

A LITERARY GALLERY OF ARMENIAN GREAT MEN

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One comfort is, the Great Men, taken up in any way, are profitable company. We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man, without gaining something by him. He is the living light-fountain which it is good and pleasant to be near.¹

Once upon a time, there was an Armenian king called Derthat who had heard of the wise Pope Sylvester who ruled from Rome over Christendom. Since the king had become a Christian himself, he longed to make a pilgrimage to Rome. Along with a holy man called Gregorius and many noble Armenians and many precious gifts, the king travelled to the countries of the setting sun.

It so happened that during this time the mountains near Rome were made unsafe by a dragon and a unicorn. The pope, who was at his wit's end, turned to his guest, the Armenian king, and pleaded with him to try to deliver the people of Rome from these monsters. God certainly would be on the king's side. The brave Armenian went to the mountains to discover the ways of these monsters. When he came upon them, they took no notice of him since they were biting and tearing at each other ferociously. The king seized his chance and with his sword cut off the head of the dragon whereupon the unicorn was catapulted off the precipice into the gorge. The king climbed down and cut off the heads of the monsters. When he returned with his trophies, he was honoured by the pope and the people of Rome as their saviour. Johannes Schiltberger recorded this legendary story in the early part of the fifteenth century for the benefit of his compatriots.²

The exploits of the good Christian king must have comforted Schiltberger during the many lonely and frightening years that he spent far away from his home as slave of the bloody heathen Timur Lenk and his son after he had been captured on the battlefield of Nicropolis in 1394. The king--as well as his people--was Christian, like the Bavarian slave, surrounded by infidels; it was a comfort to know that he was not alone in his plight. Of course, King Derthat, this legendary ruler of the oldest Christian nation, would not have "longed" like a good Catholic to make a pilgrimage to a pope in Rome, a person his own church would have regarded as an upstart and heretic. As we only know too well from

history, there has never been much love lost between Rome and the Eastern churches.

Be that as it may, Schiltberger's hagiographic account does emphasise the fact that medieval Europe was aware of the existence of fellow Christians in a hostile East; and even though there were fierce theological disputes among these various traditions, these differences did not matter so much to simple Christian souls like Schiltberger. Also, though the king's pilgrimage to Rome at first glance, seems to be unlikely, his journey does represent a long tradition of Armenians, including their kings and leaders, turning and actually going to the great cities and courts of the West where they engaged often in an amicable relationship with their European friends and equals. It was not only European kings and religious leaders and the whole lot of crusaders who followed their personal passions who travelled, to establish contact with the "others".

The more travelled and educated of Schiltberger's European contemporaries had heard about Armenian kings and their friendship with European nobility. Many of the early Crusaders were royally treated by the Armenian communities in the East, and at times this feeling of friendship and good will was reciprocated, even on a political level. On several occasions, the rulers of the newly created Crusader kingdoms had married Armenian noble ladies. Once an Armenian king even received his crown from one of the German princes of the church; this event happened in the cathedral of Tarsus when the Archbishop of Mainz, Prince Conrad of Wittelsbach, anointed in 1198 Prince Leon II king of Cilician Armenia. This monarch is perhaps best remembered on account of his friendship with Richard the Lion-Heart and that he acted as chief best man at the wedding of the English king to Queen Berengaria. In 1386 Leon VI, also king of Cilician Armenia, went to France and England to mediate between the respective kings to bring an end to the Hundred Years War. The peace mission of this last king of Armenia miscarried--and later, now without a throne and his family in Mamlouk captivity, he found refuge in Paris and his last resting place there in the Church of St. Denis. And wasn't it while defending Armenian lands that the great Barbarossa drowned?

The European contemporaries of Schiltberger then were aware of a few heroic and a much greater number of not quite so elevated Armenians; but most important: they were Christian, a people with many martyrs--and that strengthened cultural and religious ties. Often that fact somewhat paled; they nonetheless were different, were "other". They lived in a far-away exotic and fabulous place that only very few Europeans had visited, and therefore the individual and collective imagination of the European had to create an appropriate space for the Armenian king or martyr to be able to "see" this "other", as he had to do for the Tartars, Turks, and all the other peoples of the Orient he encountered in one way or another. This is the imaginary world of the European Orient that the French poet Paul Valéry has called "C'est là l'Orient de l'esprit". And this particular "ménagerie mentale",³ as we shall see, was populated with Armenian king and martyr figures--figures that appealed not only

to the religious imagination of medieval Europe but were congenial to the imagination of the Counter Reformation and the Baroque as well.

But times, taste, and political and religious realities change--and "enlightened" Europe created for itself a somewhat different "ménagerie mentale" from that of previous generations. The East had become more "accessible" through traveller reports and therefore perhaps a bit less fantastic, though the imagination of both the active and the arm-chair traveller still conveniently provided exciting details and brought a basically unknown continent into an "appropriate" European perspective and focus. The threat from the East had diminished; the Christian forces in 1571 had won the battle of Lepanto, and Vienna had not been conquered by the Turks in 1683. Exotic Christian heroic martyrs were no longer fashionable in a Europe that had fought long religious wars and had convinced itself it was a good thing to overcome religious superstitions and had therefore become open-minded as far as other cultures and religions were concerned. The philosophical tale and several of Mozart's operas had acquainted Europe with the wise ruler and observer from the East. Thus, the Western audience was ready to appreciate a play like Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* (1778) that celebrates the great Muslim ruler Saladin and the wise Jew Nathan. The play is a noble plea and argument for religious tolerance. In short, Europe had become enlightened.

Enlightened Europe wanted to be open-minded and understand the "other"--other religions and cultures. It needed a new and adjusted "awareness" of what Edward Said has called "the Orient", this "wide field of meanings, associations, and connotations" which "not necessarily refer to the real Orient but to the field surrounding the word," and naturally Armenia and the Armenians make up part of what Said has termed "Orient" and "Orientalism."⁴

The Armenians, though in many ways "different" from the peoples among whom they lived, were part of the "other". In modern critical literary discourse, the term "other" stands at the centre of a lively debate: Edward W. Said, Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Tzvetan Todorov, and Julia Kristeva, among others, have contributed to the complexities of the terms "other" and "otherness". Throughout this paper, I am using the term in its more general sense without all the ramifications the critics have given it. In this new awareness, to be Christian, especially of the Oriental variety, was not such a positive quality in the eyes of the gentleman who travelled to the East and his reader back home. The thinkers of the period approached their own Christian tradition critically in order to be open to what their forefathers had termed "heathenish" and "Mohammedan" ways. The worldly and sophisticated European traveller, it seems, had shed his Christian "clothing" at home, and as Philip Glazbrook in his book *Journey to Kars* has observed about his fellow travellers of an earlier England, "very naturally" found himself

attracted towards the powerful rather than towards the downtrodden—
towards pasha and sheikh rather than servants and moneylenders--and this
partiality led him to associate himself with Mussulmans rather than with

Christians. The Syrian or Greek Christian under Ottoman rule was perhaps the most wretched, and most despised, of all inhabitants of the empire....To find himself confronted with a set of beggars and servants as his natural associates, by faith, in the East, did not suit either him or his readers.⁵

And the European conveniently forgot the virtue of Christian humility he, too, was supposed to practice and the fact that he was to see in this "other" Christian his brother.

In his heart, the traveller was actually very much aware--while his reading public followed him vicariously--as Syndram maintains, of the relativity of his own culture and religion in relationship with the "other" and whatever this "other" represented.⁶ However, most of them remained blissfully unaware of what was happening in their subconscious mind when they encountered the "other". Julia Kristeva has suggested that this "other" the Europeans encountered in foreign parts was not really an entity by itself, but part of their individual personalities, a part of their rejected unconscious mind. In meeting the "other", the Europeans then encountered that unpleasant and destructive part of their own personality-- the "other" that exists in the unconscious mind of all of us--from which they had become estranged and therefore projected it on the "other" they met. When they met the "other", they really encountered the other side of themselves. Since the Oriental Christians of whom he had become critical and had found wanting in almost every Christian virtue because they had in many ways adapted to the traditions of their "heathen" neighbours, the European felt that through their shared religion his own culture and his very own honour would suffer in the opinion of, for example, the Muslims whom he now felt he had to impress. There is perhaps yet another aspect of this ambivalent inter-Christian relationship: by mocking "the enormities and absurdities of Christian sectarians," and that would include a great number of Armenians, the traveller "had the chance to mock behind his hand...the sober church-going hierarchy of conventional society at home," Glazbrook feels.⁷

In many ways Europeans had become "enlightened" at the expense of their own traditions and those other peoples who shared them. And the figure of the Armenian, be he heroic or common, whom we meet in the literature of the period carries much of this burden. Eventually with the rise of nationalism and the practice of realpolitik, the imaginary "Armenian" Orient created by the literary imagination of the West darkens even further. The Armenian, common or heroic, generally speaking, has fared poorly in the literatures of Europe, especially since the Enlightenment.

