy director to the Time Regulation Institute, I was not inexperienced in such matters. I had once been the accountant of the Spiritualists Club, which was somewhat similar to the Psychoanalytical Association. In my capacity as director, I kept in my waistcoat pocket the key of this association, which was housed in one single room and whose rent was regularly paid by my dear friend. (142)

The association is so hollow that Hayri İrdal is appointed as a director whose job is to carry the key of the association with him. It is not based on medical and clinical expertise since there are no medical doctors in it. It is only a place where Dr. Ramiz applies the theories, whose logic he believed to have comprehended, to people. In one of the meetings in the association, Dr. Ramiz gives lectures on dreams, yet it is so boring that everyone falls asleep:

First, Asaf the Laze-About fell asleep in his place in the rear row that he had selected. From the chair on which I sat like a good boy, at a step lower than the lecturer, in my capacity of honorary director, with both of my hands on my knees, trying to conceal the torn leather of my shoes [. . .] I thought I saw Asaf the Laze-About withdraw both his arms from the two chairs these had been occupying, and rivet his eyes on the neck of the woman with a grotesque hat who was right in front of him." [. . .] Before the third page started to be read, in the small choppy, and cool bay formed by these puffings and the hummings of bees, the dreams of a young poet from our group set sail and single-handedly engaged in a hectic sea battle of yore. Hawsers creaked, cannons roared black, and fire spread everywhere amid war cries and constant attacks. A woman of forty who had been sitting in the first row benefited from this uproar, and silently laying on the floor a dozen ducklings which she must have hidden in her pockets, screened herself behind their screechings. Her example was followed by another. (143)

Until the end of Doctor Ramiz's session, almost the entire audience falls asleep. The reason for that is not only Dr. Ramiz's monotonous speech, but also the lack of interest of the audience in the subject as they do not understand it. Ironically, even Dr. Ramiz himself falls asleep in the end, which shows that similar to his audience, he cannot also grasp the logos behind the theories he supposedly knows by heart. Hayri İrdal, who forces himself not to fall asleep, states:

'And if a man sees himself in his dream among a body of sleeping women, this means of glad tidings, he will be the absolute actor and will not have to account for his act to anyone.' Dr. Ramiz profited from the freedom provided by this sentence and drooping his head instantly, went peacefully to sleep. (144)

It is both ironic and absurd to see the head of the association fall asleep at the end of his session. That shows the reader the hollowness of both the association and Dr.

Ramiz's rootless interpretations of dreams. Dr. Ramiz is under the influence of Freud and he believes he understands the theories of Freud. Dr. Ramiz's interpretations of Freudian theories lay bare the fact that people like Dr. Ramiz can fictionalize scientific discourse and also Freudian interpretations are another fictionalized scientific discourse. Hence, science as an institution, which represents reason, can be claimed to have fictionalized discourse at times. Hence, with the theories which he seems to have understood but which are also fictionalized discourses, Dr. Ramiz actually abuses people. Thus, all the institutions and communities lack the necessary characteristics in their core in the book. They exist on the surface and nobody judges their reality since they are considered to be real unanimously.

Berger and Luckmann believe that all human activity is subject to habitualization. That is to say, if an individual repeats an action in a situation, he is most likely to act the same way in the same situation. For instance, as Hayri believes in the imaginary and even absurd stories earlier in his life, he continues to repeat this habitual cycle later in his life. Believing and living in other people's stories becomes a habit for him. For instance, Halit Ayarçı and all the employees are the actors knowing their roles in the Institute and sharing knowledge. Similarly, members of the Spiritualists Association know their roles in the association and firmly believe in the institution's necessity. People should accept and agree on the institution and its function collectively. Otherwise, the institution cannot be formed. For instance, if people stop believing in the validity of the function of Time Regulation Institute, it no longer exists. Though at first mainly the founder and then the other members of the institute try to convince people in the necessity of the institution, Halit the Regulator abolishes the institute as a result of the attacks made against the institute in the press. Hence, though these people agreed on the importance of the institute at first, they suddenly violate the agreement and it no longer exists. In other words, all institutions depend on collective agreement.

CHAPTER FOUR

MIRRORING SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION IN THE TWO NARRATIVES

Both *The Blind Assassin* and *The Time Regulation Institute* represent how reality is constructed the moment we begin to tell our stories. Atwood and Tanpınar show the variety of ways the lives of their protagonists are built with stories and how they accept them as their everyday reality. As both first person narrators tell their stories themselves, the reader learns about the events from their perspectives. That is to say, if the reader reads the events from the perspective of other characters in the book, there will be numerous possible constructions of the story and, therefore, there will be alternative stories deriving from one story. As a result, their version of the story becomes *only one* of the possible stories. For instance, both Iris and Hayri reflect their own version of events. Yet, though these first-person narrators claim to present the *true* story, they actually relate events from their point of view. They construct worlds of their own and claim that they are true. The narrators, however, do not write their stories on blank sheets of paper. They build on earlier stories and earlier traditions of their own choosing. Since they are born to the world where numerous stories ranging from big to small already exist, they inevitably live and believe in stories to which they are born and in which they grow up. For instance, the reason why Hayri easily falls under the spell of Halit the Regulator's story and continues to stick to it is because Hayri is born to and is therefore accustomed to such absurd stories since his childhood. The acceptance of his father's friends' stories, namely Seyit Lutfullah's stories, affects Hayri's perception of reality and thus prepares him to believe in Halit the Regulator's fantasy world. As such, what the narrators present to us is a mixture, a composite of parts from old stories integrated into their individual versions of reality.

The relationship between the outside world, the world of matter, the world where events and "things" happen, and the stories is rather slippery at best. In other words, stories provide fictitious worlds. Therefore, each story has elements by which it reminds the reader of its made-up quality. The narrators in both novels have their unique but totally unsimilar ways of doing this. While Hayri undermines the story he tells in a subtle way, Iris undermines her story overtly. That is to say, though Hayri

narrates the absurdity of the events he went through due to Halit the Regulator, in an attempt to express his gratitude to him, Hayri still believes he should write about Halit the Regulator, the man who changed his life and provided him with a decent life:

Stretched on my bed, I speculated: Hayri İrdal, you have lived through had times indeed; though you have but sixty years behind you, you look as if you have lived the lives of several persons. You have tasted the misery and the bitterness of having been cast aside. Problems which seemed quite insoluble either by a human being or by a superior power you easily solved. All this was thanks Halit the Regulator. He brought you out of the dark and into the light. All that threatened your mind, your comfort, and your living was transformed into friendly entities. You, who saw everywhere nothing but ugliness, poverty, and blisses, which should, in fact, be the lot of human beings, and you have realized how noble a human heart can be. You have experineced brotherly love. [. . .] Now, aren't you going to do anything to honor the memory of such a king, this pure and excellent fellow? Will you let him be buried in the past beneath a heap of scorn and slander? (31)

The fact that Hayri writes his memoir in order to honour Halit the Regulator does not mean that the former totally closes his eyes to the irrationality that surrounds the latter's projects. Though Hayri appears to write his memoir in honour of Halit the Regulator, while contributing to it, he also criticizes the absurdity of Halit the Regulator's fantasy world from time to time. Hayri's way of undermining Halit's story is hidden behind a façade of admiration and almost worship; therefore, a careless reading may miss Hayri's tongue-in-cheek narration of Halit's world.

However, unlike Hayri İrdal, Iris undermines all stories including her own quite overtly. Iris makes her criticism more openly; she admits that as a narrator, she omits some parts and therefore cannot fully present the truth. Through the end of the novel, when she understands both Laura and herself are abused by Richard, she blames Richard severely and, by revealing him as an abuser in her book, she probably leads him to his suicide and thus, in a way, makes him pay for his sins. Though Iris opens her eyes to the reality sooner or later and narrates it in her memoir, Hayri continues a pretense of believing in Halit's projections while continuing to drop hints about the absurdity of his story. It is hard to say for certain whether Hayri actually believes in Halit's vision of the world or whether he chooses to turn a blind eye to what seems to be ludicrousness to any normal person. His pursuit of Halit's dreams probably results from his total desperation and the fact that he sees Halit as his last resort that will protect him from poverty and neediness. Additionally, Hayri

is not a stranger in such a fantasy world proposed by Halit, for he has been apprenticed in the schools of Seyit Lutfullah, Naşit the Hunter and Aristidi Efendi. Moreover, to as person who has in his youth witnessed his aunt's death and resurrection, Halit's stories seem firmly grounded on reality. He sees the lunacy Halit the Regulator creates, yet he chooses to close his eyes now and then. Therefore, just as Iris' story is left-handed, Hayri's story is coupled with its alternative version as in a polyphonic piece of music.

4.1. ROLES OF LIMINALITY, PARTICIPATION AND ISOLATION WHERE AUTHORS AND CHARACTERS MEET

Both protagonists in Margaret Atwood's and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's novels narrate their stories in the first person. They author their stories and claim to present an accurate account of events. Telling their story is vital in the lives of the protagonists in both novels. The moment they tell their stories, they reconstruct the so-called reality. Hence, one can never be sure about the reality of stories as everyone has their own version of story.

Though Iris claims to tell the truth in her memoir, she also acknowledges the fact that it is not easy to reveal the truth. No matter how hard Iris struggles to capture the reality in her narrative, she understands that she can put it forth only partially. Once she looks back on what she has written, she says: "I know it's wrong, not because of what I've set down, but because of what I've omitted" (395). The meaning of the stories can be found not in what stories say but (also) what they omit; in their silences and gaps. What the narrators/writers skip or omit may be as important as what they say. Therefore, since the authors inevitably skip some events or (re)write them from their own perspectives, the reader cannot have a full understanding of reality. Hence, not only first person narratives but also all kinds of discourses are unreliable in exposing the truth. The omitted parts are the untold stories of other silent participants such as Laura. Though Iris wants to write *her* story in the most accurate way it appears to her, on a second look she wants to take some parts out.

Though both Iris and Hayri claim that they will not present the whole truth in their memoirs, their tones in revealing this sincere confession differ a lot. While Iris acknowledges the one-sidedness of her memoir because of the things she has omitted

while writing, Hayri brings a different explanation, which is rather comical to this issue. Everything in *The Time Regulation Institute* is actually Hayri İrdal's version of reality, a fact that Hayri İrdal does not hide from the reader. While writing about his life, he explicitly states the fact that he is going to skip some events that need to be forgotten and, therefore, he will not reflect the whole reality. On the very first pages of the book, Hayri İrdal declares:

I had to prepare my morning coffee myself. After which I sank into my chair and began to ruminate on my past life, sorting out materials which I thought should best sink into oblivion, those that should be passed over or transformed, and those which required deeper reflection and, to make a long story short, I tried to put all the events of my life into a chronological order, observing all the stipulations of what may be called sincerity in a dissertation, or more especially in a memoir. [. . .] Why on earth should one write at all, if one does not possess to be frank? Such sincerity would necessarily call for elimination and expurgation. You will doubtless readily acknowledge that to disclose every single thing in its true color is nearly impossible. Instead of breaking off unexpectedly in the middle of a sentence, one should well plan ahead the points on which one will be in agreement with one's readers. (30; emphases added)

Hence, as a first person narrator, Hayri acknowledges the fact that storytelling requires editorial selections and omissions. By leaving out some parts in his story, Hayri makes a favourable impression on the reader. He states that he has planned everything he chose to tell while leaving the rest of it untold. Since it is his story, he is going to change and skip the parts he does not want to be known by others. In fact, since what we know of reality is always framed and shaped by stories that we have heard, it can be claimed that reality can only be knowable to us through stories. In other words, "the *only* reality that we can reasonably claim exists is reality as it is presented discursively" (Vass, 2012: 235). That is to say, because Hayri presents his version of reality through discourse, the reader can know the reality only partially.

In both novels, Iris and Hayri are eager to tell their stories. Their narratives are actually their lives. Their urge to write about their lives derives from their need to get free. Bouson comments on this as follows:

Unable to forget the past, Iris writes her memoir in a reluctant but compulsive way, wondering as she does whether it is better to remain "swollen" with her own secrets until she bursts from "the pressure of them," or to be "depleted" by having them "sucked out" of her, "every paragraph, every sentence, every word of them," exposing all the shameful things that have made her "cringe and wish to conceal." (Bouson, 2010: 254)

On the one hand, if Iris cannot tell their stories, she is swollen with their secrets. However, on the other hand, once she tells her story, she feels like an empty shell, which seems to be comforting at first but which also has an overwhelming and tremendous effect on her because she faces the tragic events again from the beginning and has difficulty in coping with the traumatic events in her old age.

Apart from the devastating effect of telling a story, both Iris and Hayri believe their narrative is some kind of a therapy. They either want to justify their choices or show the reader that they were victimized by the ones holding the power. In either case, they are freed from their burden once they tell their stories. For instance, Iris becomes aware of her inability to see the truth before her eyes only by being the author of her own story. Iris becomes “one of the titular ‘blind assassins,’” as she confesses both her crime and the complex nature of her culpability” (Cooke, 2007: 90). She blames herself for Laura’s suicide, and, by writing the book, in a way she redeems herself and even gets some sympathy from the reader. Though the book appears to be written as a debt of gratitude to Laura, whose life Iris shatters down while trying to make it better, it is actually a confession that will free her. That is to say, Iris’ aim is not excuse herself for her part in inadvertently making Laura’s life miserable; she sees that revealing Laura’s story is a moral responsibility she owes to her sister, which she can only achieve by writing. Therefore, for Iris the story also serves as a memorial. She writes:

As for the book, Laura didn't write a word of it [. . .] I wrote it myself, during my long evenings alone, when I was waiting for Alex to come back, and then afterwards, once I knew he wouldn't. I didn't think of what I was doing as writing—just writing down. What I remembered, and also what I imagined, which is also the truth. I thought of myself as recording. A bodiless hand, scrawling across a wall. I wanted a memorial. That was how it began. (512)

Writing, for Iris, is a way of reclaiming her past from those who have stolen it from her. In this process there are two people whose lives are stolen: Laura and Alex. Iris knows that no matter what she does, she can never bring them back; therefore, she creates an alternative universe in her book whereby they will always be remembered. By writing her memoir, Iris also prevents her love affair with Alex from being forgotten. She writes her memoir after Alex is long dead and gone. When reality is gone, Iris’ story functions to fill in Alex’s absence. By putting her story into words, she makes her secret love affair with Alex public and therefore makes it real.

While telling her story from her perspective, Iris also unfolds her knotty relationship of power with Laura. Iris' relationship with Laura is problematic due to sibling rivalry dating back to their childhood. However, this rivalry is one-sided, for it is Iris that is jealous of Laura. Iris' jealousy starts the moment her mother gives birth to Laura, which eventually causes her death. Iris holds Laura responsible for losing their mother. She believes that her mother is no longer healthy after delivering Laura. In her memoir, she claims: "After Laura's birth my mother was more tired than usual. She lost altitude; she lost resilience" (84). As her mother dies after some time, Iris unconsciously puts the blame on Laura for the rest of her life. Torn between the ambivalent feelings of jealousy and protectiveness towards Laura, Iris cannot form a sincere relationship with her sister. Iris both wants to harm Laura since she puts all the blame on Laura for the misfortunes in their life, and she loves Laura and wants to protect her as she is forced to function as a mother to Laura especially upon their mother's death. Hence, being in charge of Laura's life after the death of their mother is "an unwelcome burden of responsibility which she is unable to refuse or negotiate" (Robinson, 2012: 353). For instance, as a child when Iris got sick of answering Laura's questions about everything she wondered, she told Laura to "bite her tongue" to keep the questions coming out and as a result, Laura could not chew for days. Though Iris referred to the idiomatic meaning of the phrase, Laura took it literally and suffered from pain. Actually, it was actually an alarming sign since Iris could be claimed to be one of the first people who silenced Laura with her idiomatic phrase. Since biting one's tongue refers to silence and endurance especially for women, it is as if Iris wants to teach Laura to keep silent for the rest of her life. As an elder sister, Iris has a great influence on Laura, and therefore, Iris imprisons Laura in her silence. As Iris tells her part of story, she also presents how the special bond of sisterhood has turned into a power relation. Since Laura cannot write her own story, Iris remains to be the only storyteller. In other words, though Iris leads the way to why Laura ends up living in the stories of others, including her sister, she eventually tries to atone for her blindness to Laura by resurrecting her in her narrative.

Iris reveals her ambivalent feelings towards Laura in a number of occasions throughout the novel. In the book, Iris admits:

I didn't always try to be a good sister: quite the reverse. Sometimes I called Laura a pest and told her not to bother me [. . .] Sometimes I hid from her, inside a hollow lilac bush beside the conservatory, where I would read books with my fingers stuck into my ears while she wandered around looking for me [. . .] So I often got away with the minimum required" (93).

Iris' deep-seated hatred towards her sister lies behind her desire to giving petty or serious harm to Laura. For instance, when Iris pushes Laura off the ledge of the lily pond, Iris claims she was kind of happy and satisfied to see Laura suffer. Iris states:

I pushed her off the ledge. Not into the pond though—I did have some senses. I pushed her onto the grass. It wasn't a long drop and the ground was soft; she couldn't have been hurt much. She sprawled on her back, then rolled over and looked up at me wide-eyed, as if she couldn't believe what I'd just done. Her mouth opened into a perfect rosebud, like a child blowing out birthday candles in a picture book. Then she began to cry. I have to admit I was gratified by this. I'd wanted her suffer too—as much as me. I was tired of her getting away with being so young. (97)

However, since Iris also loves Laura deep down, she cannot let her get injured seriously in certain situations. For instance, Iris is the one who saves Laura from drowning in Louveteau when she wants to sacrifice her life in return for her mother's life. Iris recalls the terror she felt after she saw Laura in the icy water of the Louveteau:

I couldn't get out of my mind the image of Laura, in the icy black water of the Louveteau—how her hair had spread out like smoke in a swirling wind, how her wet face had gleamed silvery, how she had glared at me when I'd grabbed her by the coat. How hard it had been to hold on to her. How close I had come to letting go. (151)

In fact, Laura embodies Iris' dilemma. Iris' emphasis on the difficulty of holding on to Laura can have both a metaphorical and literal meaning. On the one hand, Iris believes it is hard to hold Laura because she is in icy water; on the other hand, Iris does not want to hold Laura because she sees Laura as a burden. Hence, though Iris loves her sister, she also witnesses her true feelings about Laura. Iris realizes one part of her that wants to let Laura go while the other part wants to cling to Laura.

The relationship between the two sisters becomes even more complicated when Alex emerges. Though Iris is not interested in Alex at first, upon seeing Laura's interest in Alex, she changes her mind and starts a kind of competition. In his article "Representations of the Past in 'The Blind Assassin,'" Alan Robinson comments on the relationship between Alex and the two sisters as follows: "Iris' ambivalence towards Laura increases when their competition for the affection of

their first-love object, their mother—which Iris believes Laura won—is succeeded by the rivalry for another love-object: Alex” (Robinson, 2012: 354). Since the father figure is never present, Iris only feels maternal love, the warm attachment and devotion of her mother, which she has to share with Laura. When Iris loses her mother who is her love object, she starts to seek a different kind of love as she still needs to be loved and directs her love for her mother towards Alex. Therefore, Iris badly wants Alex’s attention. Thus, the competition between Iris and Laura for the attention of Alex, can be traced back to the older sister’s anger and resentment for her sibling for “stealing” her mother from her forever. Alex serves in Iris’ imagination as a belated compensation for her mother’s loss because of Laura. When Iris loses Alex, she loses her temper and talks in an aggressive and cruel tone with Laura. While telling Laura about Alex’s death, Iris does not try to relieve Laura, who experiences hard time facing the harsh truth; instead, she tells Laura on purpose that they had been lovers for many years. Laura feels totally deserted and betrayed by her sister, with whom everything she had had faith in collapses over her. This causes Laura’s disappointment in everything she had so far believed. Iris reflects on her share in Laura’s disappointment: “Perhaps this is what happened to Laura—pushed her quite literally over the edge. The words she had relied on, building her house of cards on them, believing them solid, had flipped over and shown her their hollow centers. . . God. Trust. Sacrifice. *Faith. Hope. Love.* Not to mention *sister*” (490). As the case of “biting one’s tongue” makes manifest, for Laura, from her early childhood onwards, words *are* reality and truth. In her mind, words are unequivocally attached to the values they represent. Iris’ words shatter her unquestioned trust in words and language: she now begins to see the gaping darkness between reality and the words that are supposed to represent it. In a world where everything is communicated via words and language, nothing remains to be trusted.

