A PSYCHOGEOGRAPHICAL DÉRIVE THROUGH THE CITYSCAPES OF ELIF SHAFAK'S *THE BASTARD OF ISTANBUL*

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Abstract
"Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else."
— Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*
Every story unapologetically calls for a place to happen, a space to hold and a location to accommodate. Fictional narratives find their places traversing through the mental, emotional, cultural, historical, political and social facets of an author's conceptual as well as contemplative fabric. It is against this background that "Literary Psychogeography" propounds a new-fangled method of assorting all those scattered images within reach, enabling humans to wander freely through space and time stimulating their senses to the physical surroundings. In this framework, it scrutinizes the impact of physical surroundings on the instinctive behaviour of individuals as recorded in literature, literature being understood here, not as the critical essays and aesthetic writings, but in its widest sense of all written records left by a people or an era. Moods emanate from the environs, feelings pour out from spaces. Buildings and locales set off a palette of emotional impulses in the characters of a story. Unquestionably this condition reciprocates as the human mind leaves phenomenal changes in its physical milieu. The current study is an explicitly penned dérive, an unplanned journey through the cityscapes of the fictional layers of Elif Shafak's, *The Bastard of Istanbul,* an engaging saga about the tangled history of two families. Set between Istanbul and Armenian diaspora in the United States, the plot mainly shifts among the lives of women, each fighting her own battles, trying to find herself an identity in a 'modern' world where traditions are collapsing.
Keywords – Cityscapes, Literary Psychogeography, Dérive, Space, Flaneur

Psychogeography – An Introduction

Every life unravels its own story and every story is set in a space. Different places and locations produce various feelings and multiple sensations in individuals which even reflects in their behaviour. A literary space portrays an author's representation of the world which is manifested through aesthetic and literary language. Space modelled in literary texts present diverse facets of the living actual places – rural, urban, sub-urban and the like. In a literary work, space furnishes the readers with social, political, cultural, ethical and even physiological aspects of human life undeniably.

It is in this context that navigating through fictional spaces and literary regions gain momentum in research avenues. 'Psychogeography' in simple terms, expounds how a geographical location impacts and influences the emotional demeanour and behavioural dispositions of individuals. The term 'psychogeography' was first introduced by Guy Debord, the French Marxist critic, philosopher and film-maker, above all the founding member of the 'Letterist International and Situationist International' in his 1955 essay 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography' - who defines it as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals." (Debord 1981) Adopting the foundational concepts from the French theorist Ivan Chtcheglov's, influential essay,'Formulary for a New Urbanism'[1] in 1953, Debord casually postulated novel and innovative strategies of traversing urban environments and cityscapes taking cues from the 19th century French

poet and writer Charles Baudelaire's concept of the "flâneur"[2] – an urban wanderer – primarily for studying geographical spaces and architecture.

Theoretical Background

Almost one hundred and fifty years ago, William Wordsworth, the romantic wanderer wrote in his *The Prelude*, an autobiographical poem,

Twas in truth an hour
Of universal ferment; mildest men
Were agitated, and commotions, strife
Of passion and opinion, filled the walls
Of peaceful houses with unquiet sounds.
The soil of common life was, at that time,
Too hot to tread upon(Wordsworth 161-7)

One of the admirable examples of psychogeographic lines, *The Prelude* portraying the charm of Lake Districtprovoked Thomas De Quincey, his contemporary to document his 'drug-fuelled wanderings in the underworld of subterranean London'(De Quincey 2003). De Quincey is a marvel in depicting details as he describes "London brothels", "unfurnished lodgings," "youthful sufferings" and "prodigious echoing" rats replace "green peninsulas", "enticing vallies", "youthful strength" and "rich plumes of tropic birds" (De Quincey 2003) with a ubiquitous poetic mettle. The innovative and revolutionary act of walking and moving around was ground-breaking as it set in motion a bundle of wandering tales as well as rich-textured narratives. No wonder Rebecca Solnit commented about the solitary Wordsworth and the wandering De Quincey that "walking was a mode not of travelling, but of being."(Solnit 2001)