The enlightened or Victorian traveller usually still had faith in the idea of the hero and indulged himself in hero-worship. At the centre of his "ménagerie mentale" towers the "Hero"--not, however, the Great Men of alien cultures to be explored on the Grand Tour, nor would it include the traditional heroes of the Armenians, that "grim-looking race, with long beards and still longer names," at whom traveller Richard Wilbraham sneers.⁸ This Hero is the narrator-traveller

himself, a figure he must turn himself into if his readers are to follow him with sufficient interest. To achieve this, the traveller has to select, embellish, and invent his exploits, and yet he has to keep in mind that verisimilitude and dramatic truth should be his aim. Created in this way, the Hero is the narrator's alter ego, rather than his own self. Into this creation the writer builds, out of his own experiences, the heroic attributes which society extolls, and expects from the adventurous traveller.⁹ How could the Great Men of other and perhaps "lesser" cultures meet such rigid requirements?

Heroes? In our own day and age, they seem to have become an extinct breed. The whole idea of heroes and hero-worship is rather an embarrassment, and very few of the Great Men of even our own generation are left on the pedestals they once occupied. Do we dare speak of heroes? Lord Byron's demand: "I want a hero: an uncommon want" with which he opens his *Don Juan* does express one of our own basic human needs. Whether we call them Great Men, heroes, role models--we all need them. Lord Byron's demand of course questions the greatness of the military leader or the man who represents power, the hero of many generations in human history. During the last two centuries in the West, our conception of the Great Men and what constitutes the heroic has greatly changed. Carlyle in his study *On Heroes and Hero-Worship* (first published in 1841) widened and democratized the gallery of Great Men to include next to the traditional hero as divinity, king, and war hero also the prophet, the priest, the teacher, the man of letters--but also the revolutionary. Our own century has contributed to this gallery the anti-hero, yet at the same time we have found our way back to where it all began, as the popularity of Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) shows.

After putting himself into proper focus, the traveller populated his "ménagerie" with the high and mighty as well with the lesser of the "other" of the contemporary and the Orient of the past. The Armenians provided him with a rich field of study.

He met the whole gallery of Armenian Great Men, the heroes of myth and hagiography, the fighters, princes, and secular leaders. There are the saints, the great teachers, the artists, the princes of the church. Of the latter I found so many that I have devoted a separate study to them. Nihilists and revolutionaries and anti-heroes tend to appeal to modern taste--and the Armenians have produced them too. Very curiously, Wilbraham's "grim-looking race, with long beards and still longer names" has found favour with the writers of the best seller. *Mutatus mutandus*--who is there to account for the strange mutations of taste? But let us return to earlier literature.

In the centuries following Schiltberger's account, the stories of other manly and pious Armenian kings reached the ears and struck the fancy of European artists. The French playwright Pierre Corneille read about the Armenian noble Polyeucte in a Latin version composed by Surius (16th century) after a book of hagiography compiled by the Byzantine monk Simeon Metaphrastes who had lived during the tenth century. In these sources, Polyeucte is a dedicated and

stoic early Christian martyr. Corneille in his play heightened the virtues of this pious Armenian and transformed him into the most perfect of Baroque heroes who does not compromise his faith and love of God for anything, neither his honour nor even his wife's love for him, and gladly accepts martyrdom for the sake of his new religion.

Corneille's *Polyeucte Martyr* was first performed during the winter of 1641/2 and is regarded as one of the great tragedies of the French classical stage.

A few years later, the German playwright Andreas Gryphius came across the story of yet another Armenian noble: Leo V, Emperor of Byzantium, one of the rulers of that empire who came to no good end and was assassinated in 820 during the Christmas service in the chapel of St. Stephen in the imperial palace in Constantinople. The misdeeds and death of Leo Armenius, as he was commonly known, entered the iconography of the Counter-Reformation shaped by the Jesuits. The pious Lutheran Andreas Gryphius during his stay in Rome in 1646 had perhaps seen there the fresco in Santa Maria Maggiore that Giovanni Baglione had painted. It depicts the gruesome death of the emperor.

It is certain that Gryphius did see a performance of *Leo Armenius* by the Jesuit playwright Joseph Simon Roth and shortly thereafter wrote his own play on the same subject. The Jesuit had emphasised in his rendering of the story the emperor's iconoclasm and his persecution of his fellow Christians.

After the disastrous defeat in 813 of Emperor Michael I, Leo, an able general from the Anatolian corps, was proclaimed emperor by the Byzantine army. Perhaps he had betrayed Michael, but his victory in 817 over the Arabs and Bulgars did save the empire. Leo V "proved himself to be a prudent, just, and successful ruler and administrator; religious without being bigoted, and strict, but not cruel." Because of his moral stance, he had made many enemies.¹⁰ This, however, is a modern evaluation and not the way Gryphius's sources, the monk George Cedrenus (11th century) and the courtier John Zonaras (12th century) viewed what in their opinion was an Armenian upstart who had made good. Leo had offended their patriotic pride and religious sentiments when he forbade the cult of the icons. Leo had been a monster; his Greek biographer Nicephorus Skenophylax minced no words. How could it be otherwise since "he derived his descent from Armenians and Assyrians; from the former he was enriched with treachery and malignancy, and from the latter he imitated beastliness in all things, surpassing them by far. He surpassed the treachery by beastliness and overtook the beastliness by treachery."¹¹ It is little wonder that he was slain by assassins in the hire of his protégé and successor Michael II, the Amorion.

There was no doubt that Leo was a tyrant, but that did not matter to a poet of the Baroque Age like Gryphius. The sins of the historical Leo V were of no great concern to the playwright who was not interested in writing a historical play. Byzantium, the world, to the Baroque poet is a vale of sorrows and sin and tears in which man is lost; all he can do is turn to God and ask for salvation. Sinful man is saved through his penitence and death and the grace of God--such an emblematic Baroque man is Gryphius's Leo Armenius. Like Duerer's

Melancholia, he is torn by doubt; like Hamlet, he fails to murder to save himself. He is an overreacher, yet at the same time also God's anointed, and when Fortune's wheel turns again his fall from power is swift and terrifying. In the final analysis, though, it turns out to be a fortunate fall, a fall into redemption, for through his death the sinful emperor on that Christmas morning is saved; Gryphius is very clear about this point. As the emperor is stabbed to death and falls, his political position and his life gone, he falls and dies on the crucifix on the altar, his blood mingling with the communion wine in the chalice.

This is high Baroque drama of the Protestant type; Gryphius was a very devout Lutheran--and his play was successful. In 1715 the philosopher Leibnitz recalled that he attended a performance of *Leo Armenius* when he was a boy, and we know that it was performed on several occasions in Breslau and in St. Gall. In Cologne and other German towns, the play was staged by the troupe of Joris Jollifous, the last travelling English actor-manager who was to come to the continent.

European school children of last century could read about other famous Armenians in their history books, and everyone with a bit of education should be able to identify Narses, the Byzantine general of Armenian background who subdued the Teutonic barbarians and saved Italy for Emperor Justinian.¹² Sometimes history books referred to him merely as "that Eunuch" who won and lost his imperial master's favour. Leopold von Ranke, the influential German historian and champion of objective history writing based on source material, described the emperor's Armenian general in his *Weltgeschichte* (1881-88) as a very influential man in the empire because he was the most trusted advisor of Justinian and in charge of the state treasure. Narses was a puny and ugly man but a genius as far as finances and matters pertaining to government and war were concerned.