Since Iris treats her as if she were an enemy, the words “sister” and “sisterhood” in Laura’s mind are cut off from her sister in flesh and blood. Therefore, she realizes she has in fact created a world of words such as “sister” and “sisterhood” in order to fill in their lack in real world. In other words, Laura does not understand what sisterhood is with reference to how Iris treats her. Instead, she forms the idea of sisterhood through words she hears from others. That is to say, she inherits words

from others who tell her about them and she believes in both the words and those who introduce them to her. Similarly, she does not know the meaning of sacrifice until Rennie tells her about the Weary Soldier, who sacrificed himself for his country. Laura once again builds the concept of sacrifice in her head through what she is told. That is to say, Laura does not have a first hand knowledge on any of the concepts above. She forms every concept in her head the moment somebody tells her about them via words. However, once she hears Iris' story, everything that used to make sense for Laura shatters down before her eyes. She is shocked to see the hollowness of the words that she has held on to throughout her life. Hence, it is so ironic that the words that she relies on prepare her tragic end.

Though Iris seems to be more aware of the gap between reality and language, she cannot escape being deceived by the power of language when it masquerades truth. Her relationship with Laura in fact demonstrates how Iris is imprisoned in language and stories. Her awareness comes only after her sister's death with her discovery of her notes, which reveal Richard to be a pedophilic sexual abuser. Up to that moment, Iris is unable to see the reality that lies right before her eyes. Iris' blindness towards Laura may be taken in two ways: Iris either believes in Richard's stories about Laura or creates her own stories about Laura to protect herself from facing brute facts. From time to time, Laura disappears and Iris loses track of Laura. For instance, Iris has no idea what Laura is doing or where she is staying when she works at Sunnyside Amusement park in the August of 1935. However, Iris forms a defence mechanism and chooses to believe that she had just wandered off and was happily alive. Iris writes how she felt about Laura's escapade back then as follows: "I thought Richard was working himself unduly. I was upset too, but believed Laura had merely wandered off— been distracted somehow. That would be more like her. She'd got off at the wrong station, forgotten our telephone number, lost her way" (322). In order to cope with the possibility of Laura's being lost, or maybe dead, Iris chooses to believe in the fake reality she creates. Iris either recreates Laura in her imagination, often in direct opposition to reality, or she remains totally ignorant of the facts of Laura's life. For example, Iris does not know that Laura plays truant from school in Toronto from autumn 1935 to April 1936. She discovers that Laura was

skipping school only when the school manager informs her both about Laura's absences and her weird attitude, which causes discomfort among students:

"It's also a question of her absences. I understand there are health problem, but . . ."

'What health problems?' I said. 'There is nothing wrong with Laura's health.'

'Well, I assumed, considering all of the doctor's appointments. . .'

'What doctor's appointments?'

'You didn't authorize them?' She produced a sheaf of letters. I recognized the notepaper, which was mine. I looked through them: I hadn't written them, but they were signed with my name. (375)

Iris has no idea what Laura is up to when she does not go to school. Iris believes all of these are due to Laura's rebellious spirit. She tries to find soothing explanations for Laura's behaviour that would comfort her and make her believe that she is a caring guardian for Laura.

While Iris sometimes chooses to believe in the stories that she creates, she is also imprisoned in Richard's stories. Richard is so good at making her believe in his stories that Iris never questions their truthfulness. When Laura is put in a mental hospital, Iris believes she is mentally ill as Richard makes her believe that. Together with his sister Winifred, Richard convinces Iris that Laura needed to be put in an institute since Laura is suffering from delusions. According to Winifred and Richard, Laura accuses Richard of trying to kill Iris and threatens to harm herself. Moreover, Laura is pregnant and is under a delusion that the baby Iris is going to have is actually her baby. Thus, Laura definitely needs to be cured. Both Richard and Winifred tell her their version of events in such a convincing way that Iris believes in what they say after all. Convincing Iris to their versions of the story is easy for Richard and Griffen since they appear to protect Iris from Laura, a mentally ill girl who can possibly harm Iris. Their ability to support their argument cleverly somehow convinces Iris:

'The specialist— the mental specialist— said that Laura must be insanely jealous of you,' said Winifred. 'Jealous of everything about you— she wants to be living your life, she wants to be you, and this is the form it's taken. He said you ought to be kept out of harm's way.' She took a tiny sip of her drink. 'Haven't you had your own suspicions?' (430)

By raising a question mark in Iris' mind, Winifred watches Iris take the bait and believe her story. Iris does not contact Laura since Winifred tells her "the doctors had advised us that seeing Laura was out of the question for the time being. They'd been

most emphatic about it. She was too deranged, not only that, she was violent” (430). By referring to authorities, like doctors and mental specialists, Winifred and Richard make their stories more credible while actually manipulating the truth. Therefore, Iris does not question the reasons why Laura has been put there once she is convinced by the Griffens. Hence, it is Richard who destroys the last strings of the special bond of sisterhood. His sister, Winifred only helps him to clean up the mess he has caused.

Being fooled by both Richard’s and her own stories, Iris ends up ignoring her sister’s life and unknowingly leads Laura to her tragic death. Therefore, Iris’ memoir functions as “her self-accusation of having acted as Laura’s blind assassin” (Robinson, 2012: 353). By remaining blind to the injustice done to Laura, Iris eventually becomes her sister’s assassin. Contrary to what her name signifies, Iris cannot become an “eye” watching Laura. As she knows she has caused her sister’s tragedy by remaining blind to the truth before her eyes, Iris tries to make up for her blindness and passiveness with her memoir in order to set herself free by honoring Laura and admitting her wrongs against Laura. Writing her memoir heals Iris since she feels free after having said everything. Writing, especially the writing of a tragic set of events, serves like the couch in psychiatrist’s office; its therapeutic effect helps heal the wounds of the past.

Iris’ memoir includes double voice in two senses. Iris writes her memoir long years after the events; therefore, her voice is heard at a distance from the past, which enables her to see the events from a perspective that she had not had in the past. She also develops an empathetic feeling with her sister, which causes her to include Laura’s voice in her narrative. Iris not only states how she felt and what she believed as a child and a young woman, but also states her evaluations of the events as an aging woman. As such, she also gives voice to Laura who no longer exists and imagines the events Laura passed through. In other words, the young Iris, who had tended to silence Laura and remained blind to her, transforms into the old Iris, who gives voice to Laura, and shows the injustice done to her while admitting her unintentional contribution that led to Laura’s victimization. However, Iris’ memoir hardly tells the whole truth as she writes her version of the story while *imagining* Laura’s story. Therefore, Iris can partially reflect the reality in her story. After all, the reader is reading *Iris’* story.

Though Iris initially claims Laura did not write a word of the story, later in the novel, she admits that Laura was her left hand. She believes Laura helped her spiritually while writing the story. She named Laura the author of the book because she believed Laura collaborated in the story. Belying her earlier statement that she was the sole author of her story, Iris says:

But on second thought it was merely doing justice, because I can't say Laura didn't write a word. Technically that is accurate, but in another sense—what Laura would have called the spiritual sense—you could say she was my collaborator. The real author was neither of us: a fist is more than the sum of its finger. (516)

Because Iris and Laura shared both similar and even the same stories and experiences as children brought up together as sisters, they are like two arms in one body, left and right. The special bond of sisterhood enables them to feel like one heart and mind living in two different bodies. Hence, Iris acknowledges Laura's contribution to the writing process. However, Iris' admission of the collaborative authorship only functions as "an act of atonement [. . .] which only partially absolves Iris from her guilty blindness in relation to Laura" (Watkins, 2013: 235).

As Iris writes, the reasons for writing her story unfold one by one. Perhaps her primary reason is to reveal her secret love affair with Alex, for she would like to offer Sabrina, her granddaughter, the truth behind her life, which is a testimony of her love for Alex. Holding Iris responsible for the death of her brother, Richard, Miss. Griffen does her best to prove that Iris is not a good parent and is incapable of looking after her child, Aimee. After striving for it so much, Miss. Griffen manages to accuse Iris by setting her up. Miss. Griffen takes pictures of Iris entering a hotel room with a man she had hired and makes Iris out to be an immoral mother, risking her child's future at the court. As a result, Miss. Griffen eventually succeeds in getting the custody of Aimee and leaves Iris in despair. After gaining Aimee's custody, Miss. Griffen influences Aimee with her version of the story and causes Aimee to hate her mother. Manipulated by her aunt, Aimee brings up her child, Sabrina, with the same story that she has heard from Miss. Griffen and accepted without listening to Iris' side of the story. Hence, Iris believes that her memoir is important as it is going to free Sabrina from the family with which she has no actual blood ties. Thus, by writing this memoir, Iris believes she has given Sabrina an opportunity to start a new life by knowing her true origins. To sum up, with her

memoir, “[Iris] is determined to offer a counterdiscourse to the official version of family history passed down to Sabrina by Winifred, who was declared Sabrina’s official guardian after the death of her neglectful and alcoholic mother” (Bouson, 2010: 267). Hence, behind Iris’ story there are many reasons including the one related to her granddaughter: By depicting her secret love affair, Iris offers the truth to Sabrina, as well. In her book, she clarifies her purpose in writing her life story as follows: “When I began this account of Laura’s life—of my own life—I had no idea why I was writing it, or who I expected might read it once I’d done. But it’s clear to me now. I was writing it for you, dearest Sabrina, because you’re the one—the only one—who needs it now” (516). Having lost the custody of her granddaughter, Iris seizes an opportunity to show Sabrina the reality which was hidden from her. Iris can communicate with Sabrina only through *written words* not only because Sabrina does not want to listen to Iris’ side of the story after being under the influence of Miss. Griffen but also because Iris does not have enough time left due to her old age. Therefore, Iris pays so much importance to her memoir through which she can free Sabrina from the association with the Griffen family.

Hence, unlike the stories that had imprisoned her in her childhood and early youth, her story is a liberating story for Sabrina. There are thus two kinds of stories: the ones that prison people and the ones that offer freedom and new horizons. Hence, in addition to imprisoning people, stories have the potential to liberate and free them from their shackles. By telling her version, Iris wants to write a liberating story which will give her granddaughter an opportunity to have a fresh start. Iris wants to stop Sabrina from being the prisoner of a story to which she does not belong. In other words, she writes her story to free Sabrina whom she sees as a prisoner. Moreover, through Iris’ storytelling, the voices of the ones who cannot speak against the dominant discourse can be heard. Throughout her story, Iris speaks on behalf of Alex and Laura. Alex’s communist beliefs would not be heard in a society where dominant discourse is interwoven with capitalism if it were not for Iris. When Iris includes Alex’s science fiction story within her story, she reveals a counter discourse against the dominant one. Similarly, the voice of Laura, whose ideas are also against the dominant discourse, can be heard thanks to Iris. Hence, Iris’ story is, therefore, a polyphonic story, which gives voice to several types of counter discourses.

Iris' writing is closely related to her body. Just as the dominant discourse inscribes itself on the female body, women respond to it by writing back. Likewise, Iris sees writing as a way to reveal her repressed desires and needs. Since she cannot express her bodily desires and needs through speech, like many other women, she writes them down in her memoir at her late age. However, she is old and not only does she *not* have a lot of time left but also her body is too weak to carry out the great challenge of writing. Therefore, she pushes her body's limits to finish her memoir. Iris states: "The old wound has split open, the invisible blood pours forth. Soon I'll be emptied" (41). It is as if she is writing her memoir with her blood; she will finish the text (story) at the expense of her physical well-being. Establishing a parallel between ink and Iris' blood, J.Brooks Bouson states, "[. . .] Iris commences her story with a visceral image of blood-as-ink" (Bouson, 2010: 75). Iris thus loses blood in every letter she writes. In other words, Iris gradually dies as she empties herself in her memoir. As she suffers from old age, Iris finds it more and more difficult to write day by day. Though writing becomes a real burden for her, she is determined to finish her story in the hope that Sabrina will read her story and learn the truth eventually. As her story proceeds forward, it becomes a real challenge to write its end: "I'm not as swift as I was. My fingers are stiff and clumsy, the pen wavers and rambles, it takes me a long time to form the words. And yet I persist, hunched over as is sewing by moonlight" (43). In order to finish her story and make it known especially to Sabrina, Iris races against time while writing her story. No matter how exhausting the writing process is for Iris, she does her best to accomplish her goal. Since she puts all her effort into writing her memoir so much that it is as if "it's Iris' body which appears to become the writing instrument, recording this narrative" (Ingersoll, 2003: 547). In other words, Iris uses her body, which has been inscribed by the dominant discourse dating back to her childhood, as an *instrument* or a sounding board and subverts the dominant discourse by authoring a counter story.

Her body, once the site of power for the dominant power, is now free to write her own story and to bring forth an image whose references are located in itself rather than external definitions. In the former story, Iris appeared as a victim of characters, ranging from her own father to her husband and sister-in-law, and the

victimizer of her sister, Laura. Thus, it is a story of her weakness in a healthy body. Her new story, however, is intended to be an empowering one albeit it is created by a weak and dying body.

Stories are formed by bodies and bodies form stories. That is to say, Iris' body serves as a writing instrument that creates a story that brings her body into existence. The body and the story seem to compete and complete each other. Since Iris writes her story as every word she puts on the page gets her closer to death, she knows very well that her survival can only be possible if her story can truly carry her bodily experiences to her reader. While the body has a physical reality, it is the story that gives meaning to the body's reality. In other words, just as the bodies are capable of creating stories, stories are similarly capable of creating and defining bodies and other material realities. Iris' material being is passed on to the reader only through the creative power of the word and stories.

Though there is more than one reason for Iris to write her story, reclaiming her and other victimized people's lives is probably her motive to write. The moment Iris starts writing her version of the story, she challenges the patriarchal authority figures whom she once had to obey. In other words, once she becomes the author of her own text, she "totes the bitter wisdom earned by a lifetime of oppression" and becomes an "armed and dangerous" authority in the fictive world she creates (Postlethwaite, 2001:163). As Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar state in their book *The Mad Woman in the Attic*, "a literary text is not only speech quite literally embodied, but also power mysteriously made manifest, made flesh" (52). Iris gains a new body and presents a new reality by authoring her memoir. Though Iris had resented but endured the patriarchal authority that shaped her life and imprisoned her in its stories, for the first time now, she gains full authority over her life by writing her story. According to Gilbert and Gubar, authority suggests:

not only 'a power to enforce obedience,' or 'a derived or delegated power,' or 'a power to influence action,' or 'a power to inspire belief,' or 'a person whose opinion is accepted'; not only those, but a connection as well with author—that is, a person who originates or gives existence to something, a begetter, father, or ancestor, a person also who sets forth written statements. (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000: 49)

By authoring her own story, Iris challenges the patriarchal lineage, which only gives opportunity to men to write their stories. Therefore, "*The Blind Assassin* is not only

Iris' account of her life, but also an explanation of why she was unable to author her own life previously" (Ridout, 2010: 92). By detailing the patriarchal norms she and Laura had been subject to since their childhood, Iris shows how impossible it is for women to make themselves heard as autonomous individuals. In patriarchy, women are the ones who play the roles given by men. In patriarchal stories, "women exist only to be acted on by men, both as literary and as sensual objects" (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000: 55). Hence, by becoming an author, Iris seizes on the opportunity to challenge patriarchy and its reality by offering a counter-reality based on her bodily experiences. She presents the counter version of the stories imposed as truth by patriarchy. In other words, Iris owns and controls both her text and the subjects in her text. However, as Iris writes her story, she cannot conceal her despair in how her and her sister's life have fallen apart as a consequence of patriarchal system.

Similarly, Hayri İrdal reveals his version of his life by authoring the book. Although he states he has written this book to express his gratitude to Halit the Regulator who has changed his life, he actually presents the ludicrousness of his life especially after meeting Halit the Regulator. He wants to express that he does not think the same way as the people who believe in the absurdity Halit the Regulator created. Though he seems to have an unshakeable trust in Halit the Regulator, İrdal's text often connotes his doubts about the ideas that Halit the Regulator implements. The growing distance between what İrdal says, the lip service he pays to his mentor, and what he means, the critical attitude he assumes towards Halit the Regulator, is the source of both humor and irony in the novel. In such an atmosphere where absurdity prevails, irony and humor remain as the only tools to reveal the reality. Through them, Hayri İrdal manages to create an alternative vision that leaks through the cracks of Halit the Regulator's dominant version. Therefore, İrdal seems to declare his independence from this dominant discourse. Once he tells his own version of the story, he feels better and free of blame.

Hence, both narratives function as therapy for the protagonists. In the book *Narrative Therapy*, the writer argues:

people come to therapy either when dominant narratives are keeping them from living out their preferred realities or when the person is actively participating in the performance of stories that she finds unhelpful, unsatisfying, and dead-ended, and that these stories do not sufficiently encapsulate the person's lived experience

or are very significantly contradicted by important aspects of the person's lived experience. (Freedman and Combs, 1996: 39)

This latter case is true for Hayri İrdal, who actively takes part in Halit the Regulator's story, which he often criticizes as being *unsatisfying* and *unhelpful*. In one sense, Richard is similar to Hayri as he also actively participates in the dominant narrative, but unlike Hayri, Richard does not find that dominant narrative unsatisfying or unhelpful. On the contrary, his own story fits perfectly into the dominant narrative of patriarchy. He creates a story and gives Iris and Laura the roles they should play. Since his authority is backed by patriarchal grand narrative, it goes unchallenged by any others who hold positions of authority. Thus, as passive players in Richard's story, both Iris and Laura cannot live out their preferred realities since they are in direct contrast with his. As Hayri and Iris cannot create and live their own stories, they are imprisoned in the dominant narratives. Hence, Hayri and Iris decide to write their own stories in order to find an outlet to express themselves. Both Iris and Hayri hold on to writing as a means of therapy since the narratives of which they are forced to become part do not match their world or their version of reality.