When the American poet Edgar Allan Poe introduced 'The Man of the Crowd', his most influential short story, concepts like the 'flaneur'and 'detournement'[3]came into vogue epitomized by Charles Baudelaire; 'imagining the city' (Marshalls 2018) by Blake, Stevenson and Machen offering insightful and engaging perspectives of the already familiar surroundings. London, Edinburgh, Paris, Germany and many other have undergone psychogeographic readings. Jenny Colgan writes, "I am constantly suffused with a melancholy sense of something lost... Edinburgh is special. Perhaps because it is a walking town."(Colgan 2012) Be itthedark 'Dickens-inspired streets of London' (Anthony 2013), Haussmann's 'crude renovation of Paris' (Debord 9) or Benjamin's 'Intérieur; a corridor of commodities' (Benjamin 2006), all of them foregrounds the "impact of local geography upon ideological philosophy."(Anthony 2013)

The Situationist International(SI)[4] and the Letterist International(LI)[5] of the 1950s were revolutionary collective of radical intellectuals, avant-garde artists, political and cultural theorists influenced by the Marxist and Anarchist theories along with its deep roots in the art movements like Dadaism and Surrealism. And when psychogeography gained acclaim in 1990s several theorists concocted explorative concepts like Dérive[6], an urban walking practice; Land art, where art is designed directly in the landscape; Site-specific which refers to the art exclusively formulated for a particular location; Way-finding, techniques used by explorers and travellers over land and sea to find relatively unmarked and often mislabelled routes; Desire path, an unplanned track created as a consequence of mechanical erosion caused by human or animal traffic and many more.

"If geographers "carve," "draw," or "write" the earth, psychogeographers add a zest of soul to the mix, linking earth, mind and foot" (O'Rourke 2021).In fact psychogeography explores urban spaces and digs out interpersonal connections with places, routes and locations. It brings the two entities – the human psyche and physical environment – together juxtaposing their mutual impact upon each other. Even though Debord and his followers never had architectural and urban designing purposes, this theory opens up interesting vistas of urban designing, urban engineering, mental mapping, imagining the city, city planning, green spaces, etc. where psychogeography has become both a documentation and designing tool.

The members of the Paris-based Letterist International group described it as "a science of relations and ambiances"; they were developing "to give play in the society of others its true meaning being 'a society founded upon play'. Nothing is more serious. Amusement is the royal privilege that must be made available to everyone." (O'Rourke 2013) Author and pyscho geographer, Wilfried Hou Je Bek calls it "the city-space cut-up", an alternative way of perceiving the city. (O'Rourke 2013) For Debord this French experimental behaviour of a purposeful drift through the city expanses can reveal the city's underlying structure. As geography deals with the external physical components and natural forces, "Its overlap with histories and myths of place is a further way of gaining a purchase on the inhospitable environment of the metropolis. People want to inscribe marks and find traces in the city, like the stories they used to tell about the stars and constellations, in order to feel more at home in an indifferent universe", observes Phil Baker, the American movie director.(Ashford 2008)

Contemporary psychogeographers, notably Iain Sinclair and Will Self observes about the "unloved outskirts of the city", "I had to walk around London's orbital motorway; not on it, but within what the Highways Agency calls the 'acoustic footprints'. The sound stream. Road has replaced river."(Sinclair 2003) Wandering, drifting and delving into a city or a landscape is a virtue with a 'ritual purpose' (Adetunji 2017) and 'a means of dissolving the mechanised matrix which compresses the space-time continuum". (Self 2003)

Psychogeography is a hub of intersection between psychology and geography that "focuses on our psychological experiences of the city, and reveals or illuminates forgotten, discarded, or marginalised aspects of the urban environment."(Adetunji 2017) The term indicates the way we relate to space and how space constructs us. As a matter of fact it becomes more intense in old cities like London, Paris, Berlin, Venice, Istanbul, Palestine and many others, "where layers of history are appreciable, but even when they are not we intuit the charge of past deeds and events which have imprinted themselves on the city's consciousness as much as on its physical structures."(McNeil 2023) Let us make a purposeful ramble through the fictional fabrics of an eminent author who snatch her readers and transport them to a multicultural geographical milieu leaving "fragments, scratches, and traces" in their psyche "peeling the layers of human habitation and revealing what is hidden, and what lies between the fissures of history."(McNeil 2023)