The history of this great general whose "feeble, diminutive body concealed the soul of a statesman and a warrior," the eunuch who is "ranked among the few who have rescued that unhappy name from the contempt and hatred of mankind," can be read in the second volume of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776). Edward Gibbon based his portrayal of the general on the accounts of Byzantine historians, especially of Procopius who was Narses's contemporary. Narses had not been a promising youth; his early years "had been employed in the management of the loom and distaff, in the cares of the household, and the service of female luxury; but while his hands were busy, he secretly exercised the faculties of a vigorous and discerning mind." Of course, he had learnt at court to "dissemble, to flatter," and thus became the favourite of Emperor Justinian.

On the whole, Gibbon's portrayal of the general is favourable. Frequently we are told of Narses's prudence, his great popularity with the soldiers and the conquered barbarians as well, and of his dedication to his special patroness, the Virgin Mary. He emerges as a clever strategist, a just yet merciful and humane victor who was most kind and generous to his hostages. It certainly was a well-

spent life, fit to be at the centre of one of Torquato Tasso's elevating epics. After long deliberation, however, the poet chose another hero, Gibbon recalls.

Unfortunately, there were some dark spots in Narses's life. His virtues "were stained with avarice; and in the provincial reign of fifteen years he accumulated a treasure of gold and silver which surpassed the modesty of a private fortune." His government became oppressive and unpopular. This provided the Empress Sophia—Theodora was not around—with the perfect excuse to get rid of him, and so she wrote in a very insulting letter addressed to him "that he should leave to *men* the exercise of arms, and return to his proper station among the maidens of the palace, where a distaff should be again placed in the hands of the eunuch."

With the publication in 1876 of *Ein Kampf um Rom (A Battle for Rome)*, Felix Dahn popularised the figure of Narses for the German reading public. The novel depicts the final stages of the fight of the Ostrogoths against the armies of Rome and Byzantium from the death of Theodoric the Great (526) till their final defeat under King Teja by Narses (552-3).

Felix Dahn regarded history somewhat naively as the product of the personal whims and passions of the high and mighty of this world. Consequently, we see his Narses rise to fame as pawn of Empress Theodora who plays him against her husband and his court and Belisar, the other great general of the empire. The Narses of the novel appears at first as the stereotyped Byzantine imperial protégé, jealously guarding his privileges, a master of clever observation, a skilled Machiavelli who is an expert at outmaneuvering his opponents. Most of all, he is the great master accountant of Byzantium. When the barbarians hear his name mentioned, they shake in their boots. But as soon as these same Goths and Franks and Vandals have come to know him as their commander, they revere him as their "father". It is difficult to oppose and defeat this "crocodile", as his enemies call him. He is the greatest man of his time in the opinion of the Procopius of the novel. And the "Pawn" outlives his "Queen".

She had taught him to be a clever rhetorician, but neither she nor the court could teach him the art of nepotism. He himself, somehow, had learnt to become an outstanding military strategist, the only general of his century who succeeded to subdue all the unruly factions of Italy. The forces under his command, like the trappers in a hunt, invaded Italy from the north, and in an unbroken line, a "walking wall of destruction," pushed south leaving behind them a country totally devoid of anything related to the Goths. This was his plan; and Dahn, who is very much on the Gothic side, has to admire him for this strategy. The novel portrays him as a victor who respects the vanquished; when the defeated remnant of the Gothic army file past him carrying their slain king on his shield, the paralysed and epileptic little victor—and Dahn always reminds his readers of these shortcomings of the general—takes the wreath of laurels from his own head and puts it on the brow of the Goth. His body may have been paralysed and shaken by the falling sickness, but he was an honourable man and a great leader of men, this the novel emphasises.

The cousins of the general, and we frequently hear that they are Armenian, do not fare so well in Dahn's Teutonic romance. Cousin Petros combines in his character all the lowest vices that are commonly associated with Empress Theodora's court. He is her creature who murders and drowns at her command because he is a coward, an upstart envious of his famous cousin and greedy of fame and money. He is an expert at intrigue and at drowning defenseless enemy queens in their bath chambers, a crooked tax collector, a forger--in short, the perfect corrupt Byzantine courtier--the "typical" Armenian as the European traveller would have said. When his services are no longer required, he himself disappears in the imperial dungeons at the bidding of his patroness.

Another Armenian, John the Bloody, dies at least the death of a soldier during the last battle. He represents the bold and brave and courageous Armenian soldier that the historian or traveller of last century associated with the past glory of ancient Armenia; these are precisely the characteristics he found lacking in his Armenian contemporaries. John, though, is tinged with Byzantine corruption: he is by far too clever and cunning for a common soldier; he is tricky and vengeful, only too glad to do the dirty business and the intriguing for his patron Belisar. Fortunately for Narses, his great opponent's shadow is slain on the battlefield.

Central to Gillian Bradshaw's *The Bearkeeper's Daughter* is not Theodora, as the title of the novel would suggest, but her trusted and loyal confidant and advisor. He is a military and administrative genius as well. We meet a courtier who is above any whisper of reproach and suspicion, a paragon of virtue who is really out of place in any Byzantine court. Narses is a sensitive man, attentive to ladies, and very devoted to the Virgin Mary. But what is outstanding in this version of the general is his deep friendship for John of Beirut, the bastard son of Theodora.

Most memorable, though, are the times when Narses remembers his family background. He was the third son of a poor Armenian peasant, a worthless mouth to feed, and because of his sickliness of absolutely no use to his family. One very harsh winter, the family lost its draught ox, and to make up for this misfortune, the father sold this most worthless of his children to a slave trader for 69 soldi, the price of perhaps half an ox. The trader was not impressed by his purchase and therefore had the boy castrated. What hurt Narses most was the behaviour of his mother. She cried and wailed as if the boy had already died when the trader handed the money to the father, yet when the little boy tried to cling to her for protection, she pushed him away and without any emotion handed him over to the slave trader. What did Narses tie to his Armenian family? Certainly no desire to return to them; eventually, after he had become rich and famous, he sent them the same amount of the blood money for which he had been sold. We would not blame him if he had forgotten his roots, but this is not the case. He confides to Justinian that he is loyal to his people, a most Armenian characteristic as the emperor reflects, a characteristic which he shares with his compatriot, the General Artabanus of the novel.

Artabanes, who is a good loyal subject and one of the military leaders in his own right, is a comic foil to the exalted Narses. There was no need for his family to sell him into slavery--instead they "sold" him into marriage with a respectable but unattractive Armenian maiden when he was sixteen. And so the future hero ran away from his marital responsibilities and conveniently forgot her on his way to the top of the military hierarchy. As he is basking in the glory of his success, she catches up with him in Constantinople and ruins his ambitious plans to marry into the imperial family. At heart Artabanes may be a bigamist, but he is a loyal soldier and a good Armenian patriot.

There remain the unsung Armenian heroes of all the battles of Justinian's reign: the historical Procopius praised them in his *Secret History*,¹³ and so does Gillian Bradshaw. There are Dahn's Armenian foot soldiers who fought so gallantly in the front lines at the walls of Ravenna, Rome, Naples, and all the other Italian towns. Many of them were sent to face death by their treacherous commanders who were in many cases Armenians themselves. Most travellers agreed with their contemporary Dahn that brave Armenians existed a very long time ago, but not any longer. Still, now and then they did find an Armenian with outstanding qualities who could be one of the company of good and respectable men.

The Victorian traveller looked around and saw a goodly number of living Armenians who had become successful and important citizens of several Mediterranean countries. Usually they were appreciated as leading citizens in their adopted countries and sometimes by the traveller as well. The small water-colour portrait painted by the traveller Godfrey Thomas Vigne (November 26, 1843, aboard the steamer from Galaz to Constantinople), a picture that shows a dashing and romantic-looking Dawud Pasha, is a case in point. Dawud Pasha, originally Garabed Artin Dawud Oghlou, was an Armenian Catholic from Constantinople who represented the Ottoman empire as attaché in Berlin and as consul-general in Vienna before he was appointed superintendent of post and telegraph in the Ottoman capital and in 1861 was promoted to first *mutasarrif*, or governor, of Mount Lebanon. In this position, till his resignation in 1868, he did much to restore peace and order to that region. Dawud Pasha has been described as "one of the most capable and enlightened officials of the Ottoman empire."¹⁴

Muhammed Ali, Viceroy of Egypt, already during his boyhood in Macedonia had been favourably impressed by Armenians. In Kavalla, it was especially the Armenian banker Agnitsi Aghiazar Amira who supported the schemes of the aspiring military man; later the Armenian merchant from Smyrna Boghos Bey Yusufian was to become the viceroy's business partner, secretary-interpreter, advisor, supervisor of financial affairs, and finally Minister of Commercial and Foreign Affairs. This Armenian was a man after the heart of the prince whom he could trust and respect, surrounded by ignorance as Muhammed Ali felt he was. He once observed: "I have been almost alone for the greater part of my life, finding nobody except Boghos Bey to second me."¹⁵

Boghos Bey had impressed other people as well. He knew many languages and therefore was appointed as a young man of twenty to be first translator of the British consulate in Smyrna; he held this position for two years. It seems that it was during this period that he was assigned to Commodore Sir William Sidney Smith as interpreter, for Boghos was aboard H. M. S. *Tigre* when Commodore Smith accompanied the Turkish force that later defeated Napoleon. Boghos handled "his duties with such skill that he attracted" the attention of the Grand Vizir who offered him the position of interpreter at the Porte, but Boghos returned to his family business in Smyrna. In 1810, he met the Viceroy for the first time; the merchant and the prince became friends.