On the other hand, the former reason for therapy is true for Hayri's first wife, Emine. She is a down-to-earth, cheerful and good-hearted woman. She constantly tries to hold Hayri in the real world since she knows that these stories told by Halit the Regulator and Doctor Ramiz do not reflect the reality she experiences. Emine witnesses how the representatives of the dominant narratives, namely Doctor Ramiz and Halit the Regulator, keep Hayri and even herself from living their preferred realities. The effect of such dominant narratives is so immense on individuals that they are deprived of the right to live their lives with their preferences if they do not go hand in hand with the dominant narrative or ideology. Since Emine sees Hayri's childhood as a time when he felt self-indulgent and free of responsibility, she wants to prevent Hayri from being such a person again. Throughout their marriage, Emine tries to keep Hayri from regressing to childhood in which fact and fiction are often mixed. However, along with other storytellers from his childhood, Halit the Regulator's stories keep Hayri İrdal in a child-like position, causing him to mistake fiction for fact (and vice versa). Emine witnesses that even the trial about the Sherbet Maker's Diamond before he is sent to the clinic, starts to unveil some features of his former self which he had once suppressed with her help. That is to say, according to

Emine, Hayri is about to transform into his former self that rejected adulthood and enjoyed being part of stories, which functioned as wish fulfillments after the accusations held against him about having the Sherbet Maker's Diamond. When Hayri's trial starts, Naşit Bey, his aunt's husband, is summoned to the court as he is one of Abdüsselam Bey's creditors. Though Naşit Bey does not know anything about the diamond, he starts to talk about Hayri's aunt's temporary death and how Hayri's father had wished to benefit financially from his sister's death. Naşit Bey even claims that Hayri's father spent the money, which his grandfather had given him to build the Approximate Ahmet Efendi Mosque, whose construction was never accomplished by any members of the family. Naşit Bey's convincing testimony, which had nothing to do with the existence of the diamond and his hostility towards Hayri, eventually cause the awakening of Hayri's former self. Hayri suddenly starts to feel very relaxed in the trial and feels like the way he used to feel when he was a child. Hayri recalls his feelings as follows:

I suddenly felt transformed. I was gradually being relieved of the burden that had been weighing on me. I had been afraid of this throughout all this strange and absurd case. This carefree attitude, this intrepidity, and this indifference meant the opening of a door which I had firmly closed on the day I had married Emine. (101)

Emine is aware of the impressionable nature of Hayri, and therefore, wants to prevent his relapse into the imaginary world of Halit the Regulator and Dr. Ramiz. Foreseeing Hayri's future, Emine knows the fact that Hayri will not be the same person once he gets out of the hospital where Doctor Ramiz treats him. Therefore, she often pays visits to keep him in reality. However, Emine's health gets worse everyday since she sees that her husband falls victim to the absurdity he is forced to participate in by the doctor. Hayri states Emine's efforts to keep him aware of the danger as follows: "While awake and asleep, I kept thinking about her. Following the confused, miserable, and oppressive visions which represented a state diametrically opposite to my actual one, I woke up gazing at her pale complexion and eyes full of complaints and reproach. Dr. Ramiz became furious at these visions" (119). Dr. Ramiz gets angry as Emine, who sees the hollowness of the stories that beset Hayri, is the only obstacle that prevents him from convincing Hayri of his absurd world. When Emine is not near Hayri physically, he sees her in his dream in which she continues to warn him about the shakiness of the world he is forced to believe by Dr.

Ramiz and Hayri's father's friends. One day, Hayri has a dream in which he is in the laboratory of Aristidi Efendi together with nearly everyone he knew including Seyit Lütfullah, Abdüsselam Bey and Doctor Ramiz. While they are staring at the mirror or the alembic, a cloud through which Emine appears, begins to be formed and asks to be saved. Hayri states:

'Save me!' shouted Emine.

'Oh no!' Not after going to so much trouble!' retorted Seyit Lütfullah, trying to stop me.

They all had their grips on me. Emine in the alembic, with her eyes wide open with fright and her hair aflame, continued to implore. I incessantly tried to reach her. But Seyit Lütfullah clenched me with his hand like a hook. It seemed he had numerous hands, and how powerful was their grip! I felt that all my limbs had been put in clamps. I could not breathe, I was writhing as if about to be stifled. 'Leave me alone! Let me go!' I shouted, trying to get free, although I knew that they would never let me go, and I could never save her. And yet I tried hard without despairing. 'Oh!' I cried. 'It'll be the end of her. Just let me go!'

As a matter of fact the image in the mirror had begun to change. After a while, there remained behind only a pair of eyes staring at me, wide open with fright. Two big eyes full of fear, wonder, and accusation looking at me through the crudest yellowish green, continuously swept and rolled upwards, reproaching me with the words, 'All this has happened because of you.' All of a sudden, something still more horrifying took place. A strong wind blew and swept everything away. (123)

After this dream, Emine dies both physically and metaphorically. She can neither pay visits to Hayri in the clinic nor visit him in his dreams. Hayri's only connection with the real world breaks and he has nobody to cling to when Emine dies. Therefore, once Emine is gone, Hayri comes out of the clinic as a new person who is supposed to play the roles given to him in the new, fantastic reality. After Hayri is released from hospital, he starts to evaluate everything he sees according to the dominant ideology. That is to say, he does not make evaluations based on his own experience or judgement; instead, he believes in the collectively accepted stories by actively participating in them. Therefore, Hayri's coming out of hospital is a turning point in his life since from then on he starts playing along with others for the rest of his life.

Hayri is a character that has been wide open to influence throughout his life. Hayri is unable "to conceive separateness, to regulate his boundaries in relation to others [and] to have an identity of his own" (Irzik, 2003: 558). Dating back to his childhood, he starts living by the stories of other people while taking them as his role model. He has a natural tendency to mimic and imitate those who exert influence on

him. Hayri comments on his natural tendency to be influenced by others, mainly by his father's friends, as follows:

I lived with those men for years, and contributed to the realization of their dreams. There were times when I put on their clothes and adopted their idiosyncrasies. Quite unwittingly I became, respectively, Nuri Efendi, Lütfullah, and Abdülselam Bey. They became my patterns, masks that sometimes unexpectedly I discovered adhering to my face. On more than one occasion I wore them when I was surrounded by people. Even now I seem to catch sight of one of them when I see myself in a mirror. No sooner do I seem to perceive the restrained smile of Nuri Efendi frolicking across my face when I take fright at what I am doing, discerning in myself Lütfullah's countenance, inured lies. And there are times when I become perturbed at witnessing in myself my father's hopeless jealousy and impatience. This is reflected also in my attire. As soon as I slip into the suits that I have cut for me by the most celebrated tailors, the image of Abdüsselam Bey overshadows my own. (66)

This passage raises a number of issues. First, Hayri İrdal, reflecting almost everybody that has entered his life, strikes the reader as an extremely mouldable entity, almost like an empty container filled by others, a mirror that reflects whoever stands in front of him. Second, like Emine, Nuri Efendi is an early example, a prototype, of the call of reality. While Emine is the representative of reality in the secular world, Nuri Efendi holds a symmetrical place in a mystically defined universe. While in the secular world Emine and Halit the Regulator occupy oppositional positions, in the earlier generation defined by religious discourse, similar oppositional positions are occupied by Nuri Efendi and Seyit Lütfullah. Therefore, the fundamental opposition, according to Tanpınar, is not between secular and religious discourses but between reality and fiction.

Since Hayri can be easily influenced by other people, first his master, Nuri Efendi and then, his wife Emine want Hayri to see his true nature and take precautions against his participating in other people's stories. Preceding Emine, Nuri Efendi is the one who foresees Hayri İrdal's mouldable nature and his weakness in being influenced by everyone. Therefore, in a conversation with Hayri, Nuri Efendi advises him to devote his life to work for the salvation of his soul. Nuri Efendi says:

Hayri, my son, I don't know if, eventually, you'll turn out to be a skilled watchmaker. But I hope you will! For your own good! If you don't devote yourself early in life to a profession body and soul, you'll strike a bad path in life. You're of a modest nature and not tough enough to take up arms against life and society. Therefore, for you, work should be the only means to salvation. (52)

Later, surprisingly, Hayri's son, Ahmet also repeats that it is only work that can help his father. Upon seeing his father's failing to escape the influence of his past, Ahmet says to Hayri: "You have not been subjected to 'the ordeal of work'" (66). However, it is really ironic that Hayri's employment in the Time Regulation Institute also causes him to be stuck in a society of lunatics who entertain hollow dreams. Hence, the institute does not give Hayri a tangible duty to perform and, therefore, keeps him away from reality. Hayri sits in the institution doing nothing but killing time.

Regardless of Nuri Efendi's advice and Emine's efforts, Hayri starts playing along with Halit's players after he is released from hospital. Though Doctor Ramiz is the first person, who helps him transform into somebody else, Halit the Regulator is the one who gives him the roles to play for the rest of his life. Being morally weak, Hayri becomes a pawn played by Halit the Regulator. After some time, both Hayri and those in his immediate environment, except for his son Ahmet and his first wife, Emine, are like puppets playing their roles given by Halit the Regulator.

Ahmet is similar to his mother, Emine, in terms of being down-to-earth and not believing in the made-up promises and stories. However, Ahmet is even less effective than Emine on Hayri's life since he is only a child and, therefore, is powerless before Halit the Regulator's story. His power over his father grows parallel to his own growth into an adult, a successful and idealistic medical doctor. While Ahmet sees his father's being dragged into a fake reality after Emine's death, as a child, he remains passive and becomes more introvert as he has not asserted his authority over his life yet. Ahmet excludes himself from the whole family who live in a dream world and goes to Anatolia to help the poor people of his nation by rejecting the opportunity to continue his education abroad. After being away from his family for quite some time, upon Hayri's insistence, Ahmet returns home to help him on a project. Ahmet decides to help his father since he sees work is the only way for his father's salvation. Similar to Nuri Efendi, Ahmet believed that "real work" could save Hayri as it would keep him busy and therefore prevent him from falling victim to Halit the Regulator's lies. Therefore, the maximum length of time Ahmet spends with his father is when they work together on the construction of the new building of the institute. As Ahmet grows older and lives away from the stories of Halit the Regulator, he gets even stronger before the dream world in which the whole family

lives. While working together, Ahmet assures Hayri that he will stay in touch with him and be a part of his life: "Don't worry. I'll call more than before. I'm strong enough now" (317). That is to say, although Ahmet had always seen the huge effect of Halit the Regulator's stories first on his father and then on everybody around him, as a little child, he could not do anything to prevent his father and his sister from falling into Halit the Regulator's trap. But becoming an adult with a decent job, Ahmet finds the strength in himself to help his father. However, pulling Hayri out of the fantasy world is not easy both for Emine and Ahmet.

Ahmet needs time away from the lunacy that surrounds his father in order to grow strong enough to resist it and help Hayri get out of it. Hayri is aware of this fact: "[Ahmet] may have to forget about me in order to become himself. But I can become myself as long as I am with him. This he can never understand perhaps. He knows that I am predestined, and he is right! But I can only stand helplessly sentinel over his destiny" (316). While Ahmet has the chance to live his life without being a puppet in one's story, Hayri's destiny is already shaped by Halit the Regulator. Ahmet is left to be the only real character alive to remind Hayri that he is living Halit's story under Halit's rules. While both Emine and Ahmet see the impressionable nature of Hayri, neither of them can save him totally. It is difficult to save Hayri since Halit's effect on him is like that of opium. While one moment he is fond of living in the dream world Halit offers with all its luxury, the next moment he is able to see the reality Emine and Ahmet try to show. However, Hayri does not make any effort to come to his senses; instead he chooses to wait helplessly for someone who is strong enough to pull him out of Halit the Regulator's story. That is to say, although Hayri is aware of his participation in Halit the Regulator's story, he does not have the will to create his own stories and live in them. Instead, Hayri chooses to act the roles given to him in other people's stories since he remembers his tragic failure upon making up the Sherbet Maker's Diamond and accepts the fact that he is not a good storyteller. Through his first person narration, Hayri not only unfolds his mouldable nature, but also points out the attempts of Nuri Efendi, Emine and Ahmet to prevent him from living in other people's stories.

The tones of Iris and Hayri are quite different from each other though they write their stories in the first person. While Hayri İrdal's narrative makes frequent

use of irony, Iris' story has quite a direct language. Irony depends on the dichotomy between what is said and what is meant. The intended meaning is hidden behind what is said, which is often exactly the opposite of the verbal statement. Therefore, an ironic statement leaves the person who hears it disarmed. Since the listener does not know how to respond to an ironical statement as only the literal meaning is said but opposite of its literal meaning is conveyed, s/he is almost paralyzed in giving response. Hayri can be ironic while narrating his story since he is simultaneously inside and outside Halit the Regulator's story. As Hayri crosses the thin line between fact and fiction any time he likes, he remains the only character in the book that has an ironic tone. In her book *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış*, Berna Moran comments on Hayri's ironic language as follows:

Tanpınar's method is to criticize society by using an observer. However, Hayri is neither a stranger from a far away country nor a man from another world living in the past era. He is a member of society which he criticizes. He lives among these people, yet he is different from them. First of all, he cannot completely be one of them since he differs from these people by birth. He is lonely and is a character "outside life." We learn from him how he was taken to mausoleums and was cured magically through the prayers of religious people. When Hayri speaks of Doctor Ramiz, he says: 'There was nothing original in his opinion of me. At first he took me to be a poor eccentric who had certain merits of his own, an inefficient soul from outer space.' İrdal's childlike naivete, half-lunatic, strange and introvert personality introvert give Hayri the opportunity to observe society from a different point of view. As Hayri recalls his school years at Fatih Rüştiyesi, he says: 'I have learned to contemplate serenely on the ups and downs of life from afar.' Elsewhere he says: 'Whenever I meditate on my past life ... I realize that that the spectator's psychology has always had its hold over me.' With this role as an observer or spectator, Hayri criticizes his society in a similar fashion to that of a foreigner who has arrived from a different country. (Moran, 1983: 299)

Hence, Hayri's being inside and outside Halit the Regulator's story enables him to provide the reader with irony. He sometimes explains a comical event in a serious manner, which makes it funnier, and sometimes he makes a situation deliberately comical with his exaggerated descriptions. In either case, through Hayri İrdal, Tanpınar leads the reader to think about the ironic circumstances while laughing at them. Regulation and bureaucracy are not the only targets to be criticized in an ironical tone, "for each character he [Tanpınar] introduces along the way brings into the book another lofty belief system ready to be lampooned. Alchemy, spiritualism, psychoanalysis, politics, academic theorizing, Hollywood romanticism" are some of the fields that are ironically criticized through different characters (Ricker, 2014).

As a first person narrator, Hayri presents his ironic tone in different ways. For instance, he provides the reader with verbal irony. Without putting what he thinks or how he feels into words explicitly, as an ironist, Hayri covertly implies his dissatisfaction with the world he is put in. In fact, by appearing to praise it, his ironic tone negates the world Halit the Regulator creates. Hayri tries to cope with his loneliness in a community with no reference to concrete facts of life, and he seeks refuge in representing the hollowness of this world in ironic language. Only by means of irony can he survive in a world with Halit the Regulator and all his advocates.

Irony “ is the making or inferring of a **meaning** in addition to and different from what is stated” (Hutcheon, 1994: 11). The said and unsaid are tangled in irony and, therefore, the denotation and connotation cannot be seen concurrently. However, Tanpınar’s use of irony in the novel is not *only* limited with verbal form. That is to say, Tanpınar does not only show Hayri’s ironic tone through his references to something other than its explicit meaning, but in *The Time Regulation Institute*, he also employs dramatic irony, which is achieved by characterization: Some of Tanpınar’s characters are portrayed as complete opposites to one-another. For instance, the sharp contrast between the characters associated with Nuri Efendi and Halit the Regulator helps increase the ironic tone in the novel. While Nuri Efendi is like a saint who is devoted to doing only good to people without expecting anything in return, Halit the Regulator is after his own benefits. They are like two different poles. Moreover, while Pakize, Hayri’s second wife, is delusional, Emine, his first wife, is a down-to-earth character trying to help Hayri out of the fake world Halit the Regulator presents.

Through his first person narration, Hayri continues his ironic tone by also showing the reader that nearly every concept in the book exists with its binary opposition. While mothers play the role of children, children perform the role of mothers. In other words, two opposing concepts can ironically replace one another. For instance, Abdüsselam Bey, whose house Hayri used to live in with Emine, gives his mother’s name to Hayri’s daughter by mistake. Being the oldest person at home, Abdüsselam Bey names Hayri’s daughter after his own mother instead of naming her Zahide, which was Hayri’s mother’s name. Ironic events follow this slip of tongue,

and Abdüsselam Bey begins to refer to Hayri's daughter as "mother." Moreover, Abdüsselam Bey even wants Zehra to call him her "son." All these ironical situations that start with a slip of tongue show that Hayri's life is full of ironies.

The second time that two concepts, life and science, collide and replace one-another and cause irony is when Doctor Ramiz instructs Hayri what kind of dreams he should have. Normally, science is meant to explain and understand life, not prescribe what and how it should be. During a therapy session with Hayri İrdal, Doctor Ramiz says: "I would like you to see dreams which would suit your case better. Do you understand what I mean? Do your utmost to see such dreams! Once you see your father in your dream in his true image then everything will be all right" (118). According to Dr. Ramiz, seeing such dreams is a sign of Hayri's healing; thus, he can go out of the hospital only by this way. He has to cooperate with Dr. Ramiz, who is practicing the knowledge he has learned in Vienna on psychoanalysis. According to Demiralp, "through Dr. Ramiz, Tanpınar ironizes the 'doctrinal intellect' stereotype who tries to apply life to science rather than applying science to life" (cited by Gündüz, 2002: 26). That is to say, by forcing Hayri to dream in accordance with his "illness," Dr. Ramiz eagerly tries to relate Hayri's life to the scientific theories instead of doing just the opposite.

The establishment of the Time Regulation Institute is also ironic since the institute tries to adjust *time*, which actually exists independent of human regulation and adjustment. Moreover, the need for the institute is *invented* by Halit the Regulator without an actual social or natural need. The architecture of the institute building adds to the absurdity and irony that rises out of this absurdity. Without having a background in architecture, Hayri is put in charge of designing a new building for the institute. The irony lies in the fact that Hayri accomplishes his project by being inspired by things he sees or hears randomly and coincidentally in his daily life:

After long hours of thinking, İrdal is convinced that the building, which is required to be in the shape of a clock, could be in rectangular shape only when his wife draws his attention to "The Blessed One." His inspiration about the shape of the building derives from "the half-raised tapestry at the entrance of a mosque" (Tanpınar, 311). Some pictures he sees in the magazines that his son brings give him some ideas about the construction of the hall. (Engin, 2009: 167)

By making use of coincidental daily events and being praised by some for his success in architecture without actually having any background in the field in the end, Hayri shows the series of ironic daily events that lead him to become an “architect” who manages to combine both traditional and modern architecture.

Depicting his story through an ironic tone makes Hayri feel more powerful than the other people who try to shape his life for the first time in his life. By using the power of words, he shows the readers the absurdity of the people he has to cope with. Through irony, Hayri İrdal transforms the pain and pressure he feels into his advantage. Hayri İrdal is well aware of the fact that he has to be part of the drama he sees around him. But, he does not have the power to stand-up against the people around him. However, by narrating his story in an ironic tone, he gets the upper hand and he turns the other characters, except for his son Ahmet and Nuri Efendi, into children. Hayri shows the reader that nearly everyone in the story acts their parts in Halit the Regulator’s game, which he likens to a child game through his ironic tone. With his seemingly serious depiction of the farcical parts that the actors and actresses perform in Halit the Regulator’s fantasy play, Hayri makes the reader laugh at the absurdities these people do by putting them in the position of children. While the participants in Halit the Regulator’s game act like children, as the writer of the story, Hayri believes he is the parent laughing at the mess of the children while sometimes contributing to their mess. Hence, Hayri’s ironic tone gives him power while depicting the events and makes him function as the voice of common sense.

As a result, either with an ironic or tragic tone, both Hayri and Iris participate in other people’s stories. Iris is both a character in Richard’s story and an author of her memoir. Similarly, Hayri is both an actor in Halit the Regulator’s story and an author in his own memoir. In other words, though they fail to author their lives, they manage to narrate their memoirs. However, through their first person narrations, both Iris and Hayri tend to “write out of who and where and when *they* are, whether *they* like it or not, and disguise it how *they* may” (Spence, 1998: 1524). Since writers narrate their stories from their own standpoint, they decide which information to include and which one to leave out. Hence, for the first time in their lives, they have the authority to author.

