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

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Summary

In this study, I explore a number of developments in ten contemporary Turkish and Anglo-Indian literary novels. Primarily, I analyse the ways in which Adalet Agaoglu, Orhan Pamuk, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Aravind Adiga, Latife Tekin, Elif Shafak, Kiran Desai and Hari Kunzru mobilise the notion of “national allegory” (Fredric Jameson), extend its scope and so transform the novels into sites of multiple belongings. Examples of contemporary Anglo-Indian and Turkish literature, the selected novels, I contend, are actually *world* texts, whose reference is not exclusively the nation-state, but a broader entity, that is, the world-system as a whole. The main title of this study, “From National Allegory to Cosmopolitanism” indicates this shift. I move from a discussion of the connection between literature and nation to a form of “literary worldliness,” observing the ways the texts depict the individual characters and their stories in relation to an expanded world.

In Chapter One, I set up the theoretical framework for my study. As I propose a comparative reading of contemporary Anglo-Indian and Turkish texts in the double context of post-colonialism and globalisation, this chapter introduces common concepts such as world system, semi-periphery, the Third World, national allegory, theatricality, subalternity, hybridity, and cosmopolitanism. In order to discuss similarities and differences among the novels, I select four shared aspects—theatricality, subalternity, hybridity, and cosmopolitanism—that also inform the chapter titles of my study. Those themes shape the connection between the novels and the world as well as circumscribe a possibility of resistance against global culture. This introductory chapter also lays out the link between the novels and “world-system” theory.

In Chapter Two, I examine three novels that underscore both the possibilities and limitations of Fredric Jameson’s concept of the “national-allegorical” mode in relation to

instances of heightened theatricality: *Lying Down to Die* (1973) by Adalet Agaoglu, *Midnight's Children* (1981) by Salman Rushdie and *Snow* (2004) by Orhan Pamuk. After discussing the modernisation projects of both Turkey and India to situate the novels as historically different yet culturally similar at the same time, I demonstrate the ways in which theatricality offers stylistic resistance to national-allegorical narratives. I conclude with a consideration of the allegoric mode in third-world texts as a failure to notice the performative aspect of culture, stressing the parodic aspects of national allegories. The three texts suggest a language of difference as a possible form of resistance to the identity politics of modernisation in Turkey and India.

I begin in Chapter Three by examining three novels *The God of Small Things* (1997) by Arundhati Roy, *Berji Kristin* (1996) by Latife Tekin and *The White Tiger* (2008) by Aravind Adiga in the context of global capitalism, and frame the texts as stories of subaltern experiences. I consider the changing meanings of the term “subaltern.” Subsequently, I investigate the ways in which the social reality of the caste system is marked by colonialism and global capitalism in India. Through an analysis of Roy’s and Adiga’s novels, I highlight the marginalisation of disenfranchised groups by British colonialism and neoliberal capitalism respectively. I then move to a different context to analyse new and recent subaltern positions in *Berji Kristen*. Subaltern experience is a matter of overlapping contexts, sometimes contrasting, sometimes reinforcing each other. The world-system is more explicit in today’s post-national/colonial era now that the role of the nation-state has been diminished. The urban underclasses have been struggling with the effects of capitalist globalisation more than with those of the nation-state. The novels offer the context for a detailed scrutiny of different as well as overlapping subaltern positions in India and Turkey.

In Chapter Four, I focus on *The Forty Rules of Love* (2010) by Elif Shafak and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) by Kiran Desai to examine the possibilities and limitations of the

political use of the theme of love. I try to identify a politics of hybridity that would be able to respond effectively to globalisation. Although it has been widely deployed in association with the fuzziness of boundaries, implying the need to move beyond them, it is also possible, in the context of global capitalism, that hybridity denotes the very boundaries it is intended to surpass. For this reason, hybridity needs to be reconsidered critically. Love may either entail a celebration of differences or the confirmation of their existence. Moreover, the hybridity at stake needs to be differentiated in relation to the different contexts provided by the novels. I explore various forms of love and hybridity to understand to what extent the novels propose a critical hybridity politics in relation to globalisation.

In Chapter Five, I pursue the implications of cosmopolitan vision for new forms of belonging through my study of *The Saint of Incipient Insanities* (2004) by Elif Shafak and *Transmission* (2005) by Hari Kunzru. Since globalisation generates different effects for different places, it brings up the question of what it may mean to identify as a citizen of the world. After I discuss the background of cosmopolitanism as the impulse to detach oneself from exclusive local origins, I analyse two significant aspects pertinent to the critical view I wish to advance. Firstly, I analyse the importance of class stratifications: not every citizen of this world can take equal advantage of being rootless. Secondly, I explore to what extent the equalisation of globalisation with Americanisation has implications for the multiple belongings that are implicit in globalisation. I then focus on the question whether these points of criticisms impede or make possible a cosmopolitan belonging that is not reinforced by universalist assumptions. In my analysis of the novels' characters, I investigate this cosmopolitan vision to see whether it is enhanced or diminished once it is vernacularly inflected. Comparing and contrasting the characters in their capabilities for multiple belongings, I try to answer the question whether the two texts are in fact able to reimagine productively the world around us.

I end my study by reflecting on the consequences of my analyses for the literary potential of the semi-periphery within the world-system the books in my corpus share, as well as emphasising the importance of differences amongst the texts that need to be tackled. Using diverse grounds of comparison – such as theatricality, subalternity, hybridity and cosmopolitanism – I try to show the interconnectedness as well as distinctiveness of the works. I speculate whether the relationship between the semi-periphery and the core may be expanded, as more and other aspects, texts and cultures will be integrated into the realm of world literature, boosting the importance of the semi-periphery as cultural and intellectual capital. Finally, I address the question whether a comparative but non-hierarchical study of selected Turkish and Anglo-Indian novels enable more inclusive and pluralistic worldviews.