The Pasha of Egypt knew that he could trust the Armenians who, as a people in the diaspora, had no pronounced political allegiance. This merchant from Smyrna, "timid, supple, and a *rayah*," with "his great intelligence, his experience in mercantile affairs" would be "entirely devoted" to the ambitious interests of Muhammed Ali, the British historian A. A. Paton wrote in 1870.¹⁶

To several travellers of the early part of last century, Boghos Bey was the guide to whom they had been recommended. This was the case with Giovanni Belzoni at the very beginning of the career of the pioneer Egyptologist. On 1815, he and his wife travelled to Egypt to impress the Pasha with his hydraulic machines. Belzoni had to present his letters of introduction to Boghos, "a man of great acuteness of understanding, and...well disposed toward strangers". Belzoni rented a house from the Armenian. The building was ramshackle, but the landlord proved to be a trusted helper and advisor.¹⁷ Boghos's own house, in turn, provided all the comforts of the Levant to his personal friends. One of these good friends, the Swiss traveller Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, often enjoyed this hospitality. Lady Hester Stanhope, too, respected this favourite of the Pasha highly. She had made up her mind that he could not possibly be an Armenian, "although he says he is--his mother was and so was his ostensible father...but I have found out his real father," a Turkish Aga whose name she unfortunately forgot to mention.¹⁸

During his audience with the Pasha, Dr. Charles Meryon, Lady Hester's private physician, saw this "Mr. Bohoz, a gentleman of the most courtier-like manners" who acted as interpreter. He was not only a skilled linguist, but "added an amiability that seemed to embellish the phrases he had to repeat."¹⁹ When Lord Lindsay, traveller to Egypt and the Holy Land, was granted an audience with the Viceroy, it was held in the presence of this "sleek and comely, honest, plodding" Armenian, "the Pasha's right-hand man."²⁰ Not all travellers were impressed by the Pasha and his advisor when they were granted an audience. "Near the divan, a host of Christian Parasites were merely cringing," the good Christian R. R. Madden was disgusted, and continued to describe his experience at court. "Some of the favourite ones were sitting on the edge of the seat in a most painful posture of respect, extolling the wisdom of every observation that fell from 'His Highness' and fawning on Mr. Bohass, the dragoman and dispenser of beans."²¹

Boghos Bey, the dispenser of beans, was not beloved by everybody, neither by all the travellers he met nor by the whole entourage of the Pasha, and so the rumour of embezzlement reached the potentate's ear. Madden reports what happened subsequently. Boghos was found guilty, and, by order of His Highness, was crammed into a sack, and "conveyed to the Nile to suffer death. But a brother dragoman (for Boghos still performs that office, and misinterprets things terribly), interfered." With the help of a highly placed Turkish official, this friend "prevailed on the executioners to postpone the murder, till the Pasha was again applied to on his behalf." Madden, however, does not tell us that during this time of royal displeasure the Italian consul to Egypt, a man called Rosseti, sheltered Boghos. When the princely anger had spent itself, the Pasha missed the expertise of Boghos and expressed it openly. Then the Armenian's "saviour" thought this to be the opportune moment, confessed his "crime" to the "astonished Viceroy; nothing could exceed his joy, he pressed to his bosom the man he had doomed to death some days before, and heaped on him all those honours which he still possesses." Those Egyptians who had failed in obedience to the Pasha's wishes "were put to death" (Madden, vol. 1, pp. 216f).

Boghos Bey, quite an Anglophile, had not found any favour in the eyes of the Irish physician Madden who accompanied the British Consul Salt on his tour of duty. Madden was outspoken about his opinion: "An Armenian...a crafty supersubtle Levantine, of polished manners, of consummate address, of a smooth exterior, and of a heart whose impulses never find their way to a tongue which 'can wheedle with the devil,' is the main spring of the Egyptian government: every movement in the politics is regulated by him (vol. 1, p. 216). As we have seen, the Pasha did not always appreciate the good qualities of his advisor either. But when he found out that his favourite had died in January 1844 almost penniless and had been given a mean funeral, it is reported that he reprimanded the mayor of Alexandria and shouted: "I order you, ass, to unearth the body of Boghos Bey, who was worth a hundred times more than you, and bury him again with all the honours we owe to a man whom I loved" (Marashlian, p. 18).

Back in the days of the Fatimid rulers, many an Armenian had influenced the affairs of Egypt; the most famous of them was perhaps Badr-al-Jamali. Now, more than six hundred years later, Boghos Bey revived old times. While he advised the Pasha, many young Armenians were educated in Europe at his recommendation and found their entry into the Egyptian system of government. Among these promising young men were three of his nephews, three young Nubarians. One of them, Nubar Pasha, became prime minister, a post which he held three times during the latter part of the century. This is the man whom Gustave Flaubert in his *Voyage d'Egypte* (Paris, 1851) flippantly dismissed as a young Armenian with a long nose like the beak of an eagle, a chap who was giving himself the airs of the Quartier Latin.²²

The Armenian Artin Bey Chrakian succeeded Boghos as Minister of Commercial and Foreign Affairs. Like Boghos, he had started his career as interpreter and then had climbed the ladder of political success. In 1837, while he

still acted as the Pasha's secretary, Prince Hermann von Pueckler-Muskau met him in the tents and audience chambers of the Pasha. The duties of Artin Bey included fanning the Pasha while he was granting private audiences, escorting the princely visitor from Silesia on all occasions, picking up after his master, and advising the Viceroy on matters of business and state.²³ During the rule of Muhammed Ali's successor, Abbas Pasha, Artin Bey like many other Christians who lived in Egypt no longer felt secure. To escape the royal dagger or poison, he asked one night for asylum in the French consulate and shortly thereafter managed to escape to Syria, as Vincent Bendetti, then French Consul-Elève in Alexandria, reports.²⁴

In Russia as well several Armenians had attained high positions. For example, General M. T. Loris-Melikoff who invaded eastern Anatolia in 1877 was Armenian, and, during the time the German professor Karl Koch was kept from conquering Mt. Ararat on account of a lingering fever, Prince Bebutoff, an Armenian by birth, was governor of the province of Erevan which was then under Russian rule. The sick professor convalesced in the house of the prince, a most charming and fatherly person, he thought.²⁵ The good professor in his sick condition must have been fooled by this cunning Armenian master at intrigue and pretense, as had been his superiors in St. Petersburg who thought that he was an ardent Russian patriot and a model administrator. Dr. Moritz Wagner, another German professor, had been told by a trustworthy source the "whole truth" about the prince, and he was going to set the record straight! This Armenian governor was really the worst enemy and scourge his very own Armenian compatriots could possibly have, and therefore he was detested and cursed by them. No Turkish pasha and no Persian sardar had ever bled them like this thief and tyrant. His Armenian subjects longed for the good old times of Persian oppression to return! The prince grew very rich and rose in the esteem of St. Petersburg; when his reign of terror finally came to an end, he was replaced by a Russian who was, unfortunately, no whit better than his Armenian predecessor.²⁶

The Armenian as the trusted advisor and friend of rulers, as the successful political climber exemplified by Prince Bebutoff or by Boghos Bey and his nephew the prime minister--the fictional descendants of this figure can be found in popular contemporary literature. For instance, in the fall of 1990 the German television audience was transported vicariously on several Saturday afternoons to the fictitious oil-rich African country Chasand. There, the clever and evil Dr. Odabachian, a drop-out lawyer from the civilised society of London, has wormed himself into the confidence of the local prince and now runs and controls the local mafia, the drug scene, the bordellos, the competing oil companies, the country itself. One strand of Odabachian's ancestry of course goes back to Calluste Guelbenkian, another to Svengali, for the doctor has cast an evil spell on his lovely Anglo-Saxon wife who is also a physician. Out of misplaced devotion, she committed perjury to cover for him and paid with her physician's license and three years of her freedom. He also expects her to condone all his murders, including that of her brother. Hardly any villain of modern melodrama sinks to

such a depth of evil. It seems that the producers of the television series had to make the bestseller *Wuestenfieber--Fever of the Desert* (1985) by Gerhard Keppner, on which this series is based, more attractive to the audience and therefore introduced the Armenian, his wife, and the mafia; they do not exist in the novel. The stereotype of the "ugly Armenian" was added to bring life and tension into a rather flat long tale.