4.2. STORY WITHIN HISTORY

“Stories that people tell about their lives deploy individual ‘plots’ in a way that resembles the construction of literary narratives; they also embed their subjects in larger narrative frames with historical plots and temporalities” (Maines et al, 4: 2008). That is exactly what both Margaret Atwood and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar do in their fiction. Both authors not only reveal their protagonists’ individual stories, but also present bigger stories, such as history, into which these individual stories are introduced. Thus, history, as well as the stories of individuals, is at the core of the events in both books. Both novels take place at significant historical moments in the nations in which they are set. The authors make use of historical events in order to highlight the events in their characters’ lives. Therefore, the parallelism between the chronology of the events in the stories and real historical events is striking in both books. Moreover, both writers occasionally symbolize people or events to refer to historical moments. In short, the novels present to the reader stories embedded in the different eras of two different national histories alongside with much commonly shared human material.

In *The Time Regulation Institute*, Tanpınar shows the periods Turkey went through via Hayri’s life. According to Berna Moran, Tanpınar divides Hayri’s life into four parts. Each part is a symbolic representation of a certain era in the Turkish history. In the book, *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış*, Berna Moran claims that the first chapter of the novel, “Great Expectations” presents pre-Tanzimat Reform era. Moran states: “If İrdal’s life serves to represent pre-Tanzimat period, Tanzimat period and Republican era, his childhood reflects pre-Tanzimat period that represents a religious and unrealistic era in which people are unaware of scientific and economic developments in the West” (Moran, 1983: 302). The friends of Hayri’s father’s, especially Seyit Lütfullah, who believes in the existence of an invisible world, are the best examples of the “religious and unrealistic era.” Instead of science, which the West exalted, Seyit Lütfullah and many others sought solace in magic and prayer.

According to Berna Moran, the second chapter entitled “Small Truths” reflects the period after Tanzimat.⁷ It is a period in which westernization is desired but without full infrastructure. In this chapter, Hayri’s first wife dies and a series of unfortunate events befall him. The coffeehouse in Şehzadebaşı is also introduced in this chapter. With the Tanzimat Period, people start to turn to West and a willingness to adopt the new begins especially in the urban circles. The coffeehouse is a symbolic representation of society, which is neither modern nor traditional after the Tanzimat Period. On the one hand, the people in the coffeehouse in Şehzadebaşı cannot fully comprehend and adapt to the new. On the other hand, they cannot stick to the old. They are stuck in between and they choose to adopt the new rather than adapt themselves to it or adapt it to their needs and conditions. Of Halit the Regulator’s description of the people in the coffeehouse, Hayri states: “Indeed, life here was life behind the main door. The people who led this life lived in such a manner that it did not occur to them to go inside, or that one of their feet should be always on the threshold” (132). If the door represents modernization after the reforms, it is obvious that people in the coffeehouse can neither enter this modernized world nor stay out of it. They stand on the threshold unable to enter or exit. For instance, Doctor Ramiz, who introduces Hayri to the people in the coffeehouse, is such a divided character. While he adores Freudian theories, he is also interested in spiritual dream interpretations of old times. Hence, similar to the other members of the coffeehouse, Doctor Ramiz ends up being a character that stands on the threshold.

In his article, “Medeniyet Değiştirmesi ve İç İnsan,” Tanpınar comments on one of the most important problems of Turkey after the Tanzimat Period. Tanpınar states: “The reason for the depression, which causes us to doubt the works we do and the work principles and which transforms the important matters into jokes by causing us to deal with petty matters instead of important ones, is the duality we go through as a result of passing from one civilization to another” (Tanpınar, 1970: 27). According to Berna Moran, the coffeehouse in Şehzadebaşı is the perfect place that presents the people who are on the threshold, “passing from one civilization to

⁷ Tanzimat Period was a period of series of reforms undertaken in the Ottoman Empire between 1839 and 1876.

another,” unable to comprehend important matters and turn them “into jokes.” Hayri states:

The word of someone who truly expressed a new idea or a new problem was listened to at first only out of politeness, mingled with curiosity, and until the imagination of the audience which was ever awake took it to heart, or brought it down to its own level, it preserved its original character. All serious matters had to follow this process. (129)

Instead of dealing with important problems that needed immediate and long-term attention, the people in the coffehouse choose to make jokes out of these matters. Trapped between two worlds, they can neither stay in the old, nor understand and appreciate the new; therefore, they float above both. They can neither stick to the old and shape their thoughts according to old norms nor adapt to the new and embrace modern thoughts. Hence, as they do not have a point of view, which is either traditional or modern, they end up ignoring important matters and degrade them.

Tanzimat Period is only the beginning, for the confusion continues in the Republican era as well. According to Berna Moran, the third chapter “Towards Dawn” and the final chapter “Every Season Has an End” are about the beginning and the continuation of the Republican period. These chapters also show the continuation of adopting the West. In these chapters, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar reflects the influence of the transition from empire to republic on the lives of the characters. Tanpınar believes the country’s transition takes place in a “chaotic time” since people are rapidly adopting everything about the West without fully comprehending them. Through Hayri, Tanpınar shows how easy it is to replace the “new” with the “old” as people are willing to imitate Western ways of life without firm ideological and historical foundations. In other words, people in that era construct their world on rootless foundations. Tanpınar shows the willingness of people to reject their past and their eagerness to be westernized. Apart from few exceptions, all the characters in the novel want to embrace Western manners. They start to imitate Western institutions, lifestyles and memorize Western thinkers’ theories. In short, they want to emulate every aspect of Western life. Since they want to erase their past and become a new nation and a new people all of a sudden, they seem as if they are caught on air as they leap from one civilization to the next. They are surrounded by emptiness all around and do not have any firm ground to set their feet. For instance, people start to form institutions without knowing the essence behind them. Since

there is no true life experience underlying these institutions, they are just imitations of Western institutions. According to Berna Moran, Hayri has a highly respected status in society and a decent income when he starts his job at the Time Regulation Institute in the third chapter of the book entitled "Towards Dawn." For Moran, this chapter

undoubtedly shows the mistakes that were made in the Republican Period while creating a new Turkish society by severing ties with the past in an ironic tone. The characteristic of this period is getting rid of the old completely while embracing the new, instead of experiencing the old and the new together. (Moran, 1983: 305)

Hence, the new is embraced only in imitation of the West. Tanpınar's characters do not produce something new or lay foundations for institutions. Instead, they directly borrow whatever they need from the West.

Not only institutions, but also theories are borrowed from the West. People believe in theories just because they are popular in Europe. Dr. Ramiz is a very good example for this. He tries to apply Freudian theory without really knowing its core and dynamics. His knowledge is so superficial that he even forces Hayri İrdal to dream according to the theories he learned in Vienna. Doctor Ramiz wants Hayri to put all his effort in dreaming in relation to the illness he wishes to diagnose in Hayri, which is Oedipus complex. Doctor Ramiz says to Hayri: "Concentrate your will, and try to get rid of the symbols disguising your father. Once they are done away with, then it will be easy to avoid your father, I mean the inferiority feeling originating from your father. I am giving you now a list of all the dreams you are expected to see this week" (118). In other words, Doctor Ramiz prescribes the dreams Hayri is expected to have. Dr. Ramiz's aim is to create a collective modern consciousness that will inform the young republic, yet his understanding of both modernity and republican ideals are ungrounded on anything substantial. In fact what he does is no different from the old ways: He changes the traditional dream interpretations of the former era and embellishes his interpretations with scientific-sounding vocabulary and concepts by relating the signs in the dreams to the formal theories he learned in Europe. In order to sound logical and stop Hayri from questioning the sanity of the content of dreams Dr. Ramiz asks him to have, Dr. Ramiz "creates" a method and names it the "Guided Dream Method." Doctor Ramiz explains his method to Hayri as follows:

I'm applying the newest and the most personal method to your case, a method devised by me. I've called it the 'Guided Dream' method. Following the diagnosis on the basis of previous dreams, to treat the patient by a strict control of his dreams. Although it was you who gave me the inspiration for this method, you're not being cooperative, are you? What a strange man you are! (119)

By naming his method, Dr. Ramiz tries to hide how devoid of content his theory is. In fact, his approach is a far cry from psychoanalysis and its methodology. He reduces Freudianism to formulaic descriptions. Upon listening to Hayri, Dr. Ramiz concludes that Hayri simply does not like his father and, therefore, he suffers severely from Oedipus complex. Hayri states the conversation between the doctor and himself as follows:

'Now we know what it's all about. You have a typical father complex. You have never been particularly fond of your father. But this is not so important. Perhaps this is the shortest way to adulthood. What you have achieved, however, is something more consequential.'

Unconsciously, I rubbed my hands. My temples were sweating.

'Please, Doctor,' I said.

'No need! I know what's ailing you. I had already sensed your trouble while I was listening to your life story. It was more apparent in your life story than in your dreams. But today I had a clearer insight. There can be no mistake in my diagnosis.'

I was almost breathing my last.

'What is your diagnosis, Doctor?'

'A serious case. . . It could have been worse, but there's nothing to fear, the prognosis is good. A typical case, but there's nothing to fear.[. . .] I told you a while ago. It's your father. You did love him, but you didn't approve of his ways.'
(112)

Thus, Doctor Ramiz reduces a psychoanalytical theory, which is Oedipus complex, to one's hatred of his father.

Moreover, by employing the unloved father figure in his novel, Tanpınar also refers to the Ottoman Empire. Tanpınar implies the urge in the collective unconsciousness of the citizens of the new era to get rid of the father figure, the Ottoman past, and embrace the modern society. Yet, the irony lies in this very point. That is to say, the characters in the novel can neither understand the traditional past nor the modern present. The philosophy behind both the Ottoman past and the present modern era eludes them totally.

Doctor Ramiz's contradictory comments on Hayri's illness are also ironic. One moment he says Hayri's situation is typical and there is nothing to worry about him, and the next moment he claims that his is a serious case. His adoption of a

Western theory and failure to internalize this theory causes him to diagnose an illness in a person who is totally sane and healthy. Actually but ironically, Hayri gets mentally ill after Doctor Ramiz's diagnosis. Starting from his diagnosis, Doctor Ramiz starts to lecture Hayri, who knows no word of German, on psychoanalysis and gives him a German book about psychoanalysis while expecting Hayri to read and understand it. Doctor Ramiz is confident that even a common person like Hayri, who is foreign to the field and the language, can understand psychoanalysis and read books in a foreign language on this subject. Doctor Ramiz wants to be westernized so immediately that he pretends to know more in order to appear to have a western point of view. However, Dr. Ramiz and the others who are so eager to be westernized remain as "puppets lacking real depth" (Gürbilek, 2003: 601). These people believe that they can have and comprehend modern ideas so quickly that they imagine not only their appearance is modernized the moment they wear European outfits, but also their ideas are modernized the moment they hear about it for the first time.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar is disturbed by the fact that Turkish people not only fail to understand the Western philosophy, but also fail to understand the depth of the Eastern spirit. They think they understand the philosophy behind the East and West and belong to one of these cultures as soon as they *put on* Eastern or Western outfits. That is to say, they conform to a Western man stereotype when they wear suits and a tie, or they fit to an Eastern man stereotype once they grow a beard and wear more conservative clothes such as cassocks. For instance, Seyit Lütfullah embodies how the values associated with the East are corrupted in imitation. Seyit Lütfullah, who travelled the entire East, was a conservative preacher in his early years. However, upon the death of his wife, he leaves the country and returns three years later as a different person with a deformed body. He begins to be known as a spiritual figure who can contact the world beyond. While Seyit Lütfullah is believed to be a spiritual figure for some, everything about him is actually "invented." Like the people who enthusiastically embrace Western life, Seyit Lütfullah embraces the East without fully comprehending its values. Everything he thinks he knows about the East is the combination of pieces he has brought together during his journey to the East. Like the ones who seem to have completely understood the essence of Western

foundations, Seyit Lütfullah believes he has fully comprehended the East. Hayri İrdal describes Seyit Lütfullah as follows:

*His grotesque shadow floated in the vacuum of untruth. He was a **mask** or the **persona** itself. Imagine a player who has assumed the leading role of a miscreant in sheer denial of truth in an entirely imaginary play breaking off in the middle of the action and divesting himself of his borrowed character, abandoning the stage, and, clad in the same garments and identical features, going out into the street, to the town and to the world of men. Seyit Lütfullah was the man who had instilled the herd instinct and the mass emotion into this small group and who had upset lives which otherwise would have ebbed away very naturally if they had been left by themselves. Nobody could exactly tell where a lie originated and where it ended. (56; emphasis added)*

Seyit Lütfullah lives a life of lies. He is an unreliable character who appears to have understood the depth of Eastern philosophy. He preaches sermons about religion, yet his knowledge is not based on firm foundations. He gives sermons without understanding the essence of religion. Ironically, the name “seyit,” which is given to the descendants of Hz. Muhammed’s bloodline, is used before his name. However, Hayri explains this misunderstanding as follows: “He was neither from Medina, nor a descendant of the Prophet as he had been alleged. His name also might well have been a borrowed one. The aforesaid allegation had originated from a woman he had once married somewhere in Iraq” (56). Just as his forename is, everything about Seyit Lütfullah is borrowed. Like the people who believe they are westernized by imitating the West, Seyit Lütfullah acts as if he understands the East. According to Tanpınar, both Seyit Lütfullah and the ones exalting the West are the same. Both of them create the East and the West in their own images.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar focuses on the willingness of people to embrace western life together with its institutions because, as a writer, Tanpınar is also disturbed by the influence of the West on Turkish literature. He is aware of the encroaching of the West not only on literature, but also on real life. As a writer, he sees that not only is literature under the threat of the West, but also every aspect of life in the early Turkish Republic is under the influence of West. Hence, he favors creating a national literature by going back to the Turkish past and its cultural wealth.

Yet, is “going back to the origins” authentic? In her article “Dandies and Originals: Authenticity, Belatedness, and the Turkish Novel,” Nurdan Gürbilek states:

He believed that a literature which is neither 'wretched' nor rootless, neither 'funny' nor derivative, neither 'primitive' nor imitative, which has both a 'human warmth' and a 'horizon' will be the result of an original synthesis of native characteristics and European ideals. Tanpınar's every suggestion toward this objective starts with the word self: We needed to 'go back to ourselves,' go back to our own past, go back to our own cultural wealth. In order to create a literature organically ours, we had to 'be our own selves.' But the dilemma appears once again in the very attempt to transcend it: Tanpınar is talking about creating a national literature rooted in an authentic national self, but the sentence itself is spoken under the very pressure of the foreign model, with the desire to rise to the level of the model, with the objective of winning the admiration of the admired model: 'It is impossible for Europeans to admire us because of things that we have borrowed from them. The most they will say is a short 'Well done!' It is only when we introduce to them things that are specifically ours that they will like us, treating us as their equals in the path of beauty and self-realization.' (Gürbilek, 2003: 602)

In her critical judgment of the author, Nurdan Gürbilek points towards Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's embeddedness in Western ideals though he argues against all kinds of imitation. Although he wants people in Turkey to embrace their indigenous culture and keep it alive, he borrows this methodology from the West.

A more sympathetic interpretation of Tanpınar's position may lie in a synthesis between the values of the East and West. Tanpınar is well aware of the fact that Turkish culture can grow rich as long as both the Eastern and Western cultures are blended in it. He does not want Turkish people to be left with the choice of favoring one culture over another. Instead, he believes in the positive influence of the mixture of both the East and the West on Turkey. Moreover, while Tanpınar knows that cultures may be influenced by one another, he does not want Turkish culture to be just influenced. Tanpınar wants the native culture of his country to be influential as well. Tanpınar acknowledged that Turkey was not only affected by Western culture, Turkey was also influenced by Persian, Arabic and Byzantine cultures throughout history. However, since Turkey during his lifetime was largely under the disproportionate influence of the West, he thought that a one-sided influence from the West could be the death knell for the authenticity of his native culture as he knew it. Knowing the threat of westernization first-hand, Tanpınar describes the confusion of the society caught between two civilizations. Tanpınar believes we can be our own selves and fight against the threat of unconditional westernization by balancing our worldview by native and authentic values. Hence, Tanpınar was well aware of the necessity and importance of having an authentic self. He believed Turkish people should be selective about which legacy they should hold on to.

Tanpınar focuses on this issue in *The Time Regulation Institute* by introducing two opposing characters, Halit the Regulator and Nuri Efendi. Through them, he shows how chaotic our lives could be if we cannot form an authentic self. As a narrator, Hayri exemplifies the condition of Turkish society torn between traditional and modern values. While Hayri tries to hold on to his country's history and culture by the teachings and lifestyles of two opposite poles Nuri Efendi and Seyit Lütfullah, this attempt is constantly interrupted by Halit the Regulator, the embodiment of modernity. Halit the Regulator mistakes modernization for untempered and uncritical westernization. In order to make the modernization process faster, he adopts Western ideas rather than adapting them to himself. In other words, rather than tailoring Western values to his own needs, he accepts them without questioning. Yet he cannot even be credited with a full appreciation of the West. Rather, his way is based on imitating rather than understanding and internalizing. He imitates Western lifestyle in his country and wants everyone to collaborate in his story. Throughout the novel, Halit the Regulator accuses Hayri İrdal of not being able to set himself free from the dictates of common sense, which are, according to him, old-fashioned values of the past. Halit the Regulator says: "You are rotten.. An obsolete soul! One cannot collaborate with a man who has no faith in life. You haven't even accepted yet the existence of Ahmet the Timely" (252). Halit the Regulator wants Hayri to support his story by believing his fictive character, Ahmet the Timely. Though the main problem that Tanpınar highlights in his novel appears to be the clash between traditional past and modern present, which results in people's not being able to adjust to their time, the main focus of the novel is that people can neither *fully* comprehend the past nor the present and, therefore, choose to believe in the *facile* standards, traditional or modern. That is to say, people both living in the traditional past and modern present appear to hold on to *fake* values of their times as they do not understand and internalize them. In the end, Tanpınar shows that people's imitation of traditional and modern values causes corrupted societies.

By means of the Time Regulation Institute, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar draws the attention of the reader to the inability of the people living in the country to adjust to the new period. Every time period creates and imposes its own concept of time. Time

becomes problematic for the characters in the book since shifting from one time period to another leads to chaos. Each character in the book has different time concepts. While Emine and her son Ahmet present the natural, factual time, which is based on the cycles of nature, a group of people including Hayri's father's friends, Doctor Ramiz, Pakize, Zehra and mainly Halit the Regulator present a fictional time, which tries to *control* the natural flow of time by dividing or representing it with numbers and, therefore, remains fictitious.

However, unlike these two poles, Nuri Efendi believes in the eternity embedded in the present. He represents timelessness and leaves himself to the flow. Nuri Efendi is one of the few who could see the "Truth." He is able to see the divine presence beyond time. Hayri İrdal says, some of Nuri Efendi's acquaintances describe him as "a great man of science, and some a quasi-saint" (48). In conversations with Hayri, Nuri Efendi tries to give Hayri an insight on time. He says: "God created man in his own image, and man created watches in his own likeness. [. . .] Man must not forsake watches, as otherwise they will perish like a man abandoned by God" (48). However, Hayri does not understand the depth of Nuri Efendi's wisdom. Instead, he tries to adopt a fictional time and ends up being diverged from the path of truth.

