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From national allegory to cosmopolitanism: Transformations in contemporary Anglo-Indian and Turkish novels

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Chapter Two

Allegory versus Theatricality: Subverting the Nation from Within

According to Joel Rosenberg, the basic definition of an allegorical narrative is that it hinges on the intersection between personal and supra-personal domains (202). In other words, the personal or individual element refers in various ways to that which is beyond it. Allegory in texts, therefore, mediates between individual characters and a larger world. By combining the concepts of allegory and nation, the American Marxist critic Fredric Jameson has broadened the definition and introduced the concept of *national allegory*: a genre in which characters play out complex relationships that interpret and highlight what are felt to be the significant aspects of a national history. Jameson's view that particularly literary works from third-world nations are inevitably about national predicaments caused by first-world imperialism has prompted an influential form of literary analysis. In his 1986 essay, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," Jameson asserts that

All third-world texts are necessarily . . . allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*, even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly Western machineries of representation, such as the novel . . . Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic, necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society. (69, italics mine)

Two points are important in the quotation above. The first is that, as part of this argument, Jameson reads third-world texts through the lens of national allegory, which allows readers to see the connection between the individual and the nation. He attempts to articulate an alternative to the view that a text is either overtly political or overtly personal. Instead, he suggests that to read third-world texts as always both personally invested and as national

allegories is to understand their importance for the third-world context from which they emerge. This form of reading third-world texts is not just a possibility among others, but rather an “epistemological priority” for Jameson (“Third World” 86).

The second point Jameson makes is that third-world texts are to be understood as national allegories specifically in contrast to the situation of first-world cultural and literary texts. He argues that there is a political dimension to third-world texts that is presently absent in their first-world counterparts. Jameson believes that, in the West, the consequence of the separation between the public and the private, between the poetic and the political, is “the deep cultural conviction that the lived experience of our private existences is somehow incommensurable with the abstractions of economic science and political dynamics” (69). In terms of literary production, this “cultural conviction” has the effect of limiting or even of negating entirely the political work of literature: in the first world, literature is a matter of the private rather than public sphere, a matter of individual tastes and solitary meditations rather than of public debate and deliberation. The relations between the public and the private in the third world are entirely different: they have not (yet) undergone this separation and division.

The connection between the individual and the national narrative is certainly manifest in *Lying Down to Die*, where Adalet Agaoglu tackles issues of historical, social and political significance, and aims to articulate a microcosm of Turkish society. In this sense her novels “hold a mirror” to Turkish society at specific points in time. Sibel Erol points out that all of Agaoglu’s works can be read as historical and sociological analyses of transformation at certain periods of Turkish society (7). Erol characterises *Lying down to Die* (1973) as a novel that “draws a panorama of Turkish society between 1938 and 1968. By tracking the life of a group of kids who graduate from the village school as the students of the teacher Dunder in 1968, the text communicates the social, political and historical developments of this period” (8).

Similarly, Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* (2004) is closely related to the aftermath of the 1980 coup d'état in Turkey. Pamuk describes *Snow* as his "first and last political novel" (Erciyes). The critic Richard Eder compares Pamuk's previous novel *My Name is Red* with *Snow*, and states that the latter's setting is more political (*New York Times*). In a more complex argument, the literary critic Nergis Erturk describes *Snow* as "a national-realist allegory," a novel about "the microcosm of Turkey in a small town inverted and expanded within a global world-literary and world-literary-critical aesthetic" (634-35). Kursat Ertugrul, on the other hand, analyses Pamuk's oeuvre and observes that his works express "the dominant concept of modernisation in Turkey, which equates modernisation with Westernisation" (635).

Salman Rushdie's work is often read in light of Jameson's critical framework for reading third-world texts. For example, Timothy Brennan argues that in Rushdie's work as a whole, "[n]arrative never follows the emotional logic of the characters' lives, but the brittle, externally determined contours of 'current events'" (84-85). Critical readings of Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) seem to agree unanimously on regarding the novel as a national allegory. Jacqueline Bandolph states that *Midnight's Children* is an allegory, claiming that Saleem Sinai "explicitly embodies the hopes of a new nation"(45). Kathleen Flanagan similarly concludes that Saleem "connect[s] the private to the social," that Saleem's "inner life is a function of the historical forces affecting his state," and that Saleem "seems himself as a vulnerable part of society as a whole"(42). Thus, Jameson's 'user's guide' on reading third-world literary works seems applicable to both Turkish and Indian contexts.

In the light of these preliminary observations, the aim of this chapter is to explore the possibilities and limits of Fredric Jameson's national allegory through a comparative discussion of the novels *Lying down to Die*, *Snow* and *Midnight's Children*, exploring whether they offer us relevant insights on the link between private and public spheres in India and Turkey. As I will try to show, the allegorical equation between story and nation is

pertinent only to the extent that emphatically and deliberately theatrical and cinematic elements are present in the three novels. These elements push the allegory beyond the merely national, suggesting parodist adaptations of the national narratives. In this sense, parody plays a major role in the writers' exploration and handling of their subject matter. Another issue that needs to be tackled is related to the fundamental concern implicit in Jameson's analysis of third-world texts: is there, to begin with, a single third-world reality? Jameson's mode of literary analysis risks homogenizing large groups of diverse, nationally distinct literatures. In order to provide answers to that question, I compare and contrast respective histories of nation building in terms of India's and Turkey's circumstances.⁵

In the course of this chapter, I problematise Jameson's concept of national allegory historically with respect to the respective modernisation trajectories of Turkey and India. I analyse both nations in relation to Jameson's idea of third world texts to see whether his model applies. I discuss a number of similarities and differences between India and Turkey. I then re-examine the central notion of national allegory by bringing in other perspectives, notably by Judith Butler, Michel Foucault and Homi K. Bhabha. Enabled by their theoretical vocabularies, I reflect on the dialectic between allegorical and theatrical nationality in the novels *Lying down to Die*, *Snow* and *Midnight's Children*. Finally, I consider the possibilities and limitations of Jameson's approach.

The Third World?

Jameson's notion of national allegory is problematic because of the implications of the term 'Third World'. In his criticism of Jameson's article, Aijaz Ahmad points to its reductive connotation, claiming that arguing that "all Third World texts are necessarily this or that"

⁵A postcolonial state in the case of India, and in the case of Turkey, a non-imperial nation-state that emerged from the ashes of an empire.

means saying that “any text originating within that social space which is not this or that is not a ‘true’ narrative” (105). Ahmad states that reading third-world literature with national allegory as metatext results in “epistemologically an impossible category” (105). Ahmad also highlights a second problem: speaking of a single ‘Third World’ erases the heterogeneity of societies so depicted, as well as the differences internal to societies (Dirlik, “Spectres” 139). Ignoring the specificities of different societies in this manner would make a comparative discussion of Turkey and India unworkable, and also unnecessary.

