

## **ABSTRACT**

Nadeem Aslam's celebrated novel *The Blind Man's Garden* begins with the assertion "History is the third parent." In its subsequent plot, Aslam evaluates the historic in close proximity with consciousness. History is interrogated as not just an epistemological category that exists in a temporal split from the present. Instead, the historic is explored as an inseparable constituent of the ontological. The historic occupies a position of ambiguity in the ontological context. It is both the foundation and the limit of consciousness. While it accords authenticity to subjectivity, it also posits the subject into a condition of immanence.

The present thesis does not engage in a critical evaluation of the literary oeuvre of Nadeem Aslam. However, it does consider the relationship of subjectivity with history and interrogates the problematic notion of historical consciousness. The thesis nuances the easy understanding of historical consciousness as subservient to the condition of history. Instead, in lights of modern epistemological ponderings on the philosophy of history, the thesis argues that historical consciousness is the un-peace and unease that the subject has in its engagement with history. The thesis argues that the modern subject is an alternative historiographer who intervenes the accepted fabric of history with an approach that is apprehensive of the notional and the nominal which accords reality its own historicity. The continuous philosophical tendencies of twentieth century philosophers to comprehend history as non-schematic, interpretive and above all marked by continuous caesuras and lacks, provide the theoretical premise for the research.

Modernity occupies a position of prominence in the thesis. The thesis argues that the flâneur, the archetypal modern subject, possesses the possibility of evolving into an alternative historiographer. For the substantiation and validation of the claim, the thesis engages in a conceptual reading of a select group of novels of Orhan Pamuk, the Turkish Nobel laureate of 2006. The Introductory chapter of the thesis attempts to establish a genealogical resemblance between flânerie and alternative historiography. By taking into consideration Baudelaire, Benjamin, de Certeau et al.'s theorization of the flâneur and modernist philosophical introspections into the idea and nature of history, the chapter tries to suggest a theoretical base to the possibility of reading the flâneur as an alternative historiographer. The latter half of the Introduction explains the project's interest in Pamuk and for this purpose engages in a conceptual reading of Pamuk's ficto-critical memoir *Istanbul*. Pamuk's visible (and feasible, as far as the scope of the research is concerned) interest in an ascription of the city illustrates his preoccupation with flânerie as practice turned performance. Simultaneously, his critical reconsideration of the history of Istanbul through an interspersion of history and memory suggest the tendencies of alternative historiography. This duality is avidly discussed in the concerned section to provide a material base to the distinctiveinterest of the thesis in the selected literary oeuvre of the author. The first chapter of the thesis, **Poet as the Historian: Flânerie and the Becoming of History in Snow**, engages in a close reading of Orhan Pamuk's novel Snow and attempts to interpret Ka, the exiled poet protagonist in the novel as a flâneur turnedalternative historiographer. The chapter explores how the trope of flânerie builds its act of engagement with the heterogeneous epistemic conjectures of history. The chapter takes into consideration the idea of history in the novel and reads it as an epistemic essence rather than a concurrence of events. The second chapter, **Turning Memory into History: The Material and the Spatial-Personal in *The Museum of Innocence***, argues that Kemal, the principle character in the novel who re-members his beloved Fusun by collecting

and preserving objects that bear her traces, is a curious combination of the flâneur and the alternative historiographer. The chapter substantiates how the material and cultures of materiality evolve as a paradigm where the personal and the social, memory and history co-habit. In doing so, the chapter problematises the easy consideration of the self-referential status of memory and depicts it as relational, dependent upon the corporeality of material culture. The chapter argues that the relational nature of memory is also fundamental in according the material its trans-material status of being. It attempts to engage in an understanding of how objects often evolve as images and as sites which are material in form but trans-material in essence. This trans-material understanding of the object is intimately associated with the poetics of flânerie and the chapter proposes to establish a correspondence between the two. The third chapter titled **In Search of Lost Wife: Flânerie, Remembrance and the Re-conceptualisation of History in *The Black Book*** engages in an understanding of the ambiguous disposition of memory as a curious poise of lived and interpreted, occurred and imagined, and considers its fundamental relationship with consciousness. The chapter, following the plight of Galip—the lawyer whose wife Ruya goes missing, takes into consideration the possibility of an alternative historiography which explores the remembered to trace in them an unrealised possibility that can situate the unhistorical and estranging present within a historical synchronicity. The chapter also substantiates Galip as the flâneur turned alternative historiographer who engages in material and metaphorical journeys through the streets of Istanbul, searching in them a trace and a sign which do not just convey significance within the consideration of the present but also tries to situate the present within an alternative historicity. The fourth chapter of the thesis is titled **The decadent flâneur and the Progress of History: Alienation, Flux and the Poetics of Reconciliation in *A Strangeness in My Mind***. The chapter assesses Mevlut, the boza seller protagonist of the novel, as a flâneur endowed with an alternative historical consciousness who negotiates with

the ordeal of change and the milieu of modernity that encompasses the social, political, economic and the spatial milieu of Istanbul. The chapter takes into consideration Mevlut's nuanced engagement with modernity and identifies his ambiguous state of being, within and without the valorised temporality of the present which modernity endorses, as a possible premise of alternative historiography. The final chapter analyses the findings derived from the research and restates the possibility of locating an overlap between the flâneur and the alternative historiographer.

The present thesis has attempted to evade the easy assumption of history as periodic or episodic. On the contrary, the thesis has tried to engage with the philosophy of history and the philosophical dimensions within which history can be conceived and narrated. The thesis has also tried to read the flâneur as an archetype and flânerie as a practice outside its standard considerations. Influenced by more recent studies, Flânerie in the thesis has refused to be contained within the considerations of a performative and has trespassed into the considerations of being. In this, the thesis has relied on the elaborate sections of the Introduction where a multifarious understanding of the archetype of the flâneur and the practice of flânerie has been attempted.