Even though the Western attitude to the figure of the Armenian as the trusted advisor and friend of rulers is not always as negative as we have seen in Odabachian's case, it is often very ambivalent. This is certainly true about Ohannes Assaiyan, a young Armenian slave who was bought by Georgius Sphrantzes, the leading Byzantine general in the fatal year 1453. The general is a historical figure, Ohannes a literary creation. The story of this sleek and clever and efficient translator, secretary, spy, intriguer, and speculator who rises from slave to trusted advisor to the general and his princess-wife is told in the novel *Sturm am Goldenen Horn--Siege of the Golden Horn* (Frankfurt, 1982) by the German popular historian Gerhard Herm. Ohannes is level-headed, even cynical, and thus has realised that the days of the Byzantine empire are numbered. He will need an open postern gate to secure his spoils from the dying city; as he says he needs to save his "piece of Constantinople, that huge cheese that is slowly eaten up by countless greedy rats"--rats like Ohannes. His security is the Bank of San Giorgio in Genoa and his new patron Basilius Beassarion, Archbishop of Nicea and later cardinal. He has transferred his allegiance to the cardinal for a very high price, to be sure. Ohannes is very greedy, and therefore he will sell the statue that Princess Anna Comnena, a fictitious descendant of the famous lady of the same name, has given to him as a special memento of herself and her father, but he will not compromise his honour as Armenian and therefore will not serve the new masters of Constantinople. We respect him for that; a sarcastic voice might say that this Armenian was a coward who ran to the secure fleshpots of Italy.

Admirers of Constantine the Great, the Roman emperor who elevated Christianity to state religion of the empire, will find very few good things to say about the Armenian eunuch Eutherius, the teacher and confidant and advisor of Julian the Apostate, who counseled his master to revolt against the emperor. The troubled family history of the imperial cousins Constantine and Julian is chronicled in Gore Vidal's novel *Julian* (New York, 1964). Vidal's Eutherius is a Falstaff-like character who could have stepped out of the pages of a comic book. Julian has to invite his teacher to sit on stately chairs of imperial proportions; any chair made for an ordinary mortal would disintegrate under his vast bulk. But it is very much to his credit, both physical and moral, after he has encouraged Julian's insurrection to carry the bad news from Paris to Constantinople. Fortune is with the Armenian Eutherius, and he does not pay in the usual Byzantine manner with his head to appease the anger of the mighty emperor.

Let us remember, this is Julian's story, and in the life of the orphaned young prince Constantine plays the role of an evil genius who has murdered his way to the throne. Whom can this gauche and friendless young exile trust, surrounded by treachery and evil as he is? Eutherius, who is first sent to him as teacher of court ceremony and as spy, surprisingly does turn out to be an honest man and does replace in many ways Julian's murdered father. Student and teacher become close friends; the prince has found a loyal and capable protector. When in Paris the legions under Julian's command revolt against the unreasonable order sent from Constantinople, Eutherius who has always been the epitome of correctness and justice in matters of state, now encourages insurrection. It is the only reasonable and proper course to take.

As Leo Hamalian has observed, "Vidal seems to have a lively affection for his fictional Armenians."²⁷ In the novel, we meet two good father figures. Julian during his student days in Athens had found friendship and guidance in the house of his teacher Prohaeresius. This philosopher remembers his own experiences when he was young, when "I first came from Armenia to Athens."

Amin Maalouf's odyssey of the manuscript of Omar Khayam's *Rubaiyat* that he tells in the novel *Samarqand* (Paris, 1988) introduces us to the Armenian Vartan who is the fictional protector of the Persian poet. Maalouf does so with interest and respect. After a night of fighting that leaves Isfahan in flames, suddenly a huge warrior barges into the bedroom of the poet. This is Vartan who till this night of fighting and regicide was a loyal bodyguard of his prince. After the murder of the prince, he was ordered by his companions to kill the poet. Unlike them, Vartan is a man of honour who feels it is his duty to shift his loyalty from the dead prince to the still living poet. The two men escape from Isfahan. During the years of exile and hardship they learn to trust each other completely.

Eventually the past catches up with them when Khayam receives a letter from his old friend Hassan Sabbah who is the most dangerous and wanted man in the Persian empire--Hassan is no other than the leader of the Assassins. The poet is to visit the Old Man of the Mountain in his stronghold Alamut. Then Vartan confesses that after the regicide he had pleaded to save Khayam's life because he was sure that sooner or later the poet would go to the mountain, and then Vartan would have his chance to eradicate what he thinks is the greatest evil in the world. Now things have changed, and Vartan has become a man of peace. To seal their deepened bond of friendship, Khayam entrusts the Armenian with the safekeeping of his secret book, the *Rubaiyat*. This book is so special to the poet that only his wife and his prince have ever touched it. Vartan is deeply touched by this gesture and falls in love with the manuscript. The bearded giant tenderly decorates its margins with glosses and drawings. Fate, however, in the guise of an assassin does not allow him to finish his labour of love and kills him while the book is kidnapped and taken to Alamut. In the novel, the priceless book ends up in a golden casket in the wreck of the *Titanic*.

Such devotion and loyalty are rare in our gallery of Armenian Great Men--in any gallery of men or women, for that matter.

In German literature, the figure of the shady Armenian has a tradition that goes back at least to Friedrich von Schiller's fragment *Der Geisterseher--The Ghost-Seer* (1786-98). The German reading public of the Enlightenment, very fond of Gothic romances and exotic tales, was fascinated by Schiller's portrayal of the Armenian mask that appears one night in Venice and starts to spin his evil web of lies, mysterious happenings, and international intrigue. The tale, also called *The Armenian* in some translations, was quite popular as the various completions of the fragment indicate. Before the tale begins, Schiller's Armenian has already corrupted the authorities of the city and will now weaken and corrupt the hero, a somewhat colourless Protestant prince, whom he is about to haunt in various guises. At the end of the fragment, the princeling turns Catholic and finds peace and the "true" sacrament, as he says, in the bosom of the Armenian who now appears in the guise of a Jesuit. Here we should remember that for enlightened Europe the Jesuit represented the ultimate embodiment of evil in human shape. Schiller's novel certainly does not enhance the image of the Armenians.

The sight of an Armenian priest on the squares and canals of Venice was nothing unusual during Schiller's time since Rome had granted in 1712 to the Mechitarists, a group of Catholic Armenians, the right to establish for themselves a convent on the island of Lazzaro. But who is Schiller's Armenian? He has the talent of appearing before the prince at crucial moments of the latter's life; he predicts important events that come true; he identifies himself as officer of the Grand Inquisition; he seems to rule over and to direct the affairs of the living and the dead of Catholic and Protestant Europe alike. Officer of the Inquisition or of the Russian army? Or wandering Jew? He is definitely not an attractive figure with his repulsive features and penetrating eyes, this "Unfathomable" as Schiller calls him, Armenian or whatever, who perhaps learnt his wisdom in the tombs of ancient Egypt, who cannot be hurt by either time or poison or death. Perhaps he is one of the un-dead?

We do know that Schiller modelled his Armenian after two of the most notorious charlatans of the eighteenth century: Alessandro Cagliostro, whose career as grand master of deception ended with his involvement in the scandal that concerned the well-known diamond necklace; and the Count of St. Germain. Casanova describes in his *Memoires* how it was rumoured that the Count was supposed to have been involved in the political intrigues of Catherine II of Russia; Casanova himself had on several occasions seen the count dressed in the national garb of an Armenian. Putting on the national costume of an Armenian must have been for a while quite the rage intellectual circles of enlightened Europe. Jean Jaques Rousseau, too, was fond of dressing himself in what he thought to be Armenian outfits to the annoyance of Voltaire, as David Marshall Lang has pointed out.²⁸ Schiller's Armenian does keep good company!