However, both Indian and Turkish contexts become relevant in different ways if we presume as our starting point the understanding of the Third World as a series of historical positions rather than a fixed and essential object (Prakash 384). Then we may also explain the reason why Turkey – despite its long imperial history – is routinely cited as an example of a third-world country among other third-world countries, such as Korea, Bolivia, Chile, Mexico and Brazil country, for instance in Joan M. Nelson’s work (461). Haldun Gulalp presents Turkey as an example “which has always been considered a pioneer of third-world independence” (953). Indeed, Arif Dirlik’s argues that the Three Worlds theory is a shifting idea: when historical realities change, the conceptualization of the term alters as well. Hence, we can scrutinize India and Turkey as countries that have both distinct and overlapping qualities vis-a-vis the concept of Third World (Dirlik, “Spectres” 132). Dirlik claims that the term Third World was a “by-product of modernisation discourse in Euro-American social science, formulated in the 1950s in response to the entanglement of colonialism and anti-colonial movements in an emerging Cold War that impelled the globe to division between two major power blocks” (133). Viewed in this manner, India’s categorisation as a third-world country becomes connected to its history, moving from a colonised to a post-colonial country.

Dirlik contends that “any critique of the Third World concept or the three worlds idea needs to be approached within the context of a broader critique of modernisation discourse” (“Spectres” 132). He explains that modernisation discourse seeks “to ensure continued Euro-American hegemony over the present and future” as it represents “Euro-American social, political and cultural paradigms—the paradigms of capitalist modernity—as the ultimate paradigms of progress” (133). This framework informs my analysis of Turkey and India in relation to the concept of Third World. I view both countries’ efforts at modernisation as examples of “alternative modernities” in non-Western contexts (Gaonkar). Rather than conceiving modernity as “a closed monolith” (Berman 24) that claims that all societies are embarked on a single historical path, I use the term in the sense that Turkey and India have both very similar and very different characteristics with regards to modernisation discourse. The idea of alternative modernities seeks to account for the fact that modernisation has proven itself to be much more multifarious than the way it was conceived. As Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar argues, “everywhere, at every national/cultural site, modernity is not one but many; modernity is not new but old and familiar, modernity is incomplete and necessarily so” (23). Thus we have various experiences of modernity: different trajectories and divergent paths. In light of these critical perspectives, I consider the position of India and Turkey as part of the Third World, while I seek out to emphasise the countries’ distinct characteristics that are informed by historical differences.

India and Turkey: comparison and contrast

The comparison between Turkey and India requires an engagement with their respective projects of nation building and their discontinuity with regard to state forms and modes of governance. Important transformations are linked to the project of building sovereign nation-states out of the ruins of empire, which took place in Turkey in 1923 and in India in 1947. According to Srirupa Roy, India's modernisation project entailed the effort to break away from British colonial structures and to secure a distinctive Indian modernity ("Temple" 152). Similarly, Turkey's modernisation aimed at a complete rupture with its Ottoman and imperial past in both political and cultural terms (Keyman 220). For both countries, secularism was adopted as the defining feature of the new state.

Although secularism has been cited as the common denominator of Turkey's and India's modernisation projects, the two countries have institutionalised secularism very differently. For India, secularism was associated with the attempt to build and consolidate a representative state government and a distinctive form of modernity (Roy, "Temple" 161). In this respect, underscoring the enduring differences between Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, and Parsis became integral to secular discourse and practice (156). The secular insistence on minority difference worked to constitute Hindu identity as the unmarked centre of Indianness while simultaneously emphasising sub-national ethnic diversity as the characteristic feature of Indian identity (Roy, "Instituting" 81). In contrast, Turkey's interpretation and implementation of secularism engages with a different majority religion (Islam), and a historical experience of nation-state formation that evolved along a different route.⁶ In an

⁶According to Roy, the differences between the applications seem to stem from the particular experiences of the founding elites of the two nations (Ataturk was a member of the Ottoman bureaucracy at a time in which centralizing imperial reforms were being enacted), and the existence of certain kinds of international norms and modular templates of nationhood (the world after the first world war was one in which organicist, ethnoracialist, and centralising nationalisms were gaining dominance), all played a part in determining why centralisation rather than devolution and *étatisme* rather than representativeness came to dominate the Turkish national

effort to reduce the political importance of Islam by securing its banishment from public and political realms, Turkey privileged the attribute of state strength –the existence of a unitary, centralized state – unlike the representative attribute of India as a secular state that provided equal treatment and protection to all religions, particularly to minorities. Both countries have shaped their nation-building projects on different perceptions of nation: “official Indian nationalism emphasized the ethnocultural heterogeneity of the nation while official Turkish nationalism produced the nation as a unitary cultural essence” (Roy, “Seeing a State” 206).

In relation to Jameson’s conception of literature as a necessary matter of the public sphere in the Third World, these similarities and differences suggest that, because the public spheres of India and Turkey are shaped according to different political modes of modernity, the expressions of the public sphere will differ as well. Certainly, the lack of a split between the private and public spheres, which results in the tale of the individual allegorically reflecting the story of the nation, can equally be found in Indo-English and Turkish novels. However, as I will argue, *Lying Down to Die*, *Snow* and *Midnight’s Children* offer alternative ways of knowing as well as problematising rather than confirming their significance as national allegories.

Allegorical or theatrical?

National allegory is concerned with the nexus between the individual and the national situation. Yet, in *Lying Down to Die*, *Snow*, and *Midnight’s Children* this form can also be read as a specific performance, achieved through the deployment of theatricality. The performative dimension in the construction of identities enables the idea that, rather than as stories of the nation, the texts I have chosen should be read as parodies of national allegories.

project (“Temple” 165).

The individuals (characters) are assigned with stage roles as actors and actresses, enacting narratives organized by the playwright (the author) in the form of a parody of a nation. The parody that theatricality exposes becomes a mode of agency and opposition for the characters that are invested with a particular identity or ideological significance.

For the purposes of my analysis of theatricality I draw on the framework provided by Elizabeth Burns. Burns has incorporated theatre history and sociological theory to make connections between what is viewed on the stage and what occurs in reality. According to Burns, the exploration of the relationship between society and theatre reveals the interconnectedness of life and stage. This relationship can be related to Jameson's politics of textuality, which is concerned with the "ways in which the social environment becomes articulated within the structure of ideology itself" (Wuthnow 154). In other words, the political perspective constitutes "the absolute horizon of all reading and interpretation" (Jameson, *The Political* 17). Jameson stresses the political share of the ideologically vested interest in the text, as well as the impossibility of separating the entangledness of society and individual. I suggest that Jameson's understanding of the connection of individual to a nation presumes a pre-given identity, which Elizabeth Burns reveals as "codified social behaviour" in that she indicates that theatre is a vehicle for the "transmission of specific beliefs, attitudes, and feelings in terms of organised social behaviour" (33).