Inherited Pain of Historical Milieu

'I've always believed in inherited pain'(Cooke 2021), says Turkey's most famous female writer Elif Shafak who penned the powerful, exuberant and whimsical tale of long hidden family secrets, historical conflicts and disturbing twists in *The Bastard of Istanbul*, set in a nuanced and multifaceted exploration of Turkey's cultural and political history. Shafak's assertion justifies itself when Asya Kazanci, one among the central characters disdainfully takes a glance at the world she lives in "History, politics, religion, society, competition, marketing, free market, power struggle, at one another's throat for another morsel of triumph…"(Shafak 166) The novel weaves through the stories of two rival cultures, those of the Turks and the Armenian, represented by two families - the Turkish Kazancis and the Armenian Tchakhmakchians – living in two different continents yet connected by a distressing past that reveals the intensity of their historical enmity and the intriguing interconnections. Shafak builds her plot on the 1915 Armenian Genocide[7], a dark unpardonable episode in history where almost 1.5 million Armenians were killed during the course of the First World War and thousands of them brutally deported and pillaged to concentration camps in the Syrian steppe.

Both Asya Kazanci and Armanoush Tchakhmakchian, the young representatives of modern generation veers through life simply to untangle the unspoken facts, unrecognised pain and disesteemed truths of their wounded past, cultural background and burdensome history, "the past is nothing but a shackle we need to get rid of. Such an excruciating burden."(148)The perpetual hostility and aversion between the Turks and Armenians is not new to the world history as is seen in the attitude of the American Rose who after divorcing her Armenian husband finds it amusing "to

offend her Armenian in- laws with a Turkish spouse, Mustafa Kazanci; she also relishes the idea that her baby daughter will have a Turkish stepfather" (Adams 2007). Shafak manages to carry her readers through the cities of Tucson, Arizona, Kentucky, Elizabethtown and San Francisco, a geographical detour experiencing that baby daughter's (Armanoush now 21 years old) divided and unstable mind of uncovering the bitter truths about "the oppressed history of her ancestors"(115). And that is how she decides to visit her step-father's family in Istanbul, "That was what she sorely needed: a journey" (115). Shafak prescribes travelling, a movement for Armanoush through the cities, streets, buildings, shops, marketplaces, cafes, apartments, neighbourhoods - an antidote to her aching and "fragmented childhood" (116) by which "she had still not been able to find a sense of continuity and identity" (116).

The Fierce Candour in Author's Voice

Shafak showcases a bunch of intricately bold female characters in her story and a few male characters, whom we do not meet, except for Mustafa, who were miserably "struggling to live with the past and trying to survive without one"(289). We hear the author's troubled yet outspoken voice through her characters all of whom we see and hear about. A fearless Shafak broaches on a highly sensitive and dangerous topic, the processing of the so-called genocide of Armenians in 1915. She harbours a fierce genuinity while relating the wretched history of wars, genocides, national and cultural animosity, identity conflicts, religious and sexual taboos, incest, and "collective amnesia that she believes Turkey suffers from". (Shafak 2016)

Shafak's liberal take on all aspects of life is evident at the expository chapters where the 19 year old Zeliha Kazanci, "her mood swaying between frozen to fuming" (3), cursed and used foul language for stepping "on another loose cobblestone and the rain" (3) quite unusual to all Turkish women who lived uncompromisingly according to the "unwritten and unbreakable rules" prescribed for the prudent 'Istanbulite Woman'. (4)

Scrupulous was the author in choosing two platforms or forums say, Café Kundera and Café Constantinopolis; the former "a small coffee shop on a narrow, snaky street on the European side of Istanbul" (76), a mysterious space as no one knew why it is named after the author Milan Kundera and where the members remain under ambiguous names without revealing their identities and the latter "a chatroom, a cybercafé, initially designed by a bunch of Greek Armenians……" (111) where all members "were the grandchildren of families once based in Istanbul" (112) The author shows remarkable alertness in her statements about the Turkish and Armenian political, cultural, historical facts without losing her audacity in making her "fictional characters of *The Bastard of Istanbul* to refer to the extermination of 1.5 million Armenians by the Ottoman Turks between 1915 and 1917." (Ehrenreich 2007)

The regular members of the The Anoush Tree section of Café Constantinopolis "would every week choose a specific discussion topic. Though the themes varied greatly, they all tended to revolve around their common history and culture – "common enemy": the Turks." (Shafak 113) After Orhan Pamuk, the much sensational Turkish Nobel Laureate who was charged in 2005 for having insulted the Turkish nation's honor, it would be none other than Elif Shafak who would dare to state ""I am the grandchild of genocide survivors who lost all their relatives at the hands of Turkish butchers in 1915, but I myself have been brainwashed to deny the genocide because I was raised by some Turk named Mustafa!" (167) Shafak's sense of fortitude is evident when Armanoush asserts to Asya "Literature needs freedom to thrive". (177)