Not all the emissaries of Armenia that could be seen in Italian cities were sinister. We have already met good King Derthat who slew the monsters. More recently, back in the twelfth century to be precise, when King William the Good ruled over Sicily, according to Boccaccio, a delegation of three noble Armenians came to the island on their way to the Pope in Rome to discuss matters related to a new crusade to the Holy Land. What happened to one of them in an inn at Trapani, the fair Lauretta tells on the fifth day of the *Decamerone*.²⁹

The delegation passed through this town just in the nick of time to save the life of a lusty young slave. The Armenian Fineo steps out of his inn at the right moment to spot the birthmark on the chest of the youth. His son whom he lost a long time ago, had a similar spot Fineo recalls. He accosts the condemned man in Armenian, and the latter responds in the same language. They turn out to be father and son. As a young child, the young man was kidnapped by Genoese corsairs from his home in Lazistan, located in Cilician Armenia, and sold as slave to a Sicilian nobleman. The boy so pleased his master that he practically became a member of the household. This, however, has consequences; when the master finds out that his daughter Violante has become pregnant, the irate father orders his daughter to commit suicide and the young man is driven to the gallows, stripped like a common criminal, exposing his birthmark. Enter Fineo. The Armenian father shames his Sicilian counterpart with his generosity: while Sicily only moments ago meant death for the young family, the Armenian Fineo receives them with kindness and generosity in Lazistan. Fineo has all the characteristics of a true gentleman, characteristics the Italian noble lacks.

The crusade that the fictional Armenians had come to negotiate with the Pope came to pass--the Third Crusade (1189-1192) in which Barbarossa participated and drowned. Other Armenian delegates and petitioners for help and crusaders against the infidel and other oppressors came to European courts. They were far less successful than Boccaccio's Fineo. No royal brother came to liberate the throne for Leon VI, the unfortunate king who died in exile in Paris (1393). And there was really very little tangible support from pope, tsar, French king, or the Elector Johann Wilhelm Leopold of the Palatinate apart from pretty words and empty promises that Israel Ori (1661?-1711) took back with him to his compatriots who were under the despotic rule of the Persian shah.

These high personages had other concerns; only the tsar sent soldiers to help in the liberation of parts of Armenia, but he was forced to reach a peace treaty that did not help the Armenians at all. In recognition of the services Ori had rendered his Christian community, he was recommended by Tsar Peter to his imperial Persian brother for the position of papal envoy. The elector, who had agreed to liberate Armenia and become its king, did really very little apart from sending a few letters to investigate the possibility of such an undertaking. Nevertheless, he recommended and praised his protégé. In 1689 when Ori first appeared at his court in Duesseldorf, the elector thanked divine providence for this chance of a first-hand report about the pitiable condition of the Christians in eastern countries. The elector was also impressed by Ori's patriotism, his

prudence, and his dedication to the Armenian cause. He wrote that the suppliant was "the most faithful and most capable person and he will carry out this grand design with the help of God. He deserves to be trusted as his intelligence, his capacity and his excellent conduct have been appreciated. God has chosen him for this undertaking, and his actions will honour the name of God."³⁰

To some contemporary observers, it seemed that God sided more with the Jesuits, especially with Father Judas Thaddaeus Krusinski, missionary in New Julfa from 1702-1722, and not with the undertaking of such an "Armenian adventurer", such a mercantile creature whose plans included the persecution of all the good Jesuit missionaries living in Persia, as the rumour had it. Father Judas was outraged.³¹

M Michel, the French consul to Aleppo, also feared that the privileges the French merchants enjoyed in Persia might be jeopardised by the sentiments that Ori had aroused by his desire to improve the situation of the Armenians in Persia. This evil Armenian had to be destroyed! In order to accomplish this, the Jesuit fathers, the French consul, along with all the French who lived and worked in Turkey and Persia, campaigned with slanderous lies and accusations of treason against Ori. The Armenian was no envoy of either tsar or pope as his letters of recommendation made him out to be; all this was a pretext to hide his true identity. Ori was the pretender to the throne of Armenia! To clinch their argument, they cited his own name as proof, for was not "Israel Ory" in French the anagram for "Il sera roy" ("He shall be king")? Who could counter such a conclusive logical argument from language? It does then not surprise us that Ori supposedly died by poisoning. The Jesuit fathers spread the rumour and were glad that this evil and cunning creature had come to such a fitting end.³²

A fictionalised version of Ori is found in Jean-Christophe Rufin's *Sauver Ispahan* (Paris, 1998). In his research for the novel, it seems, the novelist liberally dipped into the negative Jesuit and French accounts and rendered what he found there with a good helping of poetic license. In the novel, Jean-Baptist Poncet, former "ambassadeur du Négus après de Sa Majesté Louis XIV"--Rufin has introduced this part of the life of the French apothecary and adventurer in the novel *L'Abyssin* (Paris, 1997)--had to leave Africa and has found a safe haven in Isfahan. The year is 1721. The bad news that an associate and fellow adventurer of the former ambassador has been kidnapped and is now languishing in some Siberian prison reaches Isfahan. Poncet is an honourable Frenchman who would do anything to help a friend in need--and enjoy a few adventures on the way. Preparations have to be made and deceptions planned for such a dangerous undertaking. Most logically, he calls on the Muscovite ambassador, who happens to be Israel Ori. The French former diplomat cannot take this Russian barbarian--it is never mentioned that Ori is Armenian--seriously at all. Ori does not know the first thing about social and diplomatic graces; the novelist depicts him as a foul-mouthed upstart, an easily angered pompous sycophant. Poncet, like everybody in Isfahan, knows all the nasty rumours concerning the ambassador, including the implications of the anagram, but not in the framework of any

Armenian ambitions. The Frenchman is treated to a good show by the ambassador: "Son visage était laissé glabre conformément à la nouvelle mode imposée par Pierre le Grand qui souhaitait donner à son peuple une apparence moderne. Ses traits mobiles et ses grands yeux brillants outraient ses expressions à la manière d'un mime."

Why take liberties with historical events? In 1721, the year this interview supposedly took place, the historical Ori had been dead for a good ten years. The author himself points out this discrepancy. One gets the feeling that M Michel, the French Consul to Aleppo of the early 1700s, is speaking again. Poncet's subsequent errand of mercy abounds with adventures and with quite a few Armenians, including Patriarch Nerses who is residing at New Julfa. They are not a pretty lot.³³

The lives of Great Men anywhere are often controversial and raise many questions that are difficult to answer. This is also true about several members of our gallery of great Armenians. For instance, what happened to Khatchadour Abovian on that evening in April 1848 when he left his home in Tiflis?³⁴ He supposedly went for a short walk--only he did not return again. Poor Abovian; his German friends were truly sorry about his unfortunate disappearance.

It had been such a short life, a life full of hope and promise. His friends abroad admired the promising teacher and educator of his people, the writer and novelist who wanted to awaken his "nation". And now, not even forty years old, he was dead. Yet in his short life, he had made many enemies as well; his relationship with the law and the authorities during his adult life had not always been the best; the Armenian clergy at times had objected vehemently to his advanced ideas; and to the Russians he certainly was a dangerous man who tried to incite a minority to treason and revolt. In Russia, poison was not the fashionable cure for such a disease; Siberia awaited the offender instead. Abovian had perhaps been taken there or had even been assassinated, some speculated; others whispered that Abovian had gotten so disgusted with the stagnant political situation of the Armenians under Russian rule that he ran away to Turkey to join there an Armenian partisan group. Aghasi, a character in one of his novels had done so, and why should Abovian not have done likewise? Yet others had heard that there were tensions between Abovian and his German wife and decided therefore that there must have been another woman, a Turkish one, whose infuriated husband killed the lover and buried him under some bushes. How could anyone have such thoughts about the "Father of Modern Armenian Literature"? It was suicide by drowning; this was the conviction of Abovian's German friends. His misfortunes and his enemies had driven him to such a desperate act, and he had always been a melancholy man, as Bodenstedt remembered.