The search for time that is independent of factual time is prevalent in the books of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar. Nurdan Gürbilek, in her book, *Benden Önce Bir Başkası*, gives Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's definition on "time" as follows: "There is a different time concept apart from the time we spend living, laughing, having fun and working. This time concept is deeper and has nothing to do with calendar and clock [. . .] It is an undivided time" (Gürbilek, 2010: 104). In *The Time Regulation Institute*, it is through Nuri Efendi that Tanpınar expresses the existence of a time undivided by units such as seconds, minutes, or hours. According to Nuri Efendi, time is a massive whole. However, people divide and categorize it to fit their social and political needs. There is no standard season, or day or night throughout the Earth, for between the Poles and in the equatorial line, there is a considerable difference between the lengths of days and seasons. Moreover, people have changed the beginnings of years, seasons, days and nights in accordance with their political preferences. Though natural facts, such as countries' geographical conditions, show

that time cannot be perceived at the same lengths of days, nights and seasons everywhere, people's futile attempt to regulate time continues. Hence, by regulating the time, people organize and live their lives in a self-referential time. While the majority of people live harmoniously with the socially constructed time, Nuri Efendi can sense the eternity beyond time. What Nuri Efendi senses is in fact the timeless reality of transcendence, of God. In other words, he lives in the eternal present.

One step from Nuri Efendi's perception brings us to the time defined by natural cycles. There is no universal division of time in nature, as seasons, days, and nights constantly flow into each other. Instead, there are natural cycles, which show the redundancy and downright erroneousness of rigid divisions of time. That is to say, a day does not naturally and always have to become a night when it is seven or eight o'clock. Unlike socially constructed time, there does not need to be a rigid timing in nature. Nature has phases that take place smoothly without hurry, as if everything in nature has a unique internal clock that tells them when to move forward and when to wait. Similar to the time concept in nature, Nuri Efendi does not divide the time and avoids being in a rush. He often says to his customers to be patient when the customers want to take back their mended watches as soon as possible. Hayri İrdal states Nuri Efendi's unhurried nature as follows:

Customers who had entrusted their watches to him and then left his workshop would hear him shout after them, 'Don't come for your watch until I send a word.' And sometimes he would add, 'Try to be patient! Don't be anxious to get it back soon!' And once having opened the watch or the clock entrusted to him, he would put it under a glass jar and gaze at it, sometimes for weeks, without ever touching it, and if it ticked, he would lean over it, and listen to its ticking. (48)

Nuri Efendi knew he did not have to be in a hurry for anything. He enjoyed the unhurried time he lived in, hidden in the measured and divided time, which imprisons people in the fiction they have created, forcing them to hurry and run without ripening for action. While the rest of the people are like prisoners of time, Nuri Efendi can see the "Truth" hidden behind it. However, Hayri İrdal fails to see the "Truth" Nuri Efendi tries to show and, therefore, he lives in the middle by neither being in Nuri Efendi's eternity or its secular version represented by Emine and Ahmet nor living in others' fictionalized time.

Like Hayri İrdal, people living in that era confuse the time they are living in. They neither belong to the past nor to the future. Though the Time Regulation

Institute is built to function as transition from Ottoman era to progress-oriented Republican modernity, it ironically caricaturizes this transition. That is to say, there are problems in this cultural transformation, for a product of Western thought, this future-oriented time of modernity cannot be totally internalized by a people who have not experienced hundreds of years that lead to such a conceptualization. Therefore, this new concept functions more like ill-fitted garments inherited from someone who has discarded them than custom-made clothes to fit the particular curves of an individual body. Interestingly though, Tanpınar demonstrates that the Turkish people did not have their own conceptualization of time during the Ottoman period. The Ottomans inherited their time concept from other cultures such as Arabs and Persians, who gave them their religion and art forms. Tanpınar shows that the Republic, which aimed at creating an autonomous and authentic culture, is sabotaged in the same manner by those who imitate rather than adapt. While Seyit Lütfullah believes in the old culture, which was an imitation of the East, Halit the Regulator believes in the necessity of a new culture, which is the imitation of the West. Since the very project of Halit the Regulator is based on imitation, the institute fails to unite people under one "time." In short, Tanpınar shows that people in the novel have lost touch with time, therefore, with the Truth.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar also reflects the psychology of the characters as unhinged and floating bodies once they lose their time concept. He shows them as people who think and behave in an absurd way throughout the novel. The reason why these people function as absurd characters is that both the traditionalists and the modernists do not know what they are supporting. In other words, the traditionalist does not know the essence of traditions to which s/he is deeply attached, for they are only imitations. Similarly, the modernists, who have not been steeped in the history of the West that produced modernity, have no idea of what underlies modernity. Instead, they believe in the made-up or invented modern manners and institutions. In short, the absurdity lies in the lack of essence in both traditionalism and modernism.

The coffeehouse is the setting in which such absurdity reaches its peak. It functions as a place where the old and the new meet, but both the old and the new exist as shells without contents. The attendants of the coffeehouse believe they can easily become modernized individuals when they put on Western clothes or change

their appearance according to Western fashions. In order to show the deception of the atmosphere, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar comments on the owner of the coffeehouse as follows: “He had concocted a language peculiar to himself made up of archaisms and neologisms. To suit it he had adopted beard after the French fashion” (127). The owner of the coffeehouse represents fake moderns who make up their own fictional modernities without making any effort to learn what it is. According to them, instead of learning French, one can invent a language that would befit a French beard. That the language is filled with archaisms, which the speaker probably misuses, and neologisms, which nobody understands, demonstrates the hollowness of such people. The majority of the people want to live a life, which they borrowed from their foreign ideals, but they look rather like trying to fit into their newly bought and too-large or too-small clothes, than choosing clothes that will fit their bodies. They live their life as “characters lacking an inner world, a hollow man made up of borrowed gestures” (Gürbilek, 2003: 606). However, since the way they talk, dress, even walk is a borrowed ideal, it never suits them. Interestingly, these people fail to see their artificiality and insincerity in every aspect of their lives. Hence, Tanpınar shows the absurdities of these people through an ironic and sometimes sarcastic tone. When Hayri asks Doctor Ramiz if he ever got bored of the conversations of the people in the coffeehouse, he replies:

*‘Where else can I find such an enlightened community! They are all specialized people. They all live on and in **national** issues. In no other newspaper can you find such a wealth of news. You will witness it yourself when I have memoirs published, you will read in them in a chronological order every single thing I learned from these men.’ (131; emphasis added)*

With Doctor Ramiz’s reply above, Tanpınar demonstrates that though these people live on and in “national” issues, they also reveal their “personal stories” that often go parallel to these “national” or “international stories.” Moreover, through Doctor Ramiz’s reply, Hayri tries to show the absurdity of not only the people in the coffeehouse, but also Doctor Ramiz, who gives credit to the things these people say. Hayri’s ironic and sarcastic tone continues as he evaluates Doctor Ramiz’s reply on the so-called enlightened community. Hayri states: “The said national and enlightened conversation to which the doctor alluded were but idle gossip, in fact. But everything underwent a transformation naturally in the light of his scientific cast of mind” (131). By focusing on Doctor Ramiz’s profession, Hayri ironically implies

both the hollowness of Doctor Ramiz's scientific knowledge and the vulnerability of even science and scientific discourse to personal weaknesses and biases. Doctor Ramiz's judgements cannot be trusted though he seems to have the title of scientist. The theories on which he bases his evaluations are only imitations of the Western theories in spite of the reality that shouts in his face exactly the opposite case. Hence, Hayri ironically shows how impossible it would normally have been for Doctor Ramiz to have a real scientific career while he cannot even understand the absurdity the people in the coffeehouse. In other words, Doctor Ramiz enjoys his status in society thanks to his career though he makes a career through bogus science.

The most significant example for the absurdity of the so-called modern life in the book is the Time Regulation Institute, whose purpose is to synchronize time and clocks and watches throughout the nation so that no watch or clock shows a minutely different time. Such a project, whose absurdity sets the ordinary and common sensical citizens on the street laughing, miraculously grows into a major institution with a host of employees, formal government support and the seriousness of a workplace that actually produces assets. While the flourishing and survival of the institute is in itself a case that combines the marvelous and the absurd, its abolition further emphasizes the uselessness of the institution in an absurd way. When officers come to close down the institution, they dial a number and learn what the time it is. After that they understand that the institution, which was thought to be very useful for years, did not need to exist at all. They say: "When there is such a facility what is the *raison d'être* of this organization, please?" (322). Afterwards, they close down the institution. The main reason Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar shows all these absurdities is that, people, both in the Ottoman era or in the Republican period, continue practicing values that are corrupted and are far from representing the reality or the thoughts, beliefs and cultures of both time periods.

Showing the redundancy and absurdity of the Time Regulation Institute is also a criticism of capitalism. In a capitalist society, people first invent needs and then create jobs to serve these needs. Similarly, in order to create the Time Regulation Institute, the founding father, Halit the Regulator, first convinces people to the fact that such an institute is necessary. Its primary duty is to synchronize the clocks in every city so that even a minute would not be wasted. In capitalism, time is

considered to be the most important and priceless capital for which there is constant competition to capture the lion's share. What the members of dominant classes originally wanted to possess and increase for themselves is leisure time, which provided them the possibility for doing exactly those things that they enjoyed without the intrusion of necessary but distasteful labor.

The germination of the institute in Halit the Regulator's mind provides one of the most bitter ironies in the novel. When Hayri İrdal tells Halit the Regulator about Nuri Efendi's life and some of his aphorisms, Halit the Regulator comes up with the idea of founding the institute. In other words, Nuri Efendi's aphorisms form the basis of the institute. All of a sudden Halit the Regulator invents an institution and makes it a business, which employs people that have no task to perform. It all starts when Halit the Regulator misinterprets Nuri Efendi's wisdom and takes his words in their literal meaning. Hayri states Halit the Regulator's interpretation of Nuri Efendi's words and, therefore, explaining the main principle of the institution as follows:

An often-quoted remark of his, at which Halit the Regulator marveled, was: 'Running after seconds, that's what time regulation is.' 'Can you imagine what these words mean, my dear Hayri İrdal? They mean that not even a second is wasted, if the watch is well adjusted. And what are we doing? What is the city doing, what is the country doing? We are losing half of our time because of unadjusted watches. If we assume that each person in the country loses one second per hour every day, this amounts to a loss of eighteen million seconds a day, that is, three million minutes, which boils down to a loss of fifty thousand hours a day. And with all these added up you will see how many people's fates are sealed in a year [. . .] A deplorable loss indeed! Loss of work, loss of a part of one's life, loss of time and money! Do you now see the acumen and genius of Nuri Efendi? We shall be able to prevent this loss thanks to him. This is the most useful function of our institute. (51)

Obviously, Halit the Regulator does not understand the hidden meaning in Nuri Efendi's aphorism. Instead, he turns the saying into his advantage and uses it as a basis for the institution. While Nuri Efendi points towards a spiritual tie between humans and time that binds both to the divine, Halit can comprehend his words only as advice for the foundation of such a hollow institution. After *inventing* people's need for such an institute, Halit the Regulator *creates* jobs for people that would be working in the institute. The number of the personnel working in the institute "consisted of three directors, eleven department heads, forty-seven typists, and two hundred and seventy auditors" (32). Everyone is convinced that it is natural for a lot

of personnel to work in the institute since it is an important organization serving people's needs.

These needs are considered so serious that anyone who violates them is fined. This in itself is serious business that requires ingenious and complex calculations and constant revising as well as a large body of personnel. For instance, according to this system, which Hayri invents, officers collect five cents for every watch that is not synchronized with the time in public clocks. The way Hayri invents the system, however, undermines its seriousness altogether. He invents it during the time when he gets bored watching Halit the Regulator and Pakize playing backgammon. Left out of their game, Hayri makes up a game-like system in order to entertain himself. The result, however, is taken with utmost seriousness. Hayri states one of the institute's leading financiers' commentary on his fining system as follows: "One of our leading financiers had officially declared that this fining system was an extremely original invention. He kept on repeating, whenever the occasion presented itself, that he would never hesitate to remember me along with Turgot, Necker, and Schacht" (33). The financier of the institute even believes Hayri is in the same category as the leading finance ministers and economists. Though he names Hayri's fining system as an "invention," he fails to understand the fact that it is no more than an *invention*, not a mathematical discovery or solution to a mathematical problem.

What increases the absurdity of the institute is that though it has many people on its pay roll, nobody knows what their jobs are. Yet most employees of the institute do not question sitting idle and doing nothing while having a job. It is only Hayri who raises a critical voice from time to time as he comments on the work he is not doing as follows:

*I had employment but no work. This new job was not like the others I had had in the past. It had no connection either with human beings or with life itself. I could go as far as to say that during my employment at the Spiritualists Association I had cherished the belief that I was, even ridiculously, serving human beings who liked to lie to each other and to themselves. Here even this did not exist. **Here everything was born out of a few words.** It all seemed unreal. I had pronounced certain words to Halit the Regulator, and Halit the Regulator had glanced at clocks, which did not indicate the same time, and suddenly realized that he had no work to do. Other people had believed him. (208; emphasis added)*

Tanpınar shows that words play a huge role in the actualization of the institute. The institute, its history and necessity or the tasks to be performed in it are all *invented* or

even have come into existence upon the utterance of some words. After this mood is created in people's minds, everybody plays along to keep this miracle alive albeit nothing of it is rationally acceptable or comprehensible. Although Hayri comments on his not performing any tangible task while having a job, he keeps playing the roles given to him by Halit the Regulator. By detailing the absurdity of the institute's functions, Tanpınar criticizes the capitalist system which encourages the creation of needs and invention of jobs without function. Tanpınar also implies the redundancy of some government organizations such as the Time Regulation Institute. By showing the hollowness of the institute, he wants the reader to question other government institutes that have no function at all.

Though Hayri expresses his annoyance with Halit the Regulator's game starting with the Time Regulation Institute in which he believes he is trapped, Hayri is actually an opportunist. He is aware of the fact that there is a game, being played, and he plays this game because he wins. Hayri knows his life totally changed after meeting Halit the Regulator. While he had spent his childhood and the early years of his adulthood in poverty, he starts to live in abundance and enjoys life after meeting Halit the Regulator. Hayri reminds himself:

Just remember your life before you met Halit the Regulator, and compare it with your present existence. Think back to when you were haunted by creditors knocking on the door of your house at Edirnekapi and when you craved a slice of bread. Then compare it all with your present comfort and happiness. (31)

Hayri knows he is a winner and will continue to be one if he participates in Halit the Regulator's game. Hence, though he sometimes criticizes Halit the Regulator and mainly accuses everyone including himself of living in a dreamworld, Hayri remains inside although he sees the groundlessness of the institute and all that it represents.

The following chapter in the novel continues to represent important historical moments and their influence on people. The third chapter, "Towards Dawn" presents the period when Hollywood stars started to show up in Turkish magazines. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar shows this aspect of Western influence on the lives of Pakize and her two sisters. Pakize and her two sisters are unable to distinguish between Hollywood fiction and the facts of their own lives. After the institute becomes famous both in the country and abroad, a lot of newspapers want to have an interview either with Hayri or his wife, Pakize. In one of these interviews, Pakize

makes up a lot of lies about Hayri's life. She says he played the banjo and was offered a role in a Hollywood film. She starts to confuse fiction with reality as a result of the influence of Hollywood films on her. Hayri İrdal comments on this as follows:

My wife, as I have already told you, was satisfied by movies, and disregarded the shortcomings of life. My buttons that came off were no longer replaced since, like Adolf Menjou, I had at least one hundred and thirty spare suits. She also took no notice of my threadbare elbows. All that she saw in films belonged to us: castles, diamonds, gardens, noble and gentlefolk, and so forth. (146)

Hayri is well aware of the fact that Pakize lives in a dream world. She longs for a Hollywood style of life and starts to believe that her life is similar to the lives in Hollywood films. She believes she is having fun with her noble friends in luxurious places, like those in Hollywood films. She wears fashionable clothes to the meetings and likes being complimented on her clothes. Pakize loses the facts of her life in the roles she plays.

Surprisingly, however, not only Pakize, but also everyone around her, with the exception of Hayri, regards her situation anything but normal or at least fun and harmless. Nobody except Hayri considers her state delusory; in fact her self-delusions and craziness are encouraged by Halit the Regulator. Upon reading the interview with Pakize in the newspaper, Halit the Regulator gets angry at Hayri for drawing attention to the falsity of her statements. In an attempt to convince Hayri as to the sincerity of Pakize's statements, he angrily says: "Your wife introduces you to us as the most modern man in the world. You insist on keeping your suspicious attitudes and denying everything" (251). Hence, no matter how hard Hayri tries to believe in his own reality rather than the one he is exposed to, he eventually becomes part of the latter.

People, like Pakize, undergo a kind of personality change and lose their identities. Their personalities are never fixed and rationally explicable. Granted, personalities are always in processes of change and flux, but Pakize and the type she represents are floating personalities unhinged from reality. There are moments when Hayri İrdal criticizes Pakize for her mouldable nature and states: "There was something wrong with Pakize. When I sensed this, the person whom I had been sharing the responsibilities of my life began appearing to me hopelessly disabled and half-witted" (147). After listening to Pakize's stories, which are byproducts of

watching Hollywood films, Hayri understands that Pakize is living in a dream world. According to him, Pakize has an impressionable personality since she always identifies both herself and her husband with actors and actresses from Hollywood films: "Finally she identified herself with Josephine Beauhardeis and adopted her stepchildren and took them for the offspring from her first marriage. Yes, my own progeny ceased to be the children of Emine and myself and became Pakize's" (147). Hayri İrdal sees the lie in which Pakize and many others live. By stating Pakize's floating personality, Hayri tries to draw the attention of the reader to the fact that the society is also under the threat of losing its cultural, traditional and historical traits. As people begin to forget their backgrounds while trying to adopt the modern way of life, likewise, the society composed of these people will eventually fail to remember its background. As the members of the Turkish society try to adopt the norms of modern life and erase their past, they begin to lose their personal and cultural traits. They accept everything new without questioning and start to live in a dream world where reality is formed arbitrarily. Their tastes and ideas are reshaped according to the so-called modern tastes and ideas with which almost nobody has direct interaction. Interestingly, even the ones, such as Doctor Ramiz, who have been exposed to Western culture by living there for some time, do not fully understand that culture and, therefore, live their lives in a bastardised version of modernity.

Pakize is not the only character in the book that is under the influence of a Hollywood style of life. Even though she does not have any talent, Pakize's sister becomes a singer thanks to the support of Halit the Regulator. Halit the Regulator is so confident in her that he is going to change everyone's idea about what is real. In a conversation with Hayri about his sister-in-law, Halit the Regulator says:

You say that she is ugly, that means in terms of present-day concepts, she is sympathetic. You say that her voice is bad, that means it is touching and favorable for certain airs. You say she's untalented, that means she is original. I'll take care of her tomorrow. You'll see that as of tomorrow your sister-in-law will be on the stage. (204)

Halit the Regulator uses the power of words at giving direction to the thoughts of people. *Ugly* can become *sympathetic*, *bad voice* can become *touching and favorable for certain airs*, and *untalented* becomes *original* by his new definitions. By redefining the tastes of people about music, he changes people's musical perceptions. Consequently, after listening to Pakize's sister, people end up clapping her

performance though she cannot sing the song properly. Halit the Regulator represents the mindset that thinks Western music is extremely easy and requires no real talent. In fact, it is the likes of whom, who fail to appreciate the special talent and years of training, which produce and perform such musical forms. Moreover, Halit tries to adopt Western musical norms that he has not completely mastered to Turkish music singers without thinking about the difference between Western and traditional Turkish music patterns. Halit the Regulator ignores the fact that different styles of sounds which are appreciated in the West as a result of centuries of cultural developments may or may not suit Turkish music, which is also unique in its own development of cultural norms.