Burns' approach to theatricality dates back to the 1960s. Judith Butler has endorsed it in the 1990s. For Burns, theatricality occurs when certain behaviours seem to be not natural or spontaneous but "composed according to this grammar of rhetorical and authenticating conventions" to achieve some particular effect on its viewers (33). Butler, however, asserts that the "codified social behaviour" that Burns seeks to reveal produces identities performatively. In other words, "identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results" (Butler 25). Subjects continually perform identities

that are prescribed by hegemonic discourses. For Butler, performativity interrogates implicit norms. She recognizes identity as a process of identification, something that is done over and over again instead of something that is an inherent characteristic of the individual. I will attempt to show that in *Lying Down to Die*, *Snow*, and *Midnight's Children*, as stage actors performing roles, the characters are socially interpellated in the performance of acts.

Butler contributes to the theorising of subjectification, the processes by which subjects are compelled to participate in reproducing official discourses of identity. Butler is particularly interested in the performative aspects of gendered bodies. She shows how gender is a socially imposed or discursive code that is responded to and performed. I aim to scrutinise a different aspect of performativity other than gender: the sphere of national belonging.

Key to Butler's view is Michel Foucault's analysis of power. Foucault argues that power should not always be seen in terms of its obvious institutional forms. He insists that power needs to be understood "as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization"; and, moreover, "as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another" ("Afterword" 92-93). Power is located in this "moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and stable" (93).

Furthermore, power relations are not separate from other kinds of relations, such as economic, family or sexual relations, but are immanent to all of these, so that power is the product of these supporting or opposing relations. The inequalities within them also give shape to the systems of domination. In all these localised areas of power relations there is simultaneously resistance against domination. However, Foucault later revises this conflict of

power and resistance arguing that these same resistances “are in an opposition to the effects of power which is linked with knowledge, competence and qualification... What is questioned is the way in which knowledge circulates and functions, its relations to power. In brief, the *régime du savoir*” (*The History* 212). What contemporary forms of resistance contest, therefore, are not power relations per se, but rather a regime of knowledge that ties the individual in a constraining way to an identity supposedly his or her own.

Whereas Foucault is concerned with the historical and socio-linguistic webs in which the individual is inescapably caught, Butler focuses on the problematic of agency. Agency is required for each subject to sustain identity through constant repetition (Butler 145). The question is how to perform gender in a way that subverts gender identity. Her overall point is that, in acting, the subject “has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (138).

As my analysis deals with a performative reading of national allegory, it is necessary to elucidate what implications performance and performativity may have for the formation of a nation. Homi K. Bhabha’s views of the nation are significant in that theatricality complements his concept of performance. Theatricality is identifiable in Bhabha’s notion of performative agency as an act, as both a show and a showing up. Before tackling the concept of theatricality in relation to the three novels, it is necessary to situate Bhabha’s analysis of the performative aspects of nation vis-à-vis Judith Butler’s general notion of performativity.

An important aspect of Bhabha’s thinking is that agency is possible only with subjection. We do not act under conditions of our own choosing; we act within a given discursive context. Yet Bhabha claims that, in the discursive realm, the agent can act subversively in spite of the dominant narrative. Agency, in that sense, is a specific response, but also an impediment, to discursive authority. Thus, without discursive subjection, no agency is possible. Key to the notion of acting only with and within a given discursive terrain

is the idea of repetition. Jacques Derrida has pointed out that all utterances are repetitions so that when one articulates, one is actually re-articulating (307). Each iteration is never the same, moreover, because it is always marked by a difference that is contained in the very structure of language. This means that discourse is always already iterative, and each discursive iteration is differently articulated in different contexts. The implication for politics is that agency is precisely the performance, the acting out, of this repetition.

Performance contributes to agency. Firstly, agency exposes repetition, and stages the ambivalence and contingency of authority. Bhabha calls this “desacralis[ing] the transparent assumptions of cultural supremacy,” “introduc[ing] a lack” or “exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference—be it class, gender or race” (119, 219, 228). Agency is about exposing the constructedness of discourse and power, while domination is about fixing or hiding them. Secondly, while “repeating the lessons of the masters,” agency “changes their inflections” (“Freedom’s Basis” 54). For Bhabha, mimicry, through “challenging the boundaries of discourse and subtly changing its terms”, creates the opportunity for agency (119).

Mimicry is a means of subverting authority within colonialism. Bhabha describes his view of colonial mimicry as a discursive operation, in which “the excess or slippage produced by the ambivalence of mimicry (almost the same, but not quite)” serves both to undermine the authority of the dominant discourses of the colonial system and to transform them “into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a ‘partial’ presence” (“Of Mimicry” 127). Through mimicry, Bhabha claims, “the representation of identity and meaning is rearticulated along the axis of metonymy... mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization or repression of difference, but a form of resemblance that differs/defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically” (“Of Mimicry” 131). This repetition, this doubling, exposes the instability and lack within colonial power.

Burns proposes that the theatrical aspect of texts provides the connection between theatre and reality. Reconsidering Burn's ideas, Butler proposes that the reality or social behaviour Burns focuses on are to be understood as performative constructs. Bhabha is concerned with the creative (even theatrical) dimension of performance in its resistance to hegemonic discourse. It can paradoxically destabilize even as it reinforces authority. Bhabha's notion of mimicry implies performativity in Butler's terms. His writing is replete with the words "performance" or the "performative," speaking, for example, about the "postcolonial performance of repetition" ("Freedom's Basis" 52), or the "performative nature of differential identities" (219) But it is mainly in the essay titled "DissemiNation" that he elaborates what he means.

In "DissemiNation," Bhabha explains how his conception of agency not only performs the discourse that attempts to stabilise identity but also exposes its doubling and contingency. Here, he sharply distinguishes between the "pedagogical" and the "performative". The former denotes the nation's narrative authority, "signifying people as an a priori historical presence, a pedagogical object," and the latter indicates the "people constructed in the performance of a narrative, its enunciatory 'present' that is marked by repetition and pulsation of the national sign (*Location* 147). Like Butler, Bhabha conceives of the subject as being performed in the enunciatory present marked in the repetition. The people-as-subject, for him, only emerge out of the nation when they act as political agents, drawing attention to the heterogeneity and ambivalence of the nation.

For the purpose of this analysis, the concept of mimicry will be deployed in relation to situations that are informed by repetition, performance and theatricality in *Lying Down to Die, Snow*, and *Midnight's Children*. As displayed, resisted and parodied in these three narratives, the characters are overloaded by the imposed sociohistorical meanings through repeating and performing the respective nation's pedagogical narratives.