The German travellers Bodenstedt, Haxthausen, Parrot, Wagner, and Abich, they all had fond memories of this intelligent young Armenian who had guided several of them and had interpreted for all of them. Several of them had climbed Mt. Ararat under his guidance. He was a man who "had contributed so much to

raise the fame and esteem of Germany in the far-away countries of the Orient so that it was only fair that his own name should be respected and honoured."³⁵

To these German travellers, Abovian was the trusted guide; they saw in him the teacher, as they were themselves, and praised him as did the professor of botany from the University of Dorpat, Karl Koch:

There can be no doubt that Transcaucasia has ever seen a teacher who has devoted himself with such love and sacrifice to the education of children as did Abovian. Were he to be granted any assistance, a new light would emerge for the tragic and forsaken Armenian people, who have been trodden down for so many centuries.³⁶

Even Moritz Wagner who found fault with many things connected with Armenia and Armenians was pleasantly surprised by this friendly and helpful man who introduced him to the religious institutions and leading families of Tiflis and Erevan. With teachers like Abovian around, there was hope for the Armenians, the German professor reflected. One can only hope that the professor and Abovian had a bit of fun at the wedding the two men attended together, for Wagner, too, was unappreciated and led a lonely life. He ended it with the bullet from a pistol.³⁷

A number of years before that happened, a professor of physics from the University of Dorpat who enjoyed mountain climbing during his vacations arrived on September 8, 1829, at the gates of Etchmiadzin. He wanted to add Mt. Ararat to the list of his conquests. Since he could not communicate with the priests to whom he was recommended, an interpreter was found for him: a young monk who impressed the traveler favourably by his "open and understanding eyes and his modest demeanour." The good monks and Catholicos Yeprem had serious reservations about the ambitious plans of the German, but they allowed Abovian, who knew German and all the languages of the region as well, to accompany the mountaineer.

The professor, Dr. Friedrich Parrot,³⁸ and his party succeeded on the third trial. The night before the final ascent, Abovian astounded the professor with his piety by not eating from the onion soup which Parrot himself had prepared. It was a fast day on the Armenian calendar. The events of the next day deepened Parrot's feelings for the young man further. Exhausted as he must have been from the climb and the fasting, Abovian nevertheless erected a huge wooden cross that he brought along on the summit of the mountain and collected a bit of snow to take back to the monastery. Parrot was moved. There, on the top of the mountain, he decided to do something for the poor monk. When his vacation was over, the professor took Abovian along to Dorpat and looked after him as if he were his own younger brother. These years as student at Dorpat were the best time in Abovian's life. He was very grateful to his German benefactor and after his return to Armenia expressed this feeling through the kindness he showed to all the German travellers he was to meet.

One of them was Hermann Abich³⁹ who was always glad to see Abovian and enjoyed their visit to Kanaker, Abovian's birthplace, a village not far from

Erevan. August Freiherr von Haxthausen⁴⁰ also went to Kanaker. That was in August 1854. During his stay in the paternal home of Abovian and under the guidance of his Armenian friend, Haxthausen came to understand and appreciate the history, traditions, and political aspirations of his friend's people. Haxthausen enjoyed the patriarchal way of life, the huge orchards, the family history of his host and his hospitality, the simplicity and functionalism of the typical Armenian village house that reminded him of ancient Roman villas. To prove his point to his readers back in Germany, he drew the facade and plan of one of the village houses. Haxthausen was completely captivated by the way of life in the village and its people, especially by the grandfather of the family--and, of course, by Khatchadour Abovian himself. What struck the Baron most was his host's ardent patriotism (pp. 179-213).

In 1844 the poet Friedrich Martin Bodenstedt, then a young man, accepted a teaching position in Tiflis. It was an easy job that gave him enough time to follow his hobby, to collect the folklore of the various peoples of the Caucasus region. In his day, Bodenstedt was admired as the best translator of Shakespeare into German. He was also professor of English literature at the University of Munich and was knighted in appreciation of his work at the Bavarian state theatre. He was also known as the writer of a volume of poetry that went through one hundred and sixty nine editions--today nobody remembers him.

This literary phenomenon from Bavaria, one day as he was trying to make sense out of his Armenian grammar lesson, met Abovian. For Bodenstedt, Abovian was the great talented teacher not only in the classroom, but for his people as a whole. Through their own vernacular, Abovian wanted to make accessible to them the treasure of their national heritage, and through his own writing he wanted to be their teacher. But he found little understanding on the part of the authorities. The Armenian clergy and the Russian officials felt threatened by him. The latter thought that "should the Armenians want to educate themselves, they should learn Russian; should they want to pray, they should do that in Russian as well." No wonder that the teaching positions to which Abovian was "promoted" became more and more undesirable and the pay less and less. The teacher, reformer, poet became desperate (Bodenstedt, vol. 3, pp. 24ff).

The body they may kill--but Abovian lived on in the memory of those travellers who had met him. And he is not forgotten today: "He was the founder of Armenian pedagogy and the first to introduce Western principles to the Armenian people," but above all, he wrote the first Armenian novel, created the Eastern Armenian literary language and devoted his brief life to the service of his nation. "He was one of the greatest Armenians of the nineteenth century: only St. Gregory the Illuminator, St. Mesrop Mashtotz and Mechitar of Sebaste made a greater impact upon the Armenian people. Nevertheless, he thought his life was a failure and he disappeared" (Hewsen, p. 2).

Several of the travellers had come across the name of another monk, Mechitar of Sebaste, especially in connection with Venice. Richard Davey tells

the story of Mechitar who "was to leave an indelible mark on the history of the Armenians." He was born in 1675 at Sebaste in Cappadocia. "Pious and apt in study from his earliest years, the youth at the age of twenty, formed the acquaintance of some Jesuit missionaries...who induced him to embrace Catholicism." At first, he decided to join the Society of Jesus, "but in due time a more independent spirit made itself evident, and after a visit to Rome...the young convert resolved, with the Pope's approbation, to create an Order of its own." This order was "to devote itself to the religious and educational interests of the Armenian people. After many trials...he obtained leave from the Venetian Government to found a monastery on the deserted Island of San Lazzaro."⁴¹ Pope Clement XI recognised the Mechitarists in 1712.

These Armenian monks then were Catholic and therefore could be understood and appreciated by the travellers, both Catholic and Protestant alike, as one of "us". These monks were not as strange and exotic and "heathenish" as their Orthodox Armenian brothers! The travelers thus felt very comfortable and at home on San Lazzaro.

When "doing" the sight of Venice, the travelers should pay the monastery a visit. "Every tourist who spends a week in Venice goes to see the convent, and every one is charmed with it and the courteous welcome of the fathers," the American novelist and traveller William D. Howells wrote.⁴² The other travelers who went there and reported about their impressions, too, were favorably impressed by the piety and scholarly work of the Armenian brothers. This pleasant convent with its impressive library and pious and learned monks could not have been the home of Schiller's Armenian.

There were still other literary associations with the place and the brothers. It was Lord Byron who had "discovered" the island and the Armenian convent for his devotees. The fair ladies of Venice were no longer a challenge to him, and therefore the Lord had decided that his "mind needed something craggy to break upon." Armenian grammar and vocabulary seemed to him to be just the thing, he wrote on December 5, 1816, to his publisher Moore back in London. The language proved to be difficult; nevertheless, the endeavour regularised his way of life: "In the morning I go over in my gondola to hobble Armenian with the friars" (December 24, 1816, letter addressed to Mr. Moore). He did learn enough to translate, with the assistance of his teacher, two epistles of St. Paul from the Armenian New Testament. He, in turn, helped his teacher with the corrections of his Armenian-English grammar. Byron enjoyed the atmosphere of the convent, as we read in a letter to his publisher:

I was much struck--in common, I believe, with every other traveller--with the society of the Convent of St. Lazarus, which appears to unite all the advantages of the monastic institution, without any of its vices.--The neatness, the comfort, the gentleness, the unaffected devotion, the accomplishments, and the virtues of the bretheren of the order, are well fitted to strike the man of the world with the conviction that 'there is another and a better' in this life (January 2, 1817).

San Lazzaro was a place of learning. There was the printing press, installed already back in 1565, with which the monks "make great efforts for the enlightening of their nation" (letter to Murray, dated December 9, 1816) and the many books and manuscripts that Byron found in the library. There were the kindly and learned monks: the superior, Archbishop Akontz Kivver, "a fine old fellow, with the beard of a Meteor", and Father Paschal Aucher, Byron's teacher, "a learned and pious soul" (letter to Murray, dated December 27, 1816).