Regardless of both his wilful ignorance and her lack of talent, Halit the Regulator advertises Hayri's sister-in-law so well that everybody is convinced that she is a talented singer. Since Halit the Regulator has the ability to convince people through the power of discourse, hard reality loses its effect before the power of words. Through his eloquent speech, he can make people participate in his play. In fact, Halit the Regulator is a playmaker, both writing and directing the play. People around him participate in his game by performing their roles given by Halit the Regulator. His eloquent and convincing speech, however, is not the only reason why people are so willing to follow his directions. Another reason why Halit the Regulator is so influential over people's lives is that he acts as representative of modernism in a country where neither the essence of traditionalism nor that of modernism is understood. Since most of the characters are so eager to have a new way of life, they start to adopt Western ways of life together with its institutions without understanding their cultural and historical roots and the mindsets that created them. This is the main cause of the shallowness of the society that the writer wants to portray through Hayri İrdal.

Rather than emphasizing the difficulty in transition from traditionalism to modernism, Tanpınar wants to point out the difficulty to differ *fiction* from *real* in everyday life as society adopts bastardized versions of both traditional and modern values and, therefore, lead to fictional lives that are far from reality. Hayri lives his life between two poles. Hayri İrdal comments on this fact as follows: "Nuri Efendi and Halit the Regulator were the two poles around whom my life revolved" (50).

While there is Nuri Efendi, who is a representative of the true traditional Turkish culture at one pole, there is Halit the Regulator, who tries to gather people under the thought of fake modernity, at the other. Hayri İrdal is stuck in this dilemma since he plays his part in both times. That is to say, while thanks to Nuri Efendi, Hayri does not lose his touch with reality during one period of his life, he is dragged into a fictional world because of Halit the Regulator in another part of his life. Nuri Efendi and Halit the Regulator have opposite worldviews. In contrast to Nuri Efendi, who is content with his simple life in his “muvakkithane,” which is a time regulation center built in order to show prayer times publicly during the Ottoman era, Halit the Regulator is never satisfied with his life and always wants novelties and change; in other words his life is based on progress. He is a materialist who attaches too much importance to earthly pleasures. Contrary to Nuri Efendi, whose main purpose is to be closer to God and become diffused in transcendental reality, Halit the Regulator is after saving the day while profiting from it the best way he could. He sees no harm in using people if they will serve to his benefits. While Nuri Efendi tries to show Hayri and other people around him the “Truth,” Halit the Regulator imprisons them in a “fictive life.” Though these two figures are totally different from each other, Hayri ironically attaches the same importance to both Nuri Efendi and Halit the Regulator in terms of changing his life.

Apart from their personal traits, the time concepts of Nuri Efendi and Halit the Regulator are totally different from one another. While Nuri Efendi fears the changes that have started with the Tanzimat period, Halit the Regulator believes in the positive influence of the West on his country. After the constitutional monarchy, the period following the Tanzimat Period, Nuri Efendi tries not to go out as much as possible for fear that he could see clocks that are not regulated. Hayri states Nuri Efendi’s fear of seeing unadjusted clocks as follows:

With the advent of the Constitutional Era, when the number of clock towers in the city increased, he stayed in the Time Regulation Center most of the time lest he should come across ‘unadjusted clocks.’ A clock out of order, broken or defective, seemed to him like a sick man. This, by its very nature, was pardonable. But there was no excuse for an unadjusted clock. It was a social offense, a frightful sin. In the opinion of Nuri Efendi unadjusted clocks were, beyond a shadow of doubt, a means to which the devil took recourse in order to deviate mankind from the path of truth—tempting him and causing him to waste his time. (51)

The main reason for Nuri Efendi's fear of seeing unadjusted clocks in the city after the Tanzimat Period is that he foresees the chaos the new era will bring as he believes people rather than clocks will be unadjusted. That is to say, he believes people will fall apart because, like traditionalism, modernity will not be fully understood and internalised. As a result, everybody will have different time concepts. For instance, while one part of society will adopt Western culture, the other will still stick with more religious or spiritual values. In order to prevent such chaos, Nuri Efendi advises Hayri "to be master of [his] time" and fully understand the time he lives in (49). Hence, Nuri Efendi does not want to witness this chaos in which time is divided. He believes like ill-fitted garments, which do not reflect their time, time will not reflect the *real* time.

Nuri Efendi grew up in the Time Regulation Center and internalized its philosophy. The Time Regulation Center back then had nothing to do with the Time Regulation Institute founded by Halit the Regulator. The latter is the imitation of the former without understanding its philosophy. It is also ironic that Halit the Regulator does not know the history of the institute he creates. He does not know the existence of a Time Regulation Center in the Ottoman era. Instead, he believes he has come up with the idea of such an institution. The founding father, Halit the Regulator is so clueless about the history of the institution he has created that he even invents a fictive figure, Ahmet the Timely, in order to create a historical background for the institution. Though the two institutions seem to be similar at first sight as their names indicate, they are totally different from one another. While the Time Regulation Center have met the needs of people in the Ottoman era, the Time Regulation Institute, a modern institute, is so hollow that even the employees do not know what the purpose of the institution is. The institute shows the futility of the attempts of modernization since modernization is not comprehended by the masses. The main purpose of the Time Regulation Centre during the Ottoman Empire period was to adjust the clocks correctly for prayer times. Since religion was important to every Muslim, the Time Regulation Centre was a divine place that adjusted clocks for a religious service. It was also a center of positive sciences since the masters of time were studying mathematics and astronomy to be more specific in their calculations

while publishing calendars and preparing Ramadan timetables. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar defines the Time Regulation Centers as follows:

*Scattered all over the city were watch-setting centers. Even those who were in haste stopped in front of the windows and, in the name of God, took out from their pockets their respective watches, which differed according to their wealth, ages, and sizes of their bodies, and which were of gold, silver, inlaid with niello, with or without a chain, some like tiny pads, and some flat and small, and, saying a prayer to the effect that the time to be set by them be attended by good auspices with reference to the undertakings of their wives and children, adjusted and wound them, and by putting them to their ears, seemed to listen to glad tidings that were promised both for the near and the remote future. The ticktock they heard had nearly the same evocative power as the **water running at the fountain** for ablutions in the courtyard of a mosque, and echoed the voice of **sublime and eternal** beliefs. The ticktocks' properties were sui generis, and expanded in both dimensions of life. While on the one hand it arranged your daily affairs and duties, on the other hand it opened the immaculate and smooth paths that led to the eternal bliss of which one was in pursuit. (42; emphasis added)*

By finding parallellism between the clocks adjusted in watch-setting centers and *fountain water* in mosques, Tanpınar implies that the watch-setting centers used to bring people closer to nature and open the pure and smooth paths towards the *eternal* where all life flourishes. As Nuri Efendi is part of this deep-seated tradition, he feared to see this tradition fade away with the influence of the West as a result of the Tanzimat Period. Moreover, as the parts of clocks began to be produced in different factories during this time period, Nuri Efendi feared these clocks would not be the same as the old ones. He believed under the cover of modernization, the art and philosophy of adjusting clocks would be history. He believed the country would lose its time concept and, therefore, it would be lost by belonging to an unfamiliar time concept.

In a similar vein, Margaret Atwood reflects important historical events in her novel, *The Blind Assassin*. The story is narrated by an eighty-two-year-old woman named Iris. She starts writing her memior in 1998 and presents important historical moments, namely World War I, Jazz Age, Depression years and World War II, through the lives of the characters in Canada. In his article, J. Brooks Bouson states:

By placing the story of the two sisters against the larger backdrop of Canadian history and describing World War I, the Depression years, and World War II, it provides a kind of fictional documentation of the ways in which gender and class expectations shaped and confined women's lives in the first half of the twentieth century. (Bouson, 2010: 252)

Starting from her childhood, Iris reflects the devastating effects of these years both on her own life and on her family's life.

First of all, Iris writes about her childhood. She shows how *World War I* tears her family apart. World War I is the first great war in the world. No European country had experienced such violence and mass death until then. It is the first war in which the Western powers waged war on each other. At the end of the war, the map of Europe had to be redrawn because while some countries had lost territory, the others expanded theirs. Even some imperial powers, such as the Ottoman or Russian Empire, collapsed at the end of the war. Though there had been such political outcomes of the war, its devastating effects on people's lives and psychology were more massive. A whole generation, the members of whom ranged from civilians to soldiers, felt lost since they had difficulty adapting themselves to their pre-war lives after experiencing the cruelties of the war. Therefore, the term "Lost Generation," which refers to the ones who fought in World War I, is coined after the war. In other words, a whole generation's hopes and lives faded away with the futility of a mass war. The survivors of the war did not even feel lucky to be alive and to unite with their families since they could not recover from their suffering. They lost their beliefs in everything they once believed. Such post-war psychology is reflected in the dramatic transformation of some of the characters in the novel. For instance, after joining the army, Norval no longer believes in God and civilization. After learning the death of his two brothers, Percy and Eddie, in the war, Norval questions what he and his brothers fought for and chooses to become an atheist since he believes religion is just a trick the country uses to make soldiers fight for their political cause. Iris states:

[. . .] my father was now an atheist. Over the trenches God had burst like a balloon, and there was nothing left of him but grubby little scraps of hypocrisy. Religion was just a stick to beat the soldiers with, and anyone who declared otherwise was full of pious drivel. What had been served by the gallantry of Percy and Eddie—by their bravery, their hideous deaths? What had been accomplished? [. . .] All the talk of fighting for God and Civilization made him vomit. (77)

Norval feels abandoned and even betrayed by both his country and God. The survivors of the war, like Norval, have to live with the trauma of seeing their friends and brothers die. Since it is a huge burden over their soldiers, nearly all lead miserable lives after the war. Norval returns from the war as a man with one missing

eye and a limp. He is devastated due to his two brothers' deaths and can never become the same person after the war. Iris explains her father's state of mind and his attitude towards his wife after the war as follows: "my father [. . .] was a shattered wreck, as witness the shouts in the dark, the nightmares, the sudden fits of rage, the bowl or glass thrown against the wall or floor, though never at her. He was broken, and needed mending" (77). As a result of experiencing and witnessing violence and cruelty in the war, Norval becomes a violent person when he returns home. In order to cope with the catastrophic events he has experienced in the war, Norval also starts drinking. The more he drinks, the more he alienates himself from his family. This bad habit and his mood swings affect his relationship with his family to such an extent that it would not be wrong to suggest that he indirectly leads to his wife's death. Iris' mother is a selfless woman who does her best to please her husband. She wants her husband to behave the way he had before going to war. Iris' mother wants to keep her family together by transforming her depressed husband into a happy man. In an attempt to do this, she sacrifices her life by doing everything that would even threaten her health in order to please her husband. Though she is also suffering from a nervous breakdown since she is giving all her energy to her husband to make him happy, she dies as a result of a miscarriage. Even though it is not stated explicitly whether it is Norval or Iris' mother that wants to have a baby, it is likely that it is Iris' mother who thinks having a baby might be good for her husband. The baby would bring joy to the household. In other words, she could deliver a baby if it would please her husband. However, while trying to find ways to make her husband happy, Iris' mother ends up sacrificing herself for the sake of her husband. Though she gives herself up for her husband, her husband does not even spend time with her in her last days. Norval is either at work or at a place where nobody knows and, therefore, he leaves his wife alone the moments when she needs him the most. He is blind to his wife's and children's needs. He cannot be found on the afternoon when his wife suffers from miscarriage. Iris indicates his father's indifference to his wife as follows:

Mother died of a fever; also of being weak, because she could not manage to get her strength back, said Reenie. During this time the doctor came and went, and a succession of crisp, brittle nurses occupied the easy chair in the bedroom. Reenie hurried up and down the stairs with bairns, with towels, with cups of broth. Father shuttled restlessly back and forth to the factory, and appeared at the dinner table

*as a beggar. Where had he been, that afternoon when he could not be found?
Nobody said. (92)*

Norval is not only a *lost* soul, but also a *loser* since he literally loses his wife. The survivors of the war, like Norval, have to live with the haunting experience of war throughout their lives. While some face the harsh reality of war in person, the others are affected indirectly. While Norval comes back to his house needing to be cured especially by his wife, his wife also ends up being a wreck as she puts all her effort in healing him. Hence, both parties are victimized by the war.

The war not only affects Iris' family, but also Alex's life. When Alex's family gets killed in Eastern Europe in World War I, he ends up as an orphan. He is adopted and raised by a Presbyterian minister and his wife. All his life changes after the war. He reinvents himself and starts to lead a different life. A political event, which causes the death of his parents, also makes him erase his past and become a new person. The course of his life changes as a result of the decrees of History against which he is powerless. The difficulties Alex faces as a child are not limited to losing his parents and being adopted by strangers. Also, he has to live with the hardships of being branded as an orphan. Most people are prejudiced against orphans. They believe orphans are rejects of families since they lack a family background. When Laura says that Alex is an orphan, Reenie states her thoughts about orphans to both Iris and Laura as follows:

*'An orphan!' said Reenie. 'He could be anybody!'
'What's wrong with orphans?' I said. I knew what was wrong with them in Reenie's books: they didn't know who their fathers were, and that made them unreliable, if not downright degenerate. Born in a ditch was how Reenie would put it. Born in a ditch, left on a doorstep.
'They can't be trusted,' said Reenie. 'They worm their way in. They don't know where to draw the line.' (178)*

According to Reenie, orphans have no good qualities because they have no legitimate stories. Their stories are those of absence and loss; therefore, they cannot compete with the formidable stories of individuals such as Richard and History that legitimates and records such stories. Not only Reenie, but also Norval is uncomfortable around Alex when Alex comes to his house for Labor Day dinner as a guest of Laura. Having an orphan with no visible origin in his house disturbs Norval. Besides being an orphan, Alex's having Bolshevik ideas, which is like a political crime in that era, contributes more to Norval's hatred towards Alex.

Reenie also believes orphans are only pretending to be nice and polite in public. However, for Reenie, orphans are never sincere in their politeness since they have a vengeful nature. Reenie says:

*Orphans were well mannered because good manners had been beaten into them in the orphanages. Only an orphan could be so self-assured, but this aplomb of theirs concealed a vengeful nature—underneath, they were jeering at everyone. Well, of course they'd been fobbed off. Most **anarchists** and **kidnappers** were orphans. (187; emphasis added)*

Reenie believes orphans are the primary suspects of illegal activities. Although war and other tragedies for which they are not responsible create orphans, Alex becomes the one who faces political, criminal and moral prejudices for being an orphan.

When Alex comes to an age to decide what to do with the rest of his life, he begins to support Bolshevik ideas and generally spends his life either running away or hiding from the authorities looking for him. During the economic depression, Norval has no choice but close the button factory to avoid further financial loss. However, the labour union protests against him, for they believe that, instead of offering jobs to the workers in those hard times, Norval has stocked his money. The protest first turns into general strike and then rioting, which is widespread and out of control. As a result of the rioting, Norval's button factory is burned down one night. Though there is no tangible evidence proving the fact that it is Alex who has set the factory on fire, almost everyone is ready to accuse Alex of arson. Being an orphan and supporting Bolshevism are enough evidence for most people to accuse Alex of burning a factory down. With this rumour, Alex is made a scapegoat and, therefore, is on the run most of the time.

In fact, one might argue that it is the chaotic atmosphere and the dominant ideology after World War I that leads to the victimization of Alex. Everyone is confused after World War I. Most are suspicious of one another and are frightened of each other. It is a period when people believe in rumours and fill in the gaps in other people's stories to fit into their own stories. That is to say, since Alex is an orphan supporting communism, people supporting the dominant ideology, namely capitalism, provide Alex with an unfavorable story as an arsonist; he is treated as a blank sheet on which the dominant discourse inscribes its prejudices and biases. These people imprison Alex in their own story only because they need a scapegoat,

and Alex, with his rather misty background, fits really well in their story. Alex states the fact that his being accused of arson is a made-up story in a conversation with Iris:

'You didn't set the fire, I take it,' I said. I meant to sound sarcastic, but it wasn't received that way.

'I'm not stupid,' he said, 'I wouldn't set a fire for no reason.'

'Everyone thinks it was you.'

'It wasn't, though,' he said. 'But it would be very convenient for certain people to take that view.'

'What certain people? Why?' I wasn't pushing him this time, I was baffled.

'Use your head,' he said. But he wouldn't say any more. (212)

Alex is aware of the intention of these people trapping him in their stories. However, he has his hands tied since, even if he fights against the dominant ideology, he knows he will not win, for he knows Richard, the voice of the dominant ideology, has deliberately put the blame on him in order to prevent the possibility of an affair between Iris and Alex by labeling Alex as an arsonist. No matter who has set his factory on fire, Norval's declining finances as a result, leaves him no choice but to force Iris to marry Richard because of her and Laura's future. Hence, Richard's story runs parallel to the big story, in other words, the ideology or dominant discourse, which is written from the perspective of the powerful and therefore, always favors them. They are "everyone" from whom Iris hears about things.

What strikes the reader in this conversation is that Iris is perplexed and puzzled when she hears the truth from Alex. The story created by the dominant ideology is so pervasive and invasive that its reality is not questioned. Often with unknown origins, the stories that the dominant ideology fosters about individuals are supported and maintained with huge public support by a humongous and ubiquitous sum of tellers, who become the feared "everyone" lurking everywhere. Somebody has put the blame on Alex and everyone has believed in its reality without questioning. Hence, when Iris learns the counter-story, she is puzzled. Iris is always exposed to the stories created by the dominant ideology and she never thinks these stories can be unreal. The thought of this possibility is a great shock to Iris. However, it is not an eye-opener for Iris since, without realizing, she continues to believe and function as a pawn in Richard's story. Alex is unable to find a place for his story—that he is not an arsonist but (probably) Richard is. Therefore, beset within an ideological grand narrative that goes radically against his, he tries to hide in corners and niches where he feels relatively safe. Branded as a criminal, he tries to find

refuge sometimes in the most unlikely places such as Norval's home, thanks to the help he gets from Iris and Laura.

In addition to his efforts to hide from the detrimental effects of Richard's story, Alex also responds as a writer of an alternative reality; he authors a fictional universe with a science fiction text. His science fiction story enables Alex to covertly voice severe criticism of the dominant ideology. By telling his science fiction story, Alex can "engage issues of violence and of sexual and class exploitation—issues intricately interwoven in Iris' life—that other narrative forms could not address mid-century when such concerns were being doggedly swept under the carpet" (Michael, 2010: 99). Since Alex does not have the power to raise awareness in society by stating that the dominant ideology was imprisoning everyone, his story "serves as a 'political cryptogram,' as a means to 'say things in hint and metaphor'" (Michael, 2010: 99). Through metaphors, Alex refers to the real problems, which the dominant ideology chooses to ignore or even hide.