The modern nation on stage

Lying Down to Die is considered one of the most influential works in the convention of the Turkish novel. It begins with a short chapter in which Aysel, a 40-year-old professor and a privileged female intellectual in Turkey, lies down to die. She sincerely believes in the official narrative of the Turkish nation and arranges her life according to its requirements. She has become a devout believer of the ideals of the Turkish Republic. Her duty is to promote the principles of the Republic but she struggles to maintain her individuality and suffers from the irresolvable conflict between national duty and her personal ideals that she neglected throughout her life. The tension reaches a climax as Aysel attempts to commit suicide in a hotel room.

The second chapter, in which the reader is taken to Aysel's childhood, describes the graduation celebrations, held on the day of the fifteenth anniversary of the Turkish Republic (in 1938), at her provincial primary school. The emergence on the stage of a portrait of Atatürk is followed by the performance of "The Professions", a play authored and directed by the idealist teacher (Dundar) of the graduating class. The play introduces the main characters of the novel as the "soldiers" of the new nation's "army of enlightenment," an army in which each member is assigned a well-defined position, rank and duty, directed toward a particular contribution to the future that is already charted out by the light radiating from the Great Leader's face. The profession or role assigned to the each child strictly corresponds to his or her family's social status, which illustrates how different classes, gender issues and cultural backgrounds implicate the individual:

The children in charge of the stage were anxious... The 'doctor's shirt' was missing. Ertürk acquired the injector from the nearest dispensary. The sphygmomanometer was there but he had no shirt. Someone whispered, "Namik must have stolen it!"... Meanwhile Namik was wandering in the middle of the crowd with the 'scale' that

was brought from the village of Akyazi. He was not tall enough to carry the ‘scale’. The son of the head official of the district was wearing the black ‘attorney’s robe’ with a red satin collar –which was too big for his size– trying to rehearse his lines, “Justice is the foundation of possession. The right of people . . . In the part “Professions”, Aysel was wearing her mother’s high-heeled shoes, which she filled with cotton so that she could stand up. Her role was the female clerk. (Agaoglu 17,19, my translation)

The students in “The Professions,” with their borrowed adult clothes, sphygmomanometers, scales, injectors, robes, and forgotten lines, standing in for the whole nation, illustrate the allegorical impulse of *Lying Down to Die* in the spirit of Erol and Jameson. The play seems to illustrate Jameson’s view that, in the Third World, the spheres of the private and the public are intimately connected; social awareness conditions subjective experience. Yet, during this performance of the allegory of the Turkish nation entering the civilized world, the awkwardness of borrowed costumes, matched with the discomfort in the audience that is caused by the incomprehension and disapproval of some of the parents, provides sufficient cause to suspect that the national allegory, when brought to the stage, inevitably becomes, in a sense, a parody (Irzik, “Allegorical Lives” 559).

The historical context of *Lying Down to Die* is mainly shaped by the events that took place between the 1930s and 1960s. This period encompasses the repercussions of Turkey’s massive programme of social engineering from the moment of the Republic’s founding in 1923 until the death of its founding father Kemal Ataturk in 1938. Important changes included the abolition of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Pious Foundations, the abolition of religious courts, the proscription of male religious headgear, the fez, the dissolution of the dervish orders, the reform of the calendar, and the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code (Kongar).⁷ The period brought forth the idea of a new national –as opposed to imperial– identity, deeply imbued with the idea of “Turkishness.” By the end of the 1920s, radical reforms were passed such as the disestablishment of the state religion (10 April 1928),

⁷All quotations from Emre Kongar are my translations.

the adoption of the Latin alphabet (1 November 1928), and the use of the Turkish language in the Islamic call to prayer (3 February 1932). The project of bringing into existence a *Yeni Turan* (*New Society*) infiltrated all aspects of life, with the state legislating on a wide range of issues ranging from the names, dress, leisure-time activities, and public comportment of individuals to those concerning the macro-structures of social, economic, and political organisation, such as the nature of law, the role of religion, the content of education, the choice of national language, and the relationship between the state and the economy.

Epitomising the alienation of society and its individuals in the face of the changes imposed by the state-centric national politics of Turkish Republic, in “The Professions,” the nation-space becomes the ground on which the nation’s politics are both stage-managed (mimicked) and contested (subverted). The pedagogical authority of the nation-state is both performed and resisted by way of the dramatization of the distance between the role and the actor, the costume and the body, which reveal the awkwardness of the assumed or demanded coincidence between individual and national destinies, and the burden of feeling obliged to achieve such a coincidence (Irzik, “Allegorical Lives” 556). In Bhabhaian terms, this performative resistance does more than just resist: it recasts the hegemonic discourse in such a way that it estranges the discourse by retrieving from it the “foreign” notions such as the “attorney’s robe,” “the scale,” and the “high-heeled shoes,” for these items all represent the ‘new’ face of modern Turkey.

Lying Down to Die encompasses almost forty years of Turkey’s history in Aysel’s monologues, questioning herself as she decides to lie down to die, which takes about one hour and twenty minutes. The novel unfolds on three different planes (Irzik, “Olmeye Yatmak” 48). The first level comprises documentary information such as newspaper extracts, reports and announcements; headings such as “No place to retreat anymore (*Lying Down to Die* 113);” “An orchestra for each village” (181); “Brother! The war is over” (232). These

texts reflect events from real life. Experiences of incidents such as the World War II, the Marshall Aid program, and the Korean War cross with personal events that happen in the lives of the novel's characters. The second level comprises an external narrator who looks into the lives of characters from a distance and shares their experiences. This narrator introduces us to the characters in the school play "Professions" by describing their roles, and informs us about the rest of their lives, sometimes about their relations with one another, with an objective tone, refraining from direct speculation. This form of narration can be called external. The third level consists of personal narrations such as letters, diaries, dialogues, monologues, sometimes in the form of first-person narration focusing on characters, amalgamating with characters' own narrations.

As mentioned above, the first category, consisting of documentary texts, constructs the narration of the Turkish Republic's national pedagogy. The slogans from newspapers and radio news are all examples of the national discourse of modernization. However, these instances of national pedagogy are placed within an-already-constructed text, which is the novel itself. This intricateness between the objective voice of the official narrative and the subjective tone of the narrator's intervention points to the constructedness of the text. The fact that these radio news and newspapers are fused with fictitious characters and events not only creates a feeling of peculiarity but also casts doubt on their credibility. What makes this obvious is the use of the specific tense that is not used in daily Turkish language. In Turkish, it is the "-mis" tense, which can be translated into English as "it is/was/has been said that," hence signalling indirect speech. The governing tense in the documentary narrations and official correspondences, the "mis" tense, is reiterated to such an extent that it becomes ridiculous.