Political Turbulence: A State of Turmoil

Most of the story takes place in Istanbul, where Amy's "grandmother Shushan left behind a son and Asya's family was born". The political conflicts and religious turbulence is a usual backdrop of Turkish narratives and so is the case with Shafak's *The Bastard of Istanbul.* We get cues at the exposition of the story from Aunt Cevriye, when the teacher breaks in at the breakfast table with confidence, "There aren't monarchs anymore, we are a modern nation." (28) But the country remains

in chaos due to the continuing "power struggle between laicist secularism and a growing nationalism", "the possibility of EU accession; freedom of religion and speech; the infamous paragraph 301 that allows prosecution for "insulting Turkishness"; religiously and politically motivated murder threats"(Krammatschek 2007) that someone like Shafak dextrously penned in her tale. She depicts a cosy-comfortable though dilapidated, large Ottoman *konak*[8]with a handful of god-fearing women along with the "openly irreligious" Zeliha, at whom the mother Gulsum scowled, "Look at your nose piercing….All that make up and the revoltingly short skirts….those high heels" (29)

The social and political turmoil outside is juxtaposed with the muffled discontentment inside as the four Kazanci sisters grew up as "unwelcome visitors" (31), "an accidental prelude in their parents' sex life" (31), while ultimately Mustafa, the precious son lived like "a king in his house" (31) and grew up into a reserved and "arrogantly antisocial outside his house" (32) currently living in Arizona. When Gulsum bawls at her fifth child Zeliha for her apparently impious and immoral way of life, which she believed led to the birth of a bastard child Asya, 'the bastard of the novel's title', the readers are plunged into an uneasy heaviness within, gradually increasing in intensity that culminated in the upheaval of unknown facts, untold stories and unresolved trauma.

It is with extreme anticipation that Shafak makes the young Armanoush confess to Asya, "Istanbul is a bit different from what I expected. It's more modern and less conservative than I feared" (181) perhaps she means to assert that "There is no clash of civilizations between Turkey and EU, or between the East and the West. There is a clash of opinions within each and every country."(Shafak 2005) What she tries to clarify is the socio-political milieu pervading Turkey where in "the clash is crystallized in a collision between those who are state-oriented and those who are civil-society oriented."(Shafak 2005) Obviously Shafak represents the latter factions that "favour diminishing the role of the army, the state machinery and augmenting the cosmopolitan, multicultural, multi-ethnic structure of Turkey's history and future".(Shafak 2005)

City as a Metaphor

The Bastard of Istanbul is substantially prosperous in phrases, words, descriptions, thematic concerns, and symbolic significance attributed to Elif Shafak's treasured landscape 'Istanbul' though invariably she accuses Turkey for its "collective and historical amnesia."(Akyol 2014) When the Republic of Turkey was established in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, it marked the severing of the country from its Ottoman roots pronouncing the beginning of a new era, new history, and new culture. For most of the Turkish writers including Hikmet, Tanpinar, Pamuk not to say Shafak, the city of Istanbul has inexorably been the principal figure and the central hero of their fictional labyrinth.

While for a few of them the city "winds its way in and out of the poorer neighbourhoods and the ancient alleys and passages of Istanbul", for some it is an incandescent love for "the city in all its faded, messy, dusty glory"(Manguel 2015). During their walks and detours around the city Asya explains everything possible to Armanoush about her hometown, "…they took the ferry so that Armanoush could see the city in all its vastness and splendour" (197). When both girls set out to find the long-lost roots of Grandma Shushan they happened to enter a fish restaurant and spoke to the cook who remarked while narrating the street's cosmopolitan history, "Because Istanbul is not a city", the cook remarked, "It looks like a city but it is not. It is a city-boat. We live in a vessel"! (170)

Even though Feride, Asya's aunt, remains indoors and is not going out much, she keeps herself connected to the affairs of the city by perusing "accidents and disasters" from the "third page of the tabloids"(25) Her "interest in physical geography had never petered out in the fullness of time"(25). She feeds her 'collective memory' with 'local, national and international calamities' like car accidents, serial killings, hurricanes, earthquakes, fires and floods, terminal illnesses, contagious diseases and unknown viruses….." that she profoundly enjoyed. (25)

The author falls in love with the city incessantly conducing her characters, events and incidents to revolve around the metaphorical landscape, which in real life she missed desperately (the

author is a London resident for long) "because I thought about Istanbul all the time", says Elif who tries to bring her motherland "through the small things, like the taste of street food and the smell of coffee" (Saeed 2019). This city has no substitute in Shafak's emotional frame which she divulged through Asya's feelings, "listening to the myriad sounds only Istanbul is capable of producing" (Shafak 121). Shafak admires Istanbul, longing for it persistently, which is "a city of dreams and is capable of making promises to so many of us," she says "….but it also has scars and wounds". (Saeed 2019).