In his science fiction story, Alex not only reflects the power of dominant ideology on the public but also mirrors the effect of the war on the members of the society. He likens the planet Zycron to the European cities destroyed in World War I. Alex describes the imaginary city to Iris as follows:

Underneath the rocks, they say, a king is buried—a king without a name. Not only the king, but the remains of the magnificent city this king once ruled. The city was destroyed in a battle, and the king was captured and hanged from a date palm as a sign of triumph. At moonrise he was cut down and buried, and the stones were piled up to mark the spot. As for the other inhabitants of the city, they were all killed. Butchered—men, women, children, babies, even the animals. Put to the sword, hacked to pieces. No living thing was spared. (11)

Similar to the destroyed landscape in Europe after the war, Alex creates an imaginary landscape mirroring the reality in his science fiction story. Alex believes that everything he makes up in his story is actually based on true historical events and lived experiences. In other words, Alex not only forms parallels between the fictional and real landscapes after the war, but also likens everyone he sees in real life to the imaginary people and their lives in his fiction. Since he is inspired by the events that take place in real life, which he reflects into his fictional story in an unfamiliar context, he says: "I am not inventing all this, it has a firm foundation in history" (30). For instance, he "inserts past events from historical texts about despotic regimes,

ancient empires such as Babylon and Hittite in a defamiliarizing context” (Staels, 2010: 153). History is thus an indispensable element of Alex’s story. As such, it inevitably involves violence: as in much of human history, power works in a similarly cruel fashion in the death of the sacrificial brides in *Zygon*. When Iris is disturbed by the cruelty in Alex’s story, Alex defends himself by stating the fact that similar cruel things were done in ancient civilizations like Babylon and Hittite. Yet in fact cruelty is not a problem of the Babylonian and Hittite civilizations of the past. The most striking thing Atwood tries to show the reader by referring to these two ancient cities is that barbarism and savageness, which were believed to belong to the ancient times, can still be experienced in modern narrative. Atwood thus casts doubt on the thought that violence and barbarism could not be experienced in civilized cultures, especially in the twentieth century. She radically questions whether culture and being educated could suffice to stop cruelty and barbarism. In the book, Iris remembers her grandmother Adelia’s ideas of culture and comments on it:

She went in for Culture, which gave her a certain moral authority. It wouldn’t now; but people believed, then, that Culture could make you better—a better person. They believed it would uplift you, or the women believed it. They hadn’t yet seen Hitler at the opera house. (58)

Hence, this Enlightenment idea, which favors refinement and culture, is also another story accepted without much questioning and challenge. Though people have believed culture would make them better and, therefore, would stop wars, time proves this idea wrong. Cruelty and torture is not a past reality, nor does it take place outside; regardless of culture, class, race, or gender differences, it continues to happen in our shelters. That is to say, while Hitler, an opera-goer, is a threat to the world by performing his cruel activities on the weak and innocent, Richard, the refined gentleman, also uses force on Iris without even a doubt as to its legitimacy. Iris is thus aligned with the victims of the barbaric acts of Babylonians and Hittites on the one hand and of Hitler on the other:

Iris’s late twentieth-century cynicism toward the role of culture in assuring human progress implicitly links the violence in her personal life to that of the Holocaust and links Richard to Hitler in a scathing critique of the ways in which domestic violence has often been sanctioned in a modern Western culture that otherwise presents itself as progressive. (Michael, 2010: 97)

Atwood shows cruelty and barbarism are still parts of the so-called modern day civilizations both in public and private sphere. She also doubly strengthens the

cruelty done towards people by the powerful ones through Iris' memoir and Alex's science fiction story. By including violence in his science fiction story, Alex shows that nations and civilizations are ready to fight and act violently against one another no matter how civilized they might appear to be at any century. Therefore, with Alex's narrative, the belief in the progress of humanity collapses.

Alex's inspiration derives from his knowledge of history. When Iris accuses him of making up stories reflecting his Bolshevik ideas, he says he is inspired by the truth as everything he tells in his story is based on real events. He states: "Read the newspapers, I didn't invent the world" (23). Alex shows in his fictional story that history is reflected through different characters. However, *history* is also another *story* which is bigger than the others and which constantly produces several public and private stories.

The fictional city of Zycron is a presentation of a despotic regime which forces slave children to weave carpets. Alex likens this kind of regime to the dominant ideology of his time. Similar to the leader of the despotic regime in Zycron, Richard enslaves Iris and Laura. In the article, 'Narrative Multiplicity and the Multi-layered Self in *The Blind Assassin*,' Magali Cornier Michael comments on the resemblance between Richard and the King of the destroyed city Sakiel-Norn in Zycron planet as follows:

The King of Sakiel-Norn, much like Iris's husband, Richard, has great power over the lives of those around him. Because his position is secured through both money and the threat of violence he can choose to 'ruin' people 'financially,' or sell them into 'slavery,' or to 'resort to torture and executions.' (Michael, 2010: 100)

Both despotic leaders are influential on the lives of people thanks to their power. The despotic King that Alex creates in his story is the equivalent of Richard, a despotic industrialist ruling both over the members of his household and the employees in his factories. While the former is a threat to the nation, the latter is a threat to the family. Both mirror one another: Like the king of Sakiel-Norn, who sees the right in himself to enslave the blind children, Richard believes it is his right to *own* and torture the two sisters both psychologically and physically. By placing a mortal King in his science fiction story and killing him in the end, Alex finds a chance to reveal his alternative story, which he sets against the prevailing or big story. As Alex is well aware of the dominant ideology taken as the only truth by the masses, he wants to

make it visible to everyone and change the perception of reality. However, the dominant ideology, which is the big story, is so invisible, invincible, strong, and powerful that Alex cannot radically change it. Instead, he can make tiny dents in the system, namely with his science fiction story, which is the counter version of accepted *reality*. In other words, he challenges the so-called reality, which is created by *words*, with his own *words* in his science fiction story.

As will be remembered, the science fiction story entitled “The Blind Assassin” has more than one author, one of whom is Iris. The narratives of these authors sometimes challenge one another. For example, Alex’s version of events is different from Iris’. While in Alex’s version the blind assassin and the sacrificial maiden are killed by falling prey to the wolves, Iris, in her version of the story, lets the young lovers be saved and wishes them a happy life with children. She makes up an alternative ending, albeit impossible within the dominant ideology. Through this ending, Iris can find a way to escape the harsh reality. However, Alex believes his version of the story is more real since he is writing about the truth. He says: “I like my stories to be true to life, which means there have to be wolves in them. All stories are about wolves. All worth repeating, that is. Anything else is sentimental drive!” (344). By concluding his story with a sad ending, Alex believes to have reflected reality. According to Alex, there is only tragedy in real life. There is a huge loss of lives in real life both in peace and war. Similarly, everyone in Skiel-Norn is slaughtered by the invaders. The detrimental influences of World War I on Alex’s personal life show themselves in the tragic plot in his story. Just as his life, as he has come to know it, has given him no opportunity for a happy ending, the characters he creates, whether good or evil, innocent or guilty, are all doomed to violent ends. Alex describes the cruelties done by the barbarians, who enter the city at the end of his story, as follows:

Our two young folks are taken to the foothills of the western mountains and left there among the tombs, and then the barbarians proceed to enter the city per instructions, and they loot and destroy, and massacre the inhabitants. Not one escapes alive. The King is hanged from a tree, the High Priestess is disemboweled, the plotting courtier perishes along with the rest. The innocent slave children, the guild of blind assassins, the sacrificial girls in the Temple—all die. The entire culture is wiped from the universe. (344)

As in World War I, which caused the death of massive numbers of people and wiped out some European nations, the attack of the barbarians in Alex's story leads to similar kind of massacres. Hence, by writing his science fiction story, Alex wants to make a story out of hard facts of the real life in order to raise awareness.

In addition to writing about the cruelty and tragedy that prevails the twentieth century as Alex does, people invent other ways. After World War I, some people, in an effort to change their depressive mood, begin to be interested in music, art and technology. This era, which has become to be known as Jazz Age, is a period when people enjoyed big and extravagant parties in order to forget the devastating effects of the war. People try to have fun as these parties distract them from facing the harsh consequences of the war. In other words, these parties function as therapy for these people. Atwood reflects the Bohemian lifestyle of the Jazz Age, which is overcompensation for the war and the death it brings, through the character Callista Fitzsimmons, Norval's girlfriend who supports communist ideas. Though Noval is an industrialist favoring the ideas that are opposite to his lover's, their relationship continues. Callista does not take up the role of a mother for Iris and Laura. She does not show any interest in the upbringing of the girls. Instead, she prefers having parties and talking about art with her friends in these parties. Like many others, Callista guards against the immense effects of the war by living her life as if there is no tomorrow. Iris admits that his father's mood has also changed after meeting Callista with whom he engages in activities and joins parties that set his mind at rest. Iris states:

Father seemed happier; certainly he was drinking less. He had the grounds tidied up, at least enough to be presentable; he had the drive regravelled; he had the Water Nixie scraped and painted and refitted. Sometimes there were informal weekend house parties, the guests being artistic friends of Callista's from Toronto. These artists, among whom there were no names that now currently be recognized, did not wear dinner jackets or even suits to dinner, but V-necked sweaters; they ate scratch meals on the lawn, and discussed the finer points of Art, and smoked and drank and argued. (145)

Like Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *The Time Regulation Institute*, in which the characters escape from their own culture and want to embrace a totally different culture without understanding it, characters in Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*, escape from the harsh reality by giving and attending to parties where they do not think of the war. The Jazz Age and the delusive atmosphere it provides have strong parallels

to the coffeehouse in Tanpınar's novel. In both, escapism is the dominant attitude. Whereas Tanpınar's characters are comically depicted, Atwood's characters are embodiments of tragedy. People try to keep themselves busy in an attempt to avoid recalling the horrible consequences of the war. They want to remain indifferent to their history in order to live sanely for the rest of their lives.

The Jazz Age starts as a bohemian practice led by people like Callista who challenge rules of etiquette and propriety. However, the parties that they initiate with such intent are adopted by capitalists such as Winifred, who give them their own meanings. While Bolshevik friends of Callista wear casual clothes in these informal parties, the capitalists give more costly parties where people show off. Winifred is usually in charge of the balls and parties. Her parties are often costume balls, which would help a charity organization helping the poor or the children in need, but they often serve an additional purpose of creating an alternative reality by giving these people the opportunity to escape from their real lives. They become more powerful or alluring in their costumes. Iris recalls one of the costume parties Winifred organizes in the year 1936. The theme Winifred chooses for the costume ball is an Eastern theme named "Xanadu," which is an idealized place of great and idyllic magnificence and beauty. Winifred's theme choice is also symbolic since she refers to a place where Kubla Khan travelled in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem:

*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately- pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea. (332)*

Coleridge writes his poem after an opium influenced dream and when he wakes up, he tries to recall his travel to the fascinating land of Xanadu in his dream. It is an imaginary place and as such it fulfills Winifred's dreams for a peaceful landscape where people can recreate themselves after experiencing World War I. That can be a happy land where there is no sorrow or war. By wearing different costumes, the people who are invited to the party can choose to be anyone they wish to:

The corpulent could swathe themselves in rich brocades, the svelte could come as slave girls or Persian dancers and show off everything but the kitchen sink. Gauzy skirts, bangles, tinkling ankle chains—the scope was practically infinite, and of course men loved to dress up as pashas and pretend they had harems. (333)

People are pretending to be fictive characters in a fantasy world in the parties. This is a way of escaping from the real world as they do not want to recall the war and their losses. Ironically, while the characters in *The Time Regulation Institute* escape from their traditional past and want to embrace Western culture, the ones in *The Blind Assassin* see the Orient as a place to escape to since for them, the Orient functions as “lost past” or “an erased past” as a result of the war.

The rich spend more money both for attending these parties and for organizing them. For instance, the invitations Griffen sends to the guests for the “Xanadu” costume party “would appear on the engraved invitation as well—*gold lettering*, with a gold-and-cerulean border of *Arabic* writing” (332; *emphasis added*). While the balls of the capitalists are extravagant and enriched by invitations, accessories and costumes, the parties of the communists are modest. However, both capitalists and communists use parties as means of escaping from the harsh consequences of the war. In other words, they overcome the war’s effects by becoming somebody else in these balls. Yet, the characters in both novels remain hollow selves who cannot be Westerners or Orientals when they wrap themselves up in the typical clothes of these cultures. This new social order is the direct result of World War I. Hence, a historical reality leaves its strong and indelible imprint in the lives of individuals as well as nations, making the former seek ways to heal themselves from its tragic consequences.

Atwood also succeeds in reflecting the impact of depression years following World War I on the lives of the characters in the novel. Families start to face economic hardships in the aftermath of the war. Though not everyone, who is fortunate enough to survive these hardships tries to help the less fortunate, Norval helps his workers during the hard times by resisting closing down the button factory at the beginning of the Depression. Iris states:

Meanwhile the Depression had set in. Father didn’t lose much in the Crash, but he lost some. He also lost his margin of error. He ought to have shut down the factories in response to lessened demand; he ought to have banked his money—hoarded it, as others in his position were doing. That would have been the sensible thing. But he didn’t do that. He couldn’t bear to. He couldn’t bear to throw his men out of work. He owed them allegiance, these men of his. (166)

Norval sees himself as a hero who should help his workers financially by keeping them employed in the depression years. Yet, Norval’s heroic manners do not pay as

he ends up going bankrupt. Norval sticks to his story in which he functions as a hero, but when the circumstances change and he can no longer continue his story, he becomes a part of Richard's story. However, Norval's small attempts cannot change the major story, which is different from and bigger than his own or Richard's story. That is to say, no matter how hard Norval tries to help other people, he comes to the point where he has to think of his own benefits. The dominant ideology constantly reminds him that as an industrialist, he should not think of the problems of the proletariat. Though Norval does not take immediate action to prevent his financial loss at first, he changes his attitude and shuts down the factory when economy gets worse. He wants to secure himself and his family financially when things get serious. Though he shows a good face to people by sending some clothes to the ones in need before going bankrupt, in *his story* he actually enjoys seeing himself in a better or richer position than other people. Sending clothes to help the poor is really symbolic since as an industrialist he can help more. Neither of his attempts to help the needy people is sincere because in both cases he knows well enough that he avoids radical sacrifices that will bring him to the level of his workers. Therefore, he only appears to have helped people, yet he never risks himself while helping others. When he sees the economic hardship he would live after the closure of the button factory, he wants Iris to marry Richard, the new money man, in order to continue to have the lifestyle that she and Laura are used to.

The personal stories and historical background merge in Atwood's novel also in the narrative form. The narrative form of the novel shows parallels between the personal and historical. Just as the personal stories of the characters are embedded in the larger context of history, the narrative of the novel that relates the individual stories of the characters are interrupted by newspaper clippings that often serve as reminders of the larger context of history, ideology, and public opinion. Atwood clearly displays the big story through newspaper clippings and shows how this story is imposed on society as *reality*. One of the reasons for the collective acceptance of the story presented by the newspaper rather than the others voiced by others is that it is a written document. Besides, society believes this story must be *real* as it is considered as an "objective" outcome of journalism, which is thought to be a job that

reveals the truth. Michael comments on the objectivity of the newspaper stories which function as authentic materials throughout Iris' story as follows:

Like all the narratives contained in the novel, the newspaper stories emerge as necessarily mediated. Indeed, the novel makes clear that the newspaper articles, and especially the society news articles, uphold the ruling class and the societal scripts it champions. [. . .] While newspaper stories present themselves as objective published documents, all 'documents' are themselves texts that 'process' or rework 'reality.' (Michael, 2010: 101)

These newspaper clippings are the proof that all the events of the era are shaped by the powerful group that serves the needs of the dominant ideology. In other words, ideological stories suppress the counter stories. Therefore, there is a wide gap between the stories published in the newspapers and Iris' narrative. For instance, while Laura's death is described as a car accident in the newspapers, Iris describes as an act of suicide, which is witnessed by two people in Iris' memoir. In her version of the story, Iris states:

I was informed of the accident by a policeman: the car was mine, and they'd traced the license. [. . .] He said the tires may have caught on a streetcar track and the brakes may have failed, but he also felt bound to inform me that the two witnesses—a retired lawyer and a bank teller, dependable people—had claimed to have seen the whole thing. They'd said Laura had turned the car sharply and deliberately, and had plunged off the bridge with no more fuss than stepping off a curb. (1)

However, the newspapers do not mention the eyewitnesses' statements. Instead, they publish the "real" story behind Laura's death as follows: "Miss Laura Chase, 25, was travelling west on the afternoon of May 18 when her car *swerved* through the barriers protecting a repair site on the bridge and crashed into the ravine below, catching fire. Miss Chase was killed instantly" (3; emphasis added). The newspapers that function as medium of the dominant ideology try to form a sense of reality based on hard facts. That is why, "the choice of words here avoids attributing any intention to Laura, in contrast to *The bridge* earlier describing her as *driving the car off a bridge*" (Dancygier, 2007: 139). By using their highly respected status in society, the Griffens manage to change the reflection of the real course of events to the newspapers by shaping them in accordance with their own benefits. The media, as the mouthpiece of the dominant groups, gear their reports to fit the benefits of these people; in other words, they conceal rather than reveal life as experienced by individuals:

Given all the details Iris provides in her various narratives about her experiences and the people that dominate them, the newspaper stories appear anemic, devoid of any awareness about the real motives, personalities, and lives of the people they mention and quote, and sometimes these accounts are completely wrong. (Michael, 2010: 101)

Since, these newspaper clippings function as “an instrument of dominant ideology” in addition to cover-ups, the media is also involved in twisting facts and creating scapegoats by holding groups responsible for the wrongs of the ruling elite (Staels, 2010: 151). For example, in the novel, the communist ideas are believed to cause violence. They are seen as a threat to the future of their country and regarded as terrorist activities. As a result of the spread of news favoring the dominant ideology based on the reports of newspapers, people start to blame communists for everything. Being subject to these news everyday, people believe in their reality. Iris intersperses her story with newspaper clippings to show the power of the dominant ideology on media. Iris deliberately shows the newspaper clipping published in 1933:

*Captain Chase expressed to the Herald and Banner that in this time of national crisis, all must pitch in as was done in the War, especially those in Ontario which has been more fortunate than some. **Attacked by his competitors most notably Mr. Richard Griffen of Royal Classic Knitwear in Toronto, who have accused him of dumping his overruns on the market as free giveaways and thus depriving the working man of wages, Captain Chase stated that as recipients of these items cannot afford to purchase them he is doing anyone out of sales. He added that all portions of the country have suffered their setbacks and Chase Industries currently faces a scale down of its operations due to reduced demand. He said he would make every attempt to keep factories running but may soon be under the necessity, of either layoffs or part hours and wages. We can only applaud Captain Chase's efforts, a man who holds to his word, unlike the strikebreaking and lockout tactics in centres such as Winnipeg and Montreal, which has kept Port Ticonderago a law-abiding town and clear of the scenes of Union riots, brutal violence and Communist-inspired blood-shed.** (108; emphasis added)*

The tone of the newspaper clipping is striking because while it applauds and favors Richard's attempts by showing him as a citizen who sets an example to society during these harsh times with his charitable work, which in fact cannot be considered one, the clipping also implies that the real threat to the country is Communism which favors *blood-shed*. The media thus functions as an entity that justifies the capitalist system of exploitation and the industrialists it creates. If these newspaper clippings are read in detail, it will be seen that they actually imply that the ones, who criticize Richard and the system, he represents, will have no choice but to face communist threat if they do not consent to this system. The means of media applaud Richard's

promises since they are upheld by the members of the dominant social class who want to maintain the ongoing system that serve their benefits. The newspaper clippings show Richard as a patriot, who tries to protect his country from communists. They show communism as a threat while covering up the real problem. The media, together with Richard, want to prevent people from seeing the fact that they actually pose the real threat because they cover up or twist reality to the benefits of the ruling classes, which further disable the disadvantaged masses of society. In other words, the media functions in normalizing and naturalizing the machinery of power; it turns power into ideology.