The first level, which Irzik calls the external narration, describes current events and informs the reader about fashion trends, the food shortage in the country, bestsellers, as well

as the changes in the characters' lives in the same manner, using the same tense in all cases. This style, Irzik maintains, "acquires a parodic characteristic in its attempt to depict individual and original experiences" ("Olmeye Yatmak" 50). In contrast to the aim of communicating the events in an objective and formal manner, it produces comedy. If we have a look at an event Aysel remembers from her school years:

It has been said that the Faculty of Languages had organized an "Atatürk Ceremony" two weeks before Aysel received this letter from Semiha. It has been said that Aysel's "elder brothers" and "elder sisters" gathered with one sob in the big conference hall of the faculty. White handkerchiefs in hands were said to be seen. In the conference while the last speaker was finishing his speech with his exclamation "Cry brother! Cry sister! Cry mother who bore Mustafa Kemal!" it has been said that everyone in the audience –the youngest students as well as the oldest professors – became one big, very big, very wide sob as if they were waiting for this call. (Agaoglu 57, italics mine)

If we recognise the quotation above as a reflection of the narrative of Turkish nation, then the indirect language usage points at another level of narration that can be called as the space of the narrator. The indirect speech renders the voice of the narrator visible. Bal considers indirect speech as "the impersonal language situation" and suggests that there are narrative situations in which "we find a 'mixture' of the two narrative levels, which is called text interference" (*Narratology* 47). The text interference I have identified above not only makes the narrator visible but also, through the sly artificiality of the narrator's voice, constructs a parody of the national narrative space.

Furthermore, the use of indirect speech evokes a different form of narration. In many other parts of the novel, the descriptions of the narrator can be compared with stage directives in plays. Apart from Aysel's monologues, the language of the narrator reminds us of the same naïve theatricality, given that all these parts have headings that summarize, quote and highlight their content. As Irzik claims, this similarity impairs the subjectivity and

independency of the characters and “emphasizes their positions as actors having been cast for their parts by a greater authority” (“Olmeye Yatmak” 51).

All once actors and actresses of “the Professions,” Aysel and her fellow pupils at her provincial primary school in Akyazi, namely Aydin, Ali, Semiha and Hasip, follow divergent paths in life. Aydin aspires to be a politician; Ali makes leftist acquaintances and starts working at a radio station; Semiha gets married at an early age; and Hasip graduates from the faculty of theology. It is not exactly the life conditions that make them end up in totally different directions, but rather the acuteness of the gap between the prescribed roles that were given to them and their real selves.

Thus the official narrative of the nation is transformed into a theatrical allegory in *Lying Down to Die*. The pure individuality that the characters are supposed to have is impossible for the reason that their characters matter only to the extent that each of them has a meaning for the nation and its pedagogy. Yet through theatrical interventions, the novel seems to cast doubt on the assumed significance of the nation and call for an awareness of the link between the significance of one’s self and the power dynamics operating above it, imposing who one has to be. In *Snow*, too, as we shall see, theatre becomes a significant device in that it becomes not only the stage of a national allegory, but also the important demonstration of the connection between that allegory and power (Irzik, “Allegorical Lives” 560).

Performing the nation

Ka, the protagonist of *Snow*, has been in political exile in Frankfurt for twelve years, but has just returned to Istanbul for his mother’s funeral (Pamuk 4). He is making his way to Kars, an impoverished city in Anatolia, just as a severe snowstorm begins. Ka claims to be a journalist

interested in the recent suicides of a number of young girls who were forced by their schools to remove their headscarves, but this is only one of his motives. He also wants to see Ipek again, a beautiful woman he had known as a student. Divorced from a friend of Ka's turned-Islamist politician, she lives in the Snow Palace Hotel, where Ka is also staying. Kars is a tightly wound knot of tensions between secular and religious forces, and Ka's investigations lead him into encounters with all the major players, including Blue, an infamous Islamist terrorist. Ka tries to find out more about the dead girls but encounters resistance. He is from a bourgeois background in cosmopolitan Istanbul, and he has been in exile in the West. Believers accuse him of atheism; the secular government does not want him writing about the suicides. Police spies follow him everywhere; people are suspicious of him.

The novel includes the story of a "theatre coup" orchestrated by a former leftist activist named Sunay Zaim, who is now a Kemalist playwright and actor. Zaim describes himself as "an artist who wants to interfere with history" (Pamuk 202). His ambition makes him use art as a means to an end, but at the same time the approach aestheticizes and espouses interference with history, privileging it over every personal benefit. Zaim's method of blurring the boundaries of art and politics, individual and state, stage and life in his theatre become manifest in a long-forgotten play from the 1930s: "The Motherland or the Veil." As Ka narrates:

This desperately old-fashioned, even primitive, twenty-minute play had such a sound dramatic structure that even a deaf mute would have had no trouble following it:

- 1 A woman draped in a jet-black scarf is walking down the street; she is talking to herself and thinking. Something is troubling her
- 2 The woman takes off scarf and proclaims her independence. Now she is scarfless and happy
- 3 The woman's family, her fiancé, her relatives and several bearded Muslim men oppose her independence and demand that she put her scarf back on, whereupon in a fit of righteous rage the woman burns her scarf

4 The neatly bearded, prayer-bead-clutching religious fanatics, outraged by this show of independence, turn violent, but just as they are dragging her off by hair to kill her

5 The brave young soldiers of the Republic burst on to the scene to save her. (Pamuk 149-150).

Surprisingly, however, the woman emerging from under the veil is not so much the traditional innocent village girl thirsty for knowledge but rather a belly dancer showing her sexy arms (Pamuk 151), which makes it difficult for the audience to interpret the message. By the time she starts to deliver her speech about modernization, about the backwardness of symbols like the headscarf, about how we should turn our faces towards Europe and join the modern nations, the audience becomes too agitated and noisy to hear anything being said on the stage (Irzik “Allegorical Lives” 560). Yet, the actual effect of the play is more important than its message or audibility. The “young soldiers of the Republic” who save the woman from the Islamist fanatics start to shoot at the audience with real bullets. The director of the play, Sunay Zaim, becomes both an artist and a dictator as he announces the military coup on stage (Pamuk 163). The play, which is also an occasion for the first live local television broadcast from Kars, leads to two days of terror during which Islamist youths, local Kurds, and secular leftists are tortured and murdered.