Chronicles of Intergenerational Families

When the beautiful and bookish Armanoush(Amy) arrives at Istanbul, she encounters the Kazanci household, an Ottoman *konak*stuffed with "four generations of women, that includes a great-grandmother, Petite-Ma, suffering from Alzheimer's disease; a disapproving, distant and angry grandmother, Gulsum; her four daughters; and one great-granddaughter(Adams 2007)." Banu was the eldest, a self-styled Muslim mystic, Cevriye, the second eldest of the Kazanci sisters and a Turkish national history teacher, Feride, the third being a chronic 'borderline' schizophrenic "loitering around obsessive-compulsive disorder, dissociative amnesia and psychotic depression"(26).Mustafa, the only son and fourth child has left Istanbul long back and settled in Arizona and Zeliha, the youngest runs a tattoo parlour being the mother of an illegitimate daughter, Asya.

The author is adept in creating penetrating characters like Asya Kazanci, the bastard teenager who is ignorant of her own self, identity and father, rebellious in character and trying to disconnect herself from the past; her counterpart Armanoush Tchakhmakchian, the hybrid youngster from Arizona who, regardless of having both her parents, a stepfather and a huge family to love and care for her, still feeling lost and craving "to uncover the mystery behind her Armenian upbringing" (121). No wonder Shafak says in one of her interviews, "I've met many third-generation immigrants who have older memories even than their parents. Their mothers and fathers tell them: 'This is your home, forget about all that.' But for them, identity matters." (Cooke 2021)

For a fatherless child, like Elif Shafak, bought up and nurtured by a mother and grandmother, it never is gruelling to mould characters like Grandma Shushan, mother Gulsum and a delicate great grandmother Petite-Ma, women who believed they "possessed the key to a secret archive in the basement wherein the records of all the Istanbulite families (and Armenian too), past and present, were neatly kept" (159). As the nihilistic Asya introduces her family members Armanoush said, "I like your family. They are so full of life"(171). Incidentally as the young girls push Auntie Banu to use her soothsaying power in reading their coffee cups, she foretells solemnly with a troubled look, "You two girls are going to be attached to each other with a strong bond….I see a spiritual bond…."(196)

Auntie Banu would never have imagined at all that Asya and Armanoush will turn out to be closely tied, Armanoush – born to an Armenian father and American mother- enduring shuttle parenting between Arizona and San Francisco; Asya living with four motherly women figures and two grandmothers in a family where the men folks for "generations after generations ... had died young and unexpectedly" (Adams 2007), being next of kin, as Armanoush's Grandma Shushan happens to be Aysa's great grandmother. Born in different continents, raised in different ethnic traditions, living in distinct geographical realms, practising disparate cultural habits, both girls share a common grief – the ignorance of their past and the struggle for identity. "I am an outcast in that house, externally exiled from dreadful family secrets" (175), says Asya bitterly. "I need to find my identity…This is a journey into my family's past, as well as into my future," (117) confides Armanoush to her chat friends in Café Constantinopolis.

Through a third person narration, Elif Shafak arrives at an assertion that people deserve to know everything about their birth, their space, their lives, their roots and their upbringing which may otherwise cause devastating impacts on their psyche triggering a concatenation of violent acts. She

rightly believes, "You carry a place in your soul, even through the stories you were not told. You can sense the void. The past matters, because it shapes us, whether we know it or not."(Cooke 2021)

Physiographic Ripples on the Collective Psyche

The way a geographical space can subconsciously or unconsciously touch the human psyche and how landscapes shape the psychological behaviour of individuals is been encompassed meticulously in *The Bastard of Istanbul* by an author who is an epitome of her own homeland. Distance can hardly mean detachment and proximity never builds affinity. Born in France, bought up in Turkey and living in London, Shafak clarifies her obsessive fervour for Istanbul often blatant in her writings, "when you're physically away from a place, it doesn't mean you're mentally disconnected. Sometimes, in your soul, you become even more attached emotionally." (Cooke 2021)

