

disagree, but “she believed increasing the tension did not help the recognition of the genocide” (p. 212). Fortunately for Armanoush, however, the subject is changed and a personal attack is launched against Asya, the bastard of Istanbul. Shafak stages an altercation in Asya’s defense. But this intellectual bar is “no place for a drunken brawl,” and soon Café Kundera returns to its usual atmosphere of a comfortable, dreary corner for these intellectuals.

Elif Shafak has a big surprise in store for the reader: the revelation at the end of the novel that Mustafa Kazancı’s grandmother was an Armenian orphan girl, Shushan who became Shermin. And then another shock: the same Shushan was Armanoush’s grandmother too. Shafak’s novel is full of these twists and chains of conflict disentangled at the end. Armanoush has grown up in a paradoxical situation, “constantly fluctuating between a proud but traumatized Armenian family and a hysterically anti-Armenian mom,” and because of these contradictory influences in her upbringing, she decides to take “a voyage into the past” to find her identity and define her sense of Armenianness (p. 119). She secretly plans her trip to Istanbul and her stay in Mustafa’s parental home.

The Armenian-Turkish cultural, religious, and historical juxtapositions, and especially the comparison of the Armenian and the Turkish historical memory, land on a tangible ground when Armanoush arrives at the Kazancı home in Istanbul and befriends Mustafa’s niece/daughter Asya, the bastard of Istanbul. What Shermin Kazancı’s husband and son had tried to forget, the secret of their Armenian past that they had tried to bury, Shushan’s granddaughter now brings back and serves