The end of the novel is marked by yet another performance, titled *The Tragedy of Kars*, a “Turkified” adaptation of *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd, which involves Kadife publicly removing her headscarf and committing suicide as an act of autonomous will. However, it is now Zaim who gets killed with the real bullets by a stage gun, fired by Kadife. The three military coups that took place in the Cold War period bear strongly on the novel. They become manifest not only in the staged coups in the novel, but also in the religious references of the plays. Especially in the Cold War period, the Turkish state’s embrace of secularism as the sign of western modernity continued to involve controlling religion in the public sphere. This effort gave rise to “an oppositional dichotomy of ‘secularism versus

religion' that was entrenched as the dominant framework of Turkish politics" (Roy, "Temple" 168-169). The aftermath of the last big and direct coup d'état in 1980 left Turkey with "a heavy-handed and repressive statist constitution" (Kahraman 24). The 1991 elections mark an important turn in this regard: they indicated the need for change in Turkey on two accounts. According to Kahraman, the first was a reaction to the 1980 constitution. The second was political Islam, which began to gain power, first in local government and later in parliament (24). In the 1990s, political Islam reopened the debate, bringing a dimension to the debate regarding the headscarf in the context of civil/private space versus the public space (24).

This transformation is reflected in Kadife's situation in *Snow*. She is described as "a saint who changed her scarf into the flag of the repressed Anatolian woman" by an Islamist who is secretly in love with her. From this viewpoint, she represents the people of Turkey, long repressed by the modernisation project of republican Turkey. Yet, it is also Kadife who says "I don't want to represent anyone, I want to stand in front of the Europeans as just the way I am" (Pamuk 324). She is not aware of the idea that even imagining herself in front of the Europeans means allegorising herself to some extent. There is no safe space for subjectivity in that sense. This implies that *Snow* exposes the nightmarish fate of being inevitably allegorised through a regime of knowledge that compels the individual to derive meaning from something larger than him or herself.

The conflict between political Islam and Kemalist nationalism, with Kurds, leftists and "headscarf girls" caught in the middle, is balanced with the idea of religion as an existential matter of faith. Such a quest for private spiritual space is evident in the poems that Ka writes in Kars. While the text records the power Sunay Zaim's national allegories exercise over its characters, it also resists that power, attempting to find the perfect connection between poetry and privacy in the form of a lost text also called "Snow." The poems that Ka

writes in Kars turn out to be governed by a “deep and mysterious underlying structure” similar to that of a snowflake. The poems nevertheless remain utterly private and personal, and are never cited or interpreted in the novel. This can be understood as Ka’s attempt to seek out a purely private, utterly sublime space. Although Ka does not explicitly mention it, the snowflake acquires a God-like quality, and this belief in transcendence does provide the common ground for his friendship with the young Islamist Necip.

Nonetheless, religion as the means for organising a community is something that Ka cannot tolerate. During his encounter with a Kars sheikh, Ka rejects the God of “bearded, reactionary, provincial types.” In conversation with the Islamist Party member, Muhtar, Ka explains, “in this part of the world faith in God was not something achieved by thinking sublime thoughts and stretching creative powers to their limits; nor was something one could do alone... Above all, it meant joining a mosque, becoming part of a community” (Pamuk 63). What happens as a consequence of the conflict between secularist nationalists and Islamists is precisely the loss of the personal religiosity, in which each individual may decide on her answerability to God. Pure individuality and pure personal religiosity are not possible for they do not bespeak of collective attachments, whether informed by religious beliefs or ideologies: hence the snow of *Snow* ultimately engulfs Necip, the Islamist, the headscarf girls, and Ka himself, who signify the individuality or privacy of religion. They are thus left with no choice but to die.

Yet Ka’s belief in personal religiosity as “free of any ethico-political collectivity” (Erturk 639) is also imbued with problems. Ka is a middle-class character who cannot see beyond his class reality, and therefore sees religion as a question of personal faith. This understanding fails to come to terms with the mobilisation of political Islam since the 1980s. As Cihan Tugal notes, “the struggles to define the secularisation process were partly determined by the peculiarities of Turkish socio-economic development” (8). According to

Tugal, especially the military take-over of 1980 shifted the vectors between religion, class and power. The successful state repression of the militant political left, Nergis Erturk contends, promoted Islam to the only remaining outlet for the impoverished urban poor and for the Kurds, whose living conditions deteriorated with the advance of economic neoliberalisation. Political Islam has thus been mobilised with internal contradictions (639). Ka's class-informed views on secularism equates faith with religion and ignores certain developments that have occurred in Turkey. Seen from this perspective, *Snow* does not necessarily mirror the modernisation of Turkey as it is.

Depriving people of their authentic selves by changing them into representatives of national or religious causes is depicted as a threat in *Snow*. In other words, the pedagogy of the nation and its hold over individuals is illustrated in the pervasiveness of politics in both art and life. As Bhabha proposes, it is "the historical necessity of the idea of the nation" that "conflicts with the contingent and arbitrary signs and symbols that signify the affective life of the national culture" ("DissemiNation" 293). Erturk claims, "Where the Turkish ruling bloc consolidates its hegemony in extra-national theatrical projections of "the West," what *Snow* itself stages is the internal political theatre of performance "under Western eyes" (642). There is no safe line that can prevent the collision of art, politics and real life. Because politics and art have to struggle with the paradox of representation, they have no choice but to resemble one another.

Thus *Snow* offers the reader a glimpse of the national allegorical impulse in third-world texts, proving Jameson's insights regarding the connection between the personal and the public spheres. However, the novel is equally critical of the idea of national allegory: the point of the two plays in the novel is to criticise the way the Turkish state has used theatrical discourses to structure its modernisation project. Theatricality is not exclusively found in the two plays of the novel; all the world is a stage in a culture where private and public are not

separate spheres but modalities that interpenetrate and affect one another. As Marie Joe Kietzman argues in her recent article about *Snow*, “In the most intimate conversations characters posture, role-play, and read their writing, while in political discussions, they experiment with self-disclosing speech, telling their dreams and exposing private anguishes and loves” (325). These off-stage theatrical instances that underline the performances of individual characters are what Bhabha calls “counter narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries” (“DissemiNation,” 300), and they imply that secularists, Islamists, communists, women and Kurds should first become individuals, “who are then free to seek social and textual affiliation with others” (Kietzman 325). In this context, theatre, through mimicking the nation, both performs and invalidates the drive towards reading the text as an exclusive political allegory.

Cinema, parody and Saleem

Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of *Midnight's Children*, is born on the August 15th, 1947, the day of Indian independence from British rule. As a result, he feels “mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country” (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 9). Saleem is encouraged to see himself as an integral part of India's story following the telegram he receives from the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, congratulating him on the accident of his birth at such an auspicious moment, saying, “You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own” (122). As it is evident from the birth metaphor, the book tackles beginnings: of both a life and a nation.