Maybe she "smells the rot in her homeland."(Adams 2007) Why she dared to handle a subject of 'deep moral consequence' (Adams 2007) is a testimony to the fissures and cracks and bruises that the Ottoman land has left on any of its sensitively subtle native. Shafak tempers her characters and their conversations with buried yet unforgotten memories as discerned in Uncle Dikran's thoughts, "The ghosts of the past were with them" (57); Amy's contemplation of Asya and the Turks, "Self-hatred could be something the Turks went through" (176) and Asya's conviction of the Armenians including Amy, "Self-pity could be something the Armenians went through" (177).

History, politics and physiographic elements intertwine among the pages of Shafak's fictional landscape leaving painful memories, unresolved conflicts and traumatic ripples in every individual having born in Istanbul. Unlike other Turkish writers, Shafak's perception of Istanbul is complicated and critical; hence the mettlesome act of reminding the Turkish audience along with the world consciousness about the hushed up Armenian 'genocide' in Turkey during the first world war. For all the characters of the novel, past remains painful, history remains uncertain and identity remains strained. When Asya murmured imperviously to Amy, "You're fascinated with history" (179) to which she answers curtly "What's the use of it? Why should I know anything about the past? Memories are too much of a burden" (179) the reader in turn is burdened and suffocated that finds an outlet towards the end.

Auntie Zeliha, Asya's mother runs a tattoo parlour quite objectionable to the Kazanci family. Yet she enjoys her job just as she enjoys her flamboyant ways, a profession and a lifestyle in which she "could be both independent and inventive – and also, if possible, inflict a bit of pain" (72). She has even launched a new series of designs and images of tattoes, "a compound collection of images, which she entitled "the management of abiding heartache" (72). The tattoo business was profitable and became a favourite in the bohemian circles since "Istanbul being a city of broken hearts" (73), Zeliha could easily find clients, bunches of "the dumped and the despondent, the hurt and the irate" who wanted to banish their ex-lovers and lost love from their lives. (72)

Shafak populates her stories with characters enduring continual torment and torture in one way or another. "The art of storytelling is about swimming against the tide of the times. In this sense, fiction is and has always been a manifestation of calm resistance. I like that combination very much: peacefulness and rebelliousness, side by side," (PTI 2019) says the London based Turkish writer.

Conclusion

Art depicts places that has intensely touched and deeply stirred the artist's quintessence. Landscapes, locations, physical spaces, geographic milieus, living environments, architecture, climatic fluctuations and physiographic terrains collide with the emotions, feelings, ideas, memories, dreams, perceptions, dispositions and relations in human beings. Guy Debord readily admits, "The sectors of a city…are decipherable, but the personal meaning they have for us is incommunicable, as is the secrecy of private life in general, regarding which we possess nothing but pitiful documents". (Debord 2003)

Elif Shafak, a writer with multiple geographical backgrounds often deals with extremely difficult and remarkably emotional issues in her fiction. "The past is a contested landscape in

Shafak's writing"(Ehrenreich, 2007). Through her characters, she lives and relives and even takes her readers on a peripatetic experience wandering through actual as well as fictionalised zones. At the outset of the novel Zeliha, desperately trying to undergo an abortion could not make it as she was too young and fainted during the operation, once out in the streets of Istanbul, "It almost felt as if Istanbul had become a blissful metropolis, romantically picturesque, just like Paris." (21)

Asya and Armanoush visit various places, both individually and together as well, drifting through the city spaces, strolling along different streets, shops, cafes, restaurants, bookshops, seaside; undertaking casual derives, purposeful walks, intriguing encounters, thereby bringing out "aspects affecting the individual experiencing the place" like the "traditional impact, lifestyle, perceptions, interests, cultural and religious beliefs, momentary mind-sets and moods" (Oswal 2020) of the inhabitants. For instance their journey into their own past pushes them into episodic stopovers as the girls "…stopped the car and walked a little bit along Colombus Avenue, both pensive and silent"(110) and "….in front of the City Lights Bookstore…" (110); and sometimes both of them "having no better plans, they strolled through the neighbourhood…..with each new treat, they launched on a new topic" (170-171). In the words of Debord it is "a mode of experimental behaviour linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances." (Gurteen 2018)

