

Elif Shafak's novel, *The Bastard of Istanbul*, details this ignorance as opposed to the persistence of historical memory in Armenians in the Diaspora. She juxtaposes the story of two families, one Muslim Turkish in Istanbul, and the other Armenian survivors of the Genocide in San Francisco. Symbolically, she considers the story to be a struggle between amnesia and memory: the Turkish amnesia of the past imposed and reinforced by the prevailing educational policies in Turkey, and the insistence in the Diaspora on remembering and passing the memory on from generation to generation. In other words, the ignorance of the average Turk concerning his/her past—or the selective knowledge of it—versus the Diaspora Armenians' conscious adoption of the collective memory of their ancestors.⁶ What is taking place here in this juxtaposition is a testimony from the two opposite poles, namely, remembering and forgetting. Speaking about the right to remember, Tzvetan Todorov asserts that if events experienced by an individual or a group are of extraordinary or tragic nature, "ce droit devient un devoir: celui de souvenir, celui de témoigner."⁷ The Armenian Diaspora is exercising that right and performing a duty toward its past. The opposite

⁶ In an interview with Khachig Mouradian ("A Storyteller's Quest," 2006), Elif Shafak explains, "Basically, the novel testifies to the struggle of amnesia and memory. It deals with painful pasts both at the individual and collective level."

⁷ "This right becomes a duty: that of remembering and that of bearing witness." Todorov, *Les abus de la mémoire* (1995), p. 16. It should be noted here that Todorov does not endorse adherence to the past and remembering the past, unless it is for the sake of the present and the future, that is, the lessons to be learned from the past injustice and the use they can be put to.