Nevertheless, it is a daunting task to mirror India's history, which, as I have mentioned earlier, is marked by the country's effort to break away from colonial structures as

well as by ethnocultural heterogeneity. The narrator uses cinema, especially Bombay cinema, as a narrative device to mirror this reality of a postcolonial and multi-ethnic India:

Reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems - but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible. Suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting at first in the back row, and gradually moving up, row by row, until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars' faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion dissolves - or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself is reality. (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 65-66)

The use of cinematic metaphors is a means to parody the narrative of Saleem. Just like the scenes in a movie, the chapters are meticulously staged by Saleem so that the events narrated expose the irony or parody of that unnatural life story. In this context, I take the cinematic tropes as analogous to the theatrical scenes discussed above, maintaining that theatricality is not reducible to theatre. André Loiselle and Jeremy Maron re-define the concept of theatricality “as that which is specific to the theatre refers broadly to all representations that call attention to their own representationality” (2). They argue that “any performance, on stage, on screen or any other space, that foregrounds its function as a network of signs to be looked at and listened to operates as an instance of the theatrical, and may thus be read through the lens of theatricality” (2) Hence, theatricality can become relevant for other media as well.

Cinema and cinematic tools are deployed in order to highlight Saleem's reality as mirroring India's history. Cinematic imagery is used throughout Saleem's story, for example: “I permit myself to insert a Bombay-talkie-style close-up” (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 346); “I refuse absolutely to take the larger view; we are too close to what-is-happening, perspective is impossible, the picture is breaking up into dots, only subjective judgments are possible” (435); “close-up of my grandfather's right hand” (32). The images related to the cinema, including the flashbacks and the fragmentariness of the narrative point of view, not

only hint at the impossibility of the heterogeneous outlook of India's modernisation narrative but also at the absurdity of the propensity to read Saleem's story allegorically. The aim in using cinema is related to the idea of capturing reality as a whole, but because the individual is overtaken by the whole, reality becomes prone to diverse perspectives, which makes the novel resist the act of mirroring the nation. The more Saleem tries to absorb the story of the nation, the more perspectives the novel offers in relation to his origins.

Because Saleem's story is a mockery of origins, readers get informed about Saleem's lineage in the beginning and immediately understand that the Saleem who receives Nehru's letter is not the one to whom it has been addressed. Indeed, another woman gives birth at the stroke of midnight on August the 15th, 1947, in the charity ward of the same nursing home where Saleem is born. Vanita, a street musician's wife, hemorrhages and dies just three minutes after her son comes to life. One child is born a rich Muslim, another, a poor Hindu. In the nursing home their nametags, as well as their fates, are switched. Saleem becomes a figure of parody in his insistence on connecting his familial lineage to national history, constantly staging and mimicking his prescribed individuality. He is not who he claims to be to begin with.

Inasmuch as Saleem claims that his life is directly connected to the history of India, the text manifests both approval and refusal of a life story articulated into a coherent national narrative, especially with respect to India's official nationalist discourse on diversity. As Rushdie himself writes, "far from being an authoritative guide to the history of post-independence India," *Midnight's Children* "plays with historical shapes" (*Imaginary Homelands* 22, 25). Doing so, the novel also parodies how the effort of the postcolonial nation to mark its difference from its predecessor turns into the self-contradiction of its own national narrative.

Midnight's Children takes place in India and Pakistan between 1947, when India became independent of Britain, and 1975, when Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a State of Emergency in the troubled country. Protagonist and narrator Saleem Sinai is one of the 1,001 “midnight’s children” –those born within India’s first hour of independence; in addition, he is one of the only two boys born at the stroke of midnight. The novel begins with Saleem, over thirty years old and working as a supervisor in a pickle factory. Prematurely aged and apparently soon to die, Saleem tells the story of his life to a devoted, sometimes impatient chutney-stirrer named Padma. At nine, Saleem discovers that he has incredible telepathic powers that allowed him to communicate with the other surviving midnight’s children, each of whom is also endowed with a special gift of some kind. Saleem’s midnight twin Shiva, for example, possesses the “gifts of war” that would eventually make him a great military hero.

As mentioned above, Bhabha distinguishes between the pedagogic mode and the performative mode of representing a nation. The second form enables individuals to enact their own notions of cultural and personal identity. Bhabha’s “pedagogy” implicates Jameson’s view that, in third-world texts, the spheres of the private and the public are intimately connected, and that social awareness, the awareness of a group or collectivity, determines individual experience. In Bhabha’s nomenclature, Jameson’s notion of national allegory is the vehicle through which the pedagogical aspect of a culture portrays itself as the allegedly singular voice of a people. The tension between the pedagogic and the performative underlies the problems and anxieties of Saleem in his obsession with capturing reality as a whole. He constructs his story through linking his story to India; however, he is not biologically the son of Sinai family. The genealogy Saleem relates to the reader “is his own through adoption and experience, but not through heredity” (Kane 96). As the novel unfolds its plot along two axes – the personal or national longing for origin and a mockery of the

adherence to authenticity— the central position Saleem wishes to occupy in history is constantly undermined by absurd events. They happen each time he places himself at the national historical centre. The pedagogical aspect of nationalist discourse, which combines Hinduism as representative of India together with the principle of heterogeneity clashes with the performative aspect of Saleem’s familial lineage: as the prime mover of all the events, Saleem Sinai is the adopted Hindu-son of a Muslim family. The birth of Saleem is thus a parody of the illusion of coherence upon which postcolonial nationalism rests. Saleem has placed himself at the centre of his world and a letter from the Prime Minister, a newspaper photo, and the predictions of a holy man confirm his significance. But through this deliberate textual mimicry of the authentic and constant ridicule of the idea of origins, the novel displays Saleem’s life story as the black-comic epitome of national history. For example, Saleem writes, “The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date” (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* 164). Such deliberate mistakes as getting the date of Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination wrong as well as his absence in his narration, his faulty description of the elephant god Ganesh, the removal of the date of Mumbadevi’s day from the calendar, and the inaccurate representation of the Amritsar massacre (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 23) are all narrative clues that relate him to other ordinary people and their flaws which separate them from the monumental events linked with “great” figures. These intentional mistakes split the continuity of the allegedly “authentic” history and testify to the possible existence of other historical narratives that make explicit the fallacious homogeneity of the totalizing national narrative.

The accident in the washing-chest forms another good example of mockery of origins. One afternoon, while Saleem seeks refuge in the washing chest, his mother receives a phone call. Unaware of Saleem, she goes to the bathroom and begins to sob, repeating the name of her ex-husband. Saleem’s nose twitches, he sniffs, and his mother discovers him hiding in the

washing chest. Punished by his mother to one day of silence, Saleem starts to hear voices rattling in his head, which he compares to the divine voices heard by Mohammed and Moses. The next day, he confesses to the entire family that angels are speaking to him. Everyone gets extremely angry with him. Later that evening, however, Amina remembers the words of Ramram, the prophet, who told her, “washing will hide him . . . voices will guide him” (Rushdie 165). She asks Saleem about the voices again, but he claims it was just a joke. The book juxtaposes opposites: the sacred coexists with the absurd.