By being presented as doing what it takes to be, Richard appears to care about the people in need. However, all he does is to protect his benefits. While he says that he will try to keep his factories open, he also states that he may be forced to lay some people off. With his eloquent speech, Richard tries to conceal his true self. The dominant ideology of capitalism is based on the fear of communism. Since communist ideas require the production and purchase of goods only to the extent that one needs, capitalists are disturbed by this basic principle of communism. As capitalists earn their money largely through mass production and by giving low wages to the workers, they see communism as a threat to their well-being. Capitalists do not want people they employ in their factories to wake up to reality. Capitalism depends on enslaving the proletariat both as cheap labor for production and a large army of consumers who pay extremely high prices for the things they themselves produce. This exploitation is transnational and has to be upheld by the capitalists all over the world. Richard's declaration to the newspapers calls attention to this point: "A strong, healthy Germany was in the interests of the West, and of business in particular, and would serve to 'keep Bolshevism at bay, and away from Bay Street'"(455). Although Richard gives voice to the dominant ideology and is applauded after his speech, his fear is intense. Since he wants to protect both his wealth and power from the communist ideas, he sides with Hitler's ideas. He believes Hitler will prevent Bolshevik ideas from spreading. Therefore, Richard does everything that will help Hitler. He does business with Germany and supplies necessary equipment for Hitler's army. In his article, Bouson states:

After the outbreak of World War II, Richard, like many of his political peers, is forced to salvage his business and political position by aligning himself against Hitler and proving his patriotism by using his factories to help in the war effort. Describing Richard's opportunistic politics, business profiteering, and domestic terrorism, the narrative identifies him as a 'blind assassin': a ruthless man who brutally violates Laura even as he turns 'too blind an eye' to Germany's 'brutal violations of democracy.' (266)

Although Richard supports Hitler and chooses not to see his brutal violation of democracy before World War II since Hitler serves to the American capitalists' benefits, he takes a stand against Hitler starting with World War II. As Hitler's powerful status no longer serves Richard's self-interest and becomes increasingly threatening, Richard, changes the course of his own story in which he used to support Hitler. As long as the power which threatens the rest of the world but does not harm American capitalists in general and Richard in particular, industrialists like Richard and many more see no harm in giving support to Hitler. In other words, to protect his well-being and wealth, Richard turns a blind eye to the cruelty before him and, therefore, contributes largely to the power of Hitler. However, Hitler and Richard mirror one another since in *his own story*, Richard does whatever Hitler does in the big picture or *big story*: "He was Hitler, who had marched into the Rhineland. He'd broken the rules, he'd crossed the line, he'd done the forbidden thing" (368). By putting emphasis on "he," Atwood implies how easy it is to replace Hitler with Richard. Similar to Hitler, Richard crosses the line and does the forbidden thing by abusing Laura. The only difference between them is that while Hitler causes national and international tragedy, Richard causes a tragedy in domestic sphere.

It is as if all the important events in the characters' lives coincide with an important historical event in the novel. While World War I has a profound impact on Iris and Laura's childhood, the upcoming World War II leads to the death of both Alex and Laura. Though the reasons for their deaths are different, the year 1945, the end of the war, marks the end of both their lives. While Alex dies in World War II, Laura commits suicide by driving off the bridge in the same year. Alex's death is both tragic and ironic since like his parents, he loses his life in a war. Laura's death, on the other hand, is both tragic and symbolic. Laura kills herself upon understanding that the covenant she has made with God has not worked. According to the covenant she thought she has made with God, Laura would sacrifice herself by enduring a

sexual intercourse with Richard in order to save Alex. However, when Iris tells her that Alex has died in the war and she has had an affair with Alex, Laura believes she has been betrayed and kills herself. Laura thinks she has been betrayed both by God and her sister. The two ideas, sisterhood and religion, to which she has devoted all her life become shattered down before her eyes.

Laura's death is also symbolic because Laura drives off the bridge in Iris' car, wearing Iris' handgloves. Hands are always important in Iris' memoir as two sisters are tied to one another by their hands. The importance of hands in the two sisters' lives dates back to the moment when Laura makes two different copies of the photograph of Iris, Alex and herself taken in the picnic. Laura cuts herself out of the photograph in Iris' version and leaves only her own *hand* in it. Laura also forms her photograph of Alex and herself by cutting Iris out of it while leaving only Iris' *hand* in the photograph. Therefore, when Laura commits suicide, she also symbolically kills part of Iris not only because one part of Iris is always in Laura's life, like her hand in the photograph, but also because Laura wears Iris' gloves at the time of the accident. It is as if Laura tries to destroy everything that represents both Iris and the capitalist world represented by Richard. She wants to destroy the dominant ideology together with its representatives.

By writing a memoir, Iris claims that "her unofficial history is as much a version of history as official history" (Staels, 2010: 151). Like a historian, Iris writes her story in chronological order. Besides, Atwood shows that while the reader reads Iris' memoir as Iris' personal story, Atwood also implies that *history* is also another *story*, *which* is collectively thought to be true. The placement of the newspaper clippings show the reader that the events stated in the book are related to the real time and place. Therefore, these clippings function as evidence for the "truth." By stating time and place, these newspaper clippings appear to function as reminders of the real events regardless of the fact that they were in fact manipulated by the dominant and powerful social groups. Iris' piece of writing gains more credibility as readers witness the events from Iris' personal perspective in contrast to the impersonal-sounding aspect of newspaper clippings. While newspapers appear to present hard evidence by using statistics, numbers or dates, Iris' story allows the reader to get into her story through her personal narration. By narrating the story

from her own perspective, Iris shows the reader the problems she has encountered in her microcosm. However, the novel puts forward the fact that actually this microcosm reflects a macrocosm. By relating the effects of historical events on the characters' lives, Iris reconstructs the events that characters go through in their lives. In other words, she recreates the past events in parallel with historical events. Though she admits it is difficult to tell the truth, she hopes to have reflected the whole truth about her life after finishing her book. Similar to Iris, Hayri İrdal writes his lifestory while reflecting the important historical events the country is going through. Thus, both narrators of the books end up reconstructing the events that happened in the past from their own perspectives.

To sum up, using historical facts in their stories gives the authors a chance to comment on some historical events and institutions while making up their own stories. Both authors end up getting use of the historical backgrounds, which are already socially-constructed. Thus, they reconstruct these constructions in their stories and make their voices heard since history will swallow personal stories and will present only *big stories* instead.

CONCLUSION

Focusing on the social construction of everyday reality both Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin* and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *The Time Regulation Institute* question what is *real* in our lives. While Atwood's *The Blind Assassin* centers around the *silent* and *systematic* imprisonment of women under patriarchy, which is the most definitive grand narratives that shape reality, Tanpınar's *The Time Regulation Institute* reveals the engulfment and muting of the dissenting and marginalized individuals by the instrumentalizing logic of conformism. Hence, both writers reveal that behind the ambiguity of socially constructed realities lie only the benefits of the powerful.

Social reality reaches us under the guise of being natural; therefore individuals often rely on social reality as if it is unchangeable and given. Yet a critical appraisal of the social world around us will inevitably reveal its constructedness, for, rather than being universal and immutable, social "reality" closely is bound up with culture, language, economy, and other such parameters. To be able to do this requires constant effort and awareness, which may often cause frictions with authorities and powers, who are the architects of these constructions.

These constructions of reality are achieved through narratives, which themselves are constructions. Language, which is a set of symbols, creates an alternative reality blurring the boundaries between the reality as given and the one that has been brought into being through symbols. In fact, the boundaries are so blurred that the alternative reality of language soon overshadows hard reality. It is the human tendency to create a parallel universe of stories; humans are, therefore, myth-making beings, who take great pleasure in not only telling stories but also believing *in* them. Stories are human beings' way of dealing with the obdurate reality. They need to believe that they are special creatures of a deity who created them—or is it vice versa?—in his own image and thus given them a special place among all other creation. They need to believe that a knight in shining armor will come to their rescue at their direst need. They need to believe that they will be rewarded for their good deeds and punished for their evil deeds. They need to believe, in short, that there is a meaning to their lives and they will not turn to mere dust.

It is as if our brain is programmed to tell stories the moment we relate two things to each other. That is to say, people tend to think in stories. The events people encounter in their daily lives are only stories, which they internalize and accept as reality. Though storytelling is common to all and is repeatedly actualized in our everyday lives, a fine line is drawn between stories and reality by giving stories a place only in literature and considering them as an outcome of fiction. Some of those stories keep their story-ness as literary genres, but some of them get fused with our memories of the past and ideologies of the present and the projections into the future. Some assume immense power as they become fossilized as religion and, more recently, national narratives. Therefore, as social beings, we often lose sight of the constructedness of our social worlds and take them to be *the* reality. That is to say, “‘realities’ are *made*, not found” as “narrative creates its realities” (Schiffrin, et al, 2010: 47). Therefore, “the dichotomy of ‘truth versus fiction’ is becoming less dichotomous” (Schiffrin, et al, 2010: 47).

Everything people have accepted as reality is actually a social construction which is created as a result of collaborative acceptance and retelling of some realities rather than others generation after generation.

Human beings continually construct the social world, which then becomes a reality to which they must respond. So that although human beings construct the social world they cannot construct it in any way they choose. At birth they enter a world already constructed by their predecessors and this world assumes the status of an objective reality for them and for later generations (Burr, 1995: 185)

Hence, not everyone has power to construct social reality. Since socially constructed realities shape bigger systems by creating role-makers and pawns to play their parts in the system, their effect is always on large-scale. That is to say, many socially constructed terms, created by the dominant and powerful group, which range from government, religion, history, patriarchy to communism, capitalism and to several other concepts, affect the way people live all around the world on large-scale and serve to the benefits of the dominant ideologies that want to maintain the order in the world as the way it is. For instance, “there is an unmistakable pattern of projecting onto subordinated groups, as their ‘nature’ or ‘natural,’ features that are instead (if manifested at all) the result of social forces” (Haslenger, 2012: 5). Gender and race are two of such socially constructed concepts:

Gender is the social meaning of sex, while race the social meaning of (geographical) ancestry. While nature divides us by colour and sex, we divide ourselves by race and gender. While gender and race are real, their reality is of our making, the result of our social norms and practices rather than our biology, and to the extent these are unjust, so too are gender and race, the categories and differences we create and help to sustain. (Root, 2013: 563)

Hence, humans continuously construct realities though the logic behind these realities has no relationship with nature, but instead are outcomes of ideologies favored by the dominant groups both in our ancient and in our present world.

Thus, stories are inescapable and indispensable parts of the human life. If human beings are such “storytelling animals,” stories are their birthrights. As such, ideally, there are potentially as many stories as there are human beings. Is this the case, however? Both literature and life as lived experience demonstrate that not everybody’s perception of reality becomes a story worth telling and listening to. While some find no audience, some even get articulated. Both novels in this dissertation show how bigger stories engulf smaller stories and therefore, remain the only reality in recent past, leading the reader to question how the imposed realities have changed our perception of reality from time immemorial to the present.

While it is often consolatory to think that only in ancient times did people make stories that transformed natural powers to deities, which they worshipped, modern times have not really changed that habit but simply presented in under more state-of-the-art garbs. As opposed to the religious stories of the past, the modern world is immersed in secular stories that ubiquitously appear in almost every aspect of human endeavor ranging from science, to history, economy to health, in so persistent a manner that it has become impossible to be aware of their *constructedness*.

In their fiction, Atwood and Tanpınar not only present how socially constructed realities have been pawned off as reality in recent past but also lead the reader to understand the connectedness between power and stories and the ways the stories further stabilize and confirm power structures at the expense of other individuals whom they muffle and weaken. By showing the imprisonment of women in patriarchal system and revealing the passiveness and submissiveness of women in this so-called reality, Atwood shows how reality can be twisted by the ones holding the power in their hands. Like Atwood, Tanpınar presents how socially constructed

realities prevail over individual stories and become everyday realities. Hence, by showing the consequences of socially constructed realities on people in recent past, both writers reveal that reality has always been twisted. In the face of our imprisonment in the linguistic and social reality, these novels present a possibility to break the bond between the power and stories, allowing the muted and muffled voices of women, the downtrodden, the common sense in a crazy world that has gone totally loose. They present moments of fresh air, awareness and alertness to the stories that surround us and awaken us to the probability that we too can be the authors of our stories. In other words, these two novels, demonstrate the collaboration, competition and rivalry between what we call grand narratives and individual stories.

The socially constructed realities are actually *big stories* or *grand narratives*. By attributing people, institutions or systems certain roles, these narratives not only give meaning to people's lives, but also maintain social order by avoiding chaos. In other words, people who are born into any society are brought up learning their roles and the rules they are expected to obey during their lifetimes through listening to and internalizing these grand narratives. Yet, in addition to such stories into which we are born, we also invent and tell stories that reshape our individual reality. For instance, we tell our life stories to one another, we talk about our day to a friend or we tell and retell news stories to others. These two levels of stories are both interdependent and competitive. "The story of one's individual life depends on the larger stories of the community to which one belongs" (Martin, 2000: 1). As such, each individual story is both a response and a small-scale alternative to the grand narrative in which the narrator lives. The challenges and the collaborations between these two levels of storytelling proceed in a delicate balance. Once individuals manage to tell their own version of their stories that oppose and contradict bigger stories, they are labeled as marginal. Often these marginal stories are repressed and/or domesticated, or they become voiced in literature. Hence, the system maintains itself by carefully leaving out the alternative or counter versions of socially constructed realities.

While personal stories, which are actually self constructed stories, prevail in our daily lives as a result of our interaction with each other, bigger stories' effects are much more influential on people since these stories are not even considered as

“story,” instead they are believed to be “reality.” That is to say, bigger stories *normalize* certain norms, images or roles so well that these become taken-for-granted realities in the end:

The lens through which we receive these images is not neutral but evinces the power and point of view of the political and economic elites who operate and focus it. And the special genius of this system is to make the whole process seem so normal and natural that the very art of social construction is invisible. (Gamson et al, 1992: 374)

The grand narrative that the individual faces in *The Blind Assassin* takes the shape of patriarchy, which dominates and silences half the population due to their gender. The novel challenges the patriarchal norms that assume male-centered and linear logic by diffusing the narrative voice to multiple narrators and their interwoven narratives. While the grand narrative of patriarchy is monophonic, Atwood’s novel is multivocal and multifocal. The multiple tellers of the novel, namely Iris, Laura and Alex present alternative narratives that contradict the patriarchs’ grand narrative. By avoiding suppressing and marginalizing alternative stories, the narrators follow a cyclical pattern in their stories and, therefore, reveal the existence of multiple alternative realities. For instance, Iris acknowledges that this novel is a collaborative work of herself and Laura. Iris states: “Laura was my left hand and I was hers. We wrote the book together. It’s a left-handed book. That’s why one of us is always out of sight, whichever way you look at it” (516). Thus, that some voices do not find their distinct narrators does not mean they do not exist. Iris writes the book without suppressing the voice of Laura and Alex. As multiple tellers of one story, namely “The Blind Assassin,” they allow the integration of each story into one another. Thus, the stories of multiple tellers avoid “othering” and give voice to alternative stories.

In contrast, the stories of the patriarchs, namely Iris and Laura’s father and Richard, have a clear purpose and progressive logic which maintains the patriarchal system. The stories of patriarchs, which function as grand narratives, shape the way women behave, dress or even do their hair according to their own rules so that women, naturalize and internalize these norms. Hence, through many characters ironically among whom there are women, Atwood presents the calcification of patriarchal narrative, which gives no space to alternative stories.

Atwood shows the reader, as opposed to the polyphony of individual stories, the grand narratives do not admit of dissenting voices. In order to have a say within the grand narrative, one has to align his/her individual story to fit the norms and ideology offered in this big narrative. Thus, with every small story it integrates into itself, the grand narrative consolidates its power and becomes all the more unassailable. Patriarchy as the most powerful of these grand narratives manages to increase its power and hush unorthodox views by its monophonic and univocal structure. The end of this narrative does not allow for multiple and alternative endings for they are already prescribed from their start.

The tone of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *The Time Regulation Institute* differs, for rather than the somber tone of Atwood's novel, Tanpınar's novel has a highly comical tone. Yet, it does not reduce the intensity of its subject. It delves into the psychology of the authors of grand narratives and demonstrates how stories compete with one another in our everyday lives and how the authors of grand narratives are often those who assume power at the expense of the most common sense assumptions and sweep their audience off their feet into an unrelenting frenzy of idiocy. In the meantime, the voice of reason, common sense, and the individual who has a different version of truth is kept silent. The major author of the narrative, which is the Institute, is Halit the Regulator, who, with his irrational charisma, brings a totally functionless institute into existence disregarding any that call him to common sense reality. For instance, the moment Hayri tries to tell his own story, he is silenced and ignored as if he is the only one who misinterprets the events around him. The people around him, particularly Dr. Ramiz, Pakize and especially Halit the Regulator, successfully keep him in the fictive world Halit the Regulator has created and, therefore, constantly present to him a different reality that goes starkly against what he experiences as such. Since Hayri is given no chance to make up his own story, he ends up imprisoned in the stories of others, which function as grand narratives. Tanpınar shows that not only the bureaucratic state institutions but also, more importantly, the whole perception of reality are no more than fictions of lunatic yet charismatic individuals who can manipulate others as their disciples.

While larger stories are shape our identities, beliefs, bodies or roles by imposing themselves as *reality*, not every small story has a chance to be heard. That

is to say, self-constructed stories cannot often exist unless they support the larger story. Hence, though various realities exist, the “larger story” successfully blinds people to these alternative realities by labeling them as “marginal stories.” Since the dominant ideology is geared to maintaining its ongoing system, in it these alternative stories are seen as threats and, therefore, are discredited. This is exactly what both Atwood and Tanpınar show to their readers through their victimized characters Iris, Laura and Hayri. However, both writers present how larger story swallows individual stories in different ways. On the one hand, Atwood portrays Iris as a character who remains blind to her own story and, therefore, lives in Richard’s story until Laura’s suicide and presents Laura as a character who fails to live her own story in a patriarchal society which labels her as “marginal.” On the other hand, Tanpınar depicts Hayri İrdal as a character who, like Iris, fails to create his own story and ends up living in other people’s stories. However, the difference between Iris and Hayri is that while Hayri understands that he is living in a dream world once in a while but keeps contributing to other people’s stories by playing his part, Iris opens her eyes to the *socially constructed reality* at the very end and gets a chance to make her side of the story heard. Though these self-constructed stories that do not go hand in hand with the larger story are silenced, they still remain to be “reality.” Thus, both novels disclose in their unique ways who or what decides on the shape of “reality” into which we are born.

If socially constructed reality in any field is imposed on people without people’s notice, as Berger and Luckman claim, then it may be concluded that the individual is a “mechanical” being who is supposed to give the responses that have been taught to him or her by the mores of a particular society since childhood. For instance, why should millions of individuals willingly choose to get married, have children or wear similar clothes? They do these because they are “the products of society they are born into” (Burr, 1995: 182). Besides, “in long chains of communicative interaction, those past collective experiences that are not fated to be forgotten are suitably dressed up and provide the cloth from which present collective identities are fashioned” (Luckmann, 2008: 278). That is to say, the past shapes present day as it functions as a reliable source which shows the way things are

supposed to be. Hence, both Atwood's and Tanpınar's books reveal that as humans are born into certain kind of reality that we take for "real."

Yet the authors do more than show our imprisonment in stories; they create alternatives. Both Atwood and Tanpınar open the eyes of their readers to "socially constructed realities" or "so-called realities" which masquerade as "Truth" so that they can reevaluate the portion of constructedness in their lives, such as their bodies, their genders or even their life choices. In other words, such a view may transform everything that is seen as "real" into a mass of collectively accepted rules and roles attributed to people, institutions or to things in order to maintain the ongoing system. Hence, raising awareness to this fact, the novels demonstrate that behind every social behavior and institution lie powerful stories. Since there is no way out of stories, the authors recommend the process of healing as multiplication of stories with new ones from the unheard-of corners of societies and the world.

Demonstrating the inescapability of linguistic and social constructions that surround us and thus opening the eyes of their readers to the fictitiousness of what may appear as hard-core reality, both Atwood and Tanpınar invite the readers to respond to this world of fiction by constructing their own fictions, their own reality constructions and perceptions. Whether every story gets to be heard is still a major problem, but one has to hope, against all odds, that her version might find voluntary audiences, if not in the world of lived-experiences, at least in the fictional worlds like Atwood's or Tanpınar's.

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