Elif Shafak weaves the intricate tale by paralleling the lives of Asya and Armanoush, their surreptitious hangouts, the Café Constantinoplis and Kafe Kundera, the untold story of Asya's fatherhood and the patchy Armenian history of Armanoush. Kafe Kundera is "about fixations, repetitions and obsessions", "a place out of time and space" (84), a resort to Asya, just as Café Constantinopolis is a cyber-resort for Amy with ambiguous named chat friends who indulge in fuming discussions. Till the end no one knows that Mustafa has raped his sister Zeliha who covered it up for him and the family, only to see her daughter grew up as a 'bastard'. Shafak's brilliance kept him away for long years as "Istanbul had imperceptibly become a ghost city for him" (285) and the Kazanci home, "a home with its backdoor closed to the past" (285).

"Psychogeography is therefore useful and crucial in understanding the complication between the histories and myths of urban landscapes" (Adetunji 2017). A dérive into unexpected places, past and present "compels us to abandon – at least temporarily – our ordinary conceptions of the face value of a location, so that we may question its mercurial history" (Adetunji 2017). Besides the author, every woman in this fictional terrain tells her own tale, fighting her own battle, re-creating her own myth and finding her home in a scarred memory. Every geographical context gains historical relevance and cultural significance when they assimilate and absorb the lives of humans who live these spaces.

Notes

[1]**Formulary for a New Urbanism** is the manifesto postulated by the French political theorist, Ivan Vladimirovitch Chtcheglov who was a revolutionary sentenced to two years imprisonment following the Russian Revolution of 1905. It was written by Chtcheglov under the name Gilles Ivain at the age of 19. It was an internal document and one of the key texts of psychogeography adopted by the Lettrist International in October 1953.

[2]**Flaneur** refers to a person, who is a 'stroller ', 'lounger' or 'loafer'; one who indulges in the act of flanerie which involves strolling, leisurely walks, idle and casual exploration. In the traditional sense, flaneur is depicted as a male, an ambivalent figure of urban affluence and modernity which reflects the ability to wander detached from society just to be an acute observer of the industrialized contemporary life. The term primarily is a literary type from 19th century France, carrying a set of rich associations that later gained popularity in the 20th century by Walter Benjmin, the German Jewish philosopher and Charles Baudelaire, the French poet.

[3]**Detournement** is a technique developed in the 1950s by the Letterist International and later adapted by the Situationist International. It means 'rerouting, hijacking' in French; in simple terms it is the diversion of something that involves changing its course or destination.

[4]**The Situationist International(SI)**was a revolutionary and avant-garde collective of artists, intellectuals and political theorists formed in 1957. It emerged from the European artistic and political milieu, primarily in France. It had a substantial impact on various fields including art, urbanism and social theory. The term 'situationism' referred to the group's belief in the transformative power of situations or lived experiences. Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* is one of their seminal texts.

[5]**The Letterist International(LI)**was a precursor to the Situationist International and an influential avant-garde movement that emerged in the early 1950s. Found by the Romanian-born French artist, poet and film-maker, Isidore Isou, the Letterists challenged the established cultural norms. They undertook radical experimentation with language, art and everyday life. Fundamentally the LI aimed to revolutionise art and culture by focusing on the power of letters, words and sounds.

[6]**Dérive or dérive walk** as a concept was developed by the SI as a method of exploring and engaging with urban environments in a subversive and spontaneous manner. It was often seen as a form of resistance to the prescribed paths and routines imposed by the capitalist society. It aims to reclaim the city for individual experience and expression. The dérive focussed on the psychogeography of the urban environment which encompassed the emotional and behavioural effects of specific spaces on individuals.

[7]**The 1915 Armenian Genocide** refers to the systematic extermination and deportation of the Armenian population by the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. All these events that took place between 1915 and 1923 culminated in the death of an estimated 1.5 million Armenians. This has been widely recognized as one of the first modern genocides and continues to be a highly controversial and sensitive topic.

[8]**Ottoman *konak***also known as caravanserai was a type of building common in the Ottoman Empire. It refers to a mansion or a large residence of wealthy individuals, notable figures or government officials. It had a prominent architectural style, still found in Turkey, Balkan countries and the Middle East. Konaks were multi-storeyed buildings with large courtyards, intricate facades and ornate interiors.

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