Furthermore, the Midnight’s Children Conference that Saleem organises becomes the stage on which India’s governing institutions are both imitated and undermined. The MCC is “a loose federation of equals, all points of view given free expression” (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 220). Within the novelistic construction, the presence of the conference echoes the staged adaptations in *Snow* and *Lying Down to Die*. Hence, it imagines a public sphere in which people of different social classes and racial backgrounds will meet to discuss issues of wider significance. As the name ‘Midnight’ implies, the 1001 children who are born at the precious moment of India’s Independence are symbols of the new generation’s collective will to build a national future –similar in that respect to the students who represent the face of modern Turkish Republic in *Lying down to Die*. Saleem tells the reader how he has founded and named the MCC:

On my tenth birthday, abandoned by one set of children, I learned that five hundred and eighty-one others were celebrating their birthdays, too; which was how I understood the secret of my original hour of birth; and, having been expelled from one gang, I decided to form my own, a gang which was spread over the length and breadth of the country, and whose headquarters were behind my eyebrows. And on my tenth birthday, I stole the initials of the Metro Cub Club - which were also the initials of the touring English cricket team - and gave them to the new Midnight Children’s Conference, my very own M.C.C. (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 207)

Taking place after Saleem's tenth birthday, the conference group consists of the 581 survivors of the original midnight's children. Saleem equates the status of the conference with that of the ten-year-old nation. However, after her 1975 assumption of dictatorial power under the guise of state emergency, Indira Gandhi has Saleem imprisoned and tortured until he yields the names of the members of MCC. Gandhi captures and sterilizes 420 of them, Saleem claims, to drain them of their magical powers and hope. The inadequacy to sustain a unified nation-state becomes evident in the doom of the children. In that sense, the novel registers not only the fate of the nation but also the impossibility of embodying the discontinuous history of the postcolonial.

On a stylistic level, the novel performs conflict and division. The MCC is originally an abbreviation of Marylebone Cricket Club, an allusion to colonial authority as well as a parody of the Indian state. Saleem's appropriations suggest the palimpsestic mutation of the localized colonial language in the course of decolonization (Su 71). Towards the end of the novel Saleem discovers sadly that "M.C.C., which stands for Metro Cub Club, once also stood for the Midnight Children's Conference, and had now been usurped by the secret nightspot [Midnite- Confidential Club]" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 453). To imagine a nation as a coherent whole in its diversity turns to disillusion as the collective will (the midnight's children) for a better nation is distorted.

In addition to theatrical devices, Saleem deploys other forms and genres in his narration, such as references to Hindu myths, fairy tales, newspaper headlines, and the diary format. Saleem says, "I have no hope of saving my life, nor can I count on having even a thousand nights and a night. I must work fast, faster than Scheherazade, if I am to end up meaning –yes, meaning– something" (Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* 453). Comparing himself to Scheherazade, Saleem suggests that his life –the nation's life– depends, like hers, on his storytelling skills. In the same line, Saleem finds "some certainties" during the war, for

instance that the voice of Jamila Singer sang Pakistani troops to their deaths, but at the same time, he continues “in the first five days of the war Voice of Pakistan announced the destruction of more aircraft than India had ever possessed; in eight days, All-India Radio massacred the Pakistan Army down to, and considerably beyond, the last man” (339). Among other improbabilities, Saleem learns that “[l]ame men loaded their pockets with grenades, pulled out the pins, flung themselves beneath advancing Indian tanks; toothless old ladies disembowelled Indian babus with pitchforks!” (340). These absurd accounts of battle lead Saleem to wonder whether any of these events really happened as they were described: “But did it or didn’t it? Was that how it happened? Or was All-India Radio –great tank battle, huge Pak losses, 450 tanks destroyed–telling the truth?” (406). Insofar as Saleem identifies his personal tragedy with the fate of his nation, he acknowledges his unreliability at the same time, and hence the constructed nature of his text.

Thus in its repetitive endeavour to capture the reality of India and Saleem, *Midnight’s Children* both installs and parodies the authority of history and nation. Through cinematic imagery and the theatrical voice of its narrator, the performance of the national pedagogical discourse not only explicates but also empowers Saleem’s narrative in subverting the single voiced authority of the national narrative.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the concept of national allegory in third-world texts with a focus on the link between private and public spheres in *Lying Down to Die*, *Snow* and *Midnight’s Children*. I have specifically aimed at comparing and contrasting the texts in terms of the modernisation projects of Turkey and India. Through a critical analysis of the texts, I have also tried to focus on the question: is there a single third-world reality? Turkish

modernisation privileges the attribute of state strength and does not allow any ethnic qualifiers to modify the essence of Turkishness. The theatrical elements in *Lying Down to Die* and *Snow* both show and parody the idea of Turkishness and Turkish state as an all-powerful agent of didactic modernism. They also demonstrate the power and centrality of the novel in accounts of cultural transition to alternative modernities, offering literary acts of survival through imitating and subverting the national discourse. Although Indian modernity proves that there is no single modernisation experience, it shows variations in terms of its emphasis on the idea of diversity that is marked by the endeavour to build a state that would “stand for” the people. This forms contrast with the modernisation project of Turkey, which, as Roy claims, “endeavoured to build a state that would represent people by standing as them” (“Seeing a State” 207). Through its cinematic effects, *Midnight’s Children* plays with and resists this idea of embracing of differences and reveals the impossibility of such an attempt in Saleem’s narrative.

Against the grain of Jameson’s proposition that a third world text should be regarded as national allegory, meaning that the story of the individual speaks for the nation as a whole, I have argued in this chapter that *Lying Down to Die*, *Snow*, and *Midnight’s Children* deploy and subvert the notion of constructing a life story that is articulated through the national discourses of India and Turkey. All three texts foreground parodist aspects of national allegories. The texts offer possibilities for exploring the language of difference as a resistance to the identity politics of modernisation in Turkey and India. Exposing the theatrical as the site where allegory is deliberately manipulated in the three texts has helped me to conclude that Jameson’s concept of the allegoric mode in third world texts overlooks the performative aspect of culture, excluded in the creation of the pedagogic voice. Reading *Lying Down to Die*, *Snow*, and *Midnight’s Children* for what they do performatively rather than, say, pedagogically, might suggest a more comprehensive view of allegory, and allows us to

conclude that while much of third-world writing might indeed manifest an allegorical impulse, it assumes whole new shapes and meanings in Turkey and India that grapple with the project of modernisation.