Admirers of the poet travelled in his footsteps. Robert Curzon, Richard Davey, William D. Howells, and the ladies Vervaines of the latter's fictional world, to mention just a few. They all agreed with Byron. The American novelist Howells loved the place; in his opinion it was a *hortus conclusus*, though once a leper colony; it was "walled in with solid masonry from the sea, and encloses a garden court, filled with...beautiful flowers, and with the memorable trees of the East." Howells was very much struck by Padre Giacomo Issaverdanz and his "pleasant face and manners." It was the duty of the young monk to show the convent to English travellers (*Venetian Life*, pp. 172ff). We meet this monk again ten years later in Howells's novel *A Foregone Conclusion* (1879) as Padre Girolamo who acts as guide to an American lady and her daughter. To this monk, San Lazzaro is "my home--my country."

The convent had the reputation of being a seat of learning and a repository of rare and ancient Armenian manuscripts. Armand von Schweiger-Lerchenfeld admired the scholarly work of the monk Paul Lucas Indschidschean, an authority on history and geography,⁴³ while James Bryce spoke highly of "my valued friend Father Alishan" who had "rendered great services to Armenian history and bibliography."⁴⁴ M. A. Ubcini, the Italian geographer, also stressed the important role this Mechitarist convent had played in Armenian intellectual life by giving "an impulse to Armenian language and literature which was communicated to the rest of the nation, reaching even those who were dispersed over remote countries."⁴⁵ Their printing press supplied this "Armenian nation" with excellent editions of the classics of their own language (Wagner, *Ararat*, p. 133).

Yet behind all this bustling religious and cultural life was an ulterior motif, and Ubcini was convinced that the monks of San Lazzaro were, despite their Armenianness, first and foremost true "Romish priests", and therefore true "disciples of the Propaganda" of the Vatican and consequently fond of "absolutism, love of dominion, and desire of encroachment." These Romish aspirations, however, were transformed by the Mechitarists of Venice in their own peculiar Armenian fashion. For them, according to the Italian scholar, "patriotism remains the supreme influence to which every other, even that of the church is secondary." No matter where these Armenians might be living, be it the isles of the Lagunes or the shores of the Bosphorus, their eyes were directed towards Mt. Ararat to "which they fondly look as the home of their faith and their affections--the central point of their political and religious existence, when time shall bring about the resurrection of the Armenian nationality" (p. 333).

Ubicini would have associated Schiller's Armenian with the convent of San Lorenzo after all!

Times and political realities have changed. When Peter Stephen Jungk took the vaporetto to the terminal San Lazzaro, Isola degli Armeni, as he researched the life of Franz Werfel,⁴⁶ he found the eyes of Father Beszdikian directed towards another mountain: Musa Dagh, a mountain that has become almost synonymous with Armenian survival.

The spirit of revolt and national feelings had been in the air ever since the latter part of the eighteenth century. As we know, revolutions and wars were to demand "Liberté, Egalité, et Fraternité" for mankind in the West. This enlightened spirit had also reached the Armenian monks of Venice and was breaking up the Ottoman empire. Things had to change; this feeling many patriotic Armenians shared. Perhaps the Treaty of Berlin might put an end to their bondage. Their hopes were shattered. To keep the "Armenian movement" alive, according to the traveller Lynch, San Lazzaro sent out its students, patriots, and political agitators, and had "fixed upon them as suitable material for a conflagration. The object of these men is to keep the Armenian cause alive by lighting a flame here and there and calling: Fire!"⁴⁷ The spirit of the French and American revolutions had finally reached far-away Anatolia. Many a traveller who had at home grown up with this revolutionary tradition somehow did not feel at ease when he saw that the "other", in this case the Armenians who shared with him a common faith, now wanted to claim for themselves as well the benefits of this liberating spirit.

Why could these most peculiar Christians, who were nothing but baptised Turks, as the imperial German military advisor to Ottoman Turkey Heinrich von Moltke described them--why could they not be happy and content to live under the mild and tolerant rule of their Muslim overlords? The average traveller thought that the Armenian peasantry who lived under the Turks was quite happy, but they had been corrupted by their leaders, especially the clergy. Whether Catholic or Orthodox, all priests who did not dare to talk to the travellers--and there were many of them in the 1860s and 1870s--must have had a guilty conscience for plotting against the Ottoman authorities: "if they are not engaged in seeking to undermine the Government, one would have thought that they had nothing to fear," Captain Fred Burnaby mused naively, having great confidence in the integrity of the Ottoman system.⁴⁸ Paul Rohrbach on his study tour through a war-torn Armenia remained blissfully callous to the fears of his Armenian guides who should have, in his opinion, remained as scholarly detached as he himself when their Kurdish host told them that a few days ago he and his clan had "slaughtered" all the Armenians of the neighbourhood. Rohrbach's Armenian guides became very quiet; one of them was shaking with fear, whereupon the traveller concluded that this companion of his must be "politically compromised" and ridiculed the poor man's fears.⁴⁹

The spirit of discontent and revolution was fostered not only in San Lazzaro but in Holy Echmiadzin as well; of this the travellers were convinced. Viscount

Pollington, visiting the convent in 1865, met there an Armenian merchant named Raphael who seemed to be there on a secret mission, and the traveller promptly "judged him to be an emissary of the Turkish Armenians, sent to enquire into the state of feeling among the Russian Armenians,—whether they were ripe for revolt or not. He was speculating on an insurrection in Turkey at no distant date" and bring back Leon, the last scion of the Lusignans of Cyprus, to the revived throne of Armenia.⁵⁰

These were troubled times, and discontent could not be any longer simply suppressed. In 1862, the citizens of Zeitun had revolted; those of Van in 1863. It is easily understandable that such bloody events were followed by the formation of a number of local secret societies. At first they were ephemeral. They were later to be followed by societies that proved to be permanent.⁵¹ Many of these revolutionary ideas had reached the "unruly" Armenians via Russia, and this fact, in the opinion of most Western travellers, made the new spirit that had taken root among these Armenian groups highly suspect, for Russia was the enemy and simply could not be trusted.

Neither could the Armenian revolutionary groups themselves be trusted. When Captain Burnaby travelled in eastern Anatolia in the 1870s, no town of any size in Armenia was free from these Russian collaborators. "It is the POLICY of the RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT, and therefore its AGENTS...to exaggerate real existing evils, or trump up imaginary complaints, in order to keep up that CHRONIC DISAFFECTION." He had been told by a Turkish pasha that "if it were not for Russian intrigues...we Turks should be very good friends with the Christians" (vol. 2, p. 297). Many of the travellers accepted sentiments like these to represent the ultimate truth.

The Armenians, on the other hand, did not put much trust in such possible friendships any longer and many had armed themselves. This the travellers had been told by reliable sources. A certain Herr Spiegel had spent much time in the interior of Asia Minor and had there become an expert on Armenian affairs. In 1857, this gentleman told the traveller Senior that he believed "the feelings of the Christian population to be such as to render an insurrection against the Turks almost certain within five or six years" for the greater part of the population "are armed. The laws which forbid their being so are, like most Turkish laws, unexecuted."⁵²

There were many rumours and shady Armenian revolutionaries around, so at least several travellers thought. One night in 1895 somewhere in an inn in Anatolia, E. A. Brayley Hodgetts was visited by a "mysterious person", a "miserable weedy little specimen of humanity" who grandly identified himself as an Armenian revolutionary and told his host that "all Armenia is in arms. All the young men are ready to shoulder muskets and march out to save their bretheren, and the Catholicos will place himself at their head. We shall soon be free."⁵³ As we know, this never came to pass. Other travellers now and then had met dedicated Armenian patriots who had given up a comfortable way of life in Europe and returned home to assume their patriotic duty. George Barrow's

Armenian London merchant comes to mind; his national pride was "so strong as to be akin to poetry" that it made him reach the conclusion that "it is my bounden duty" to go back home and "to attack the Persians."⁵⁴ Barrow never bothered to find out what happened to his freedom fighter in Persia.

It was especially true about Ottoman Turkey that, as the century progressed, the conditions of life for the Christian minorities, and among them were the Armenians, became increasingly more difficult. Mrs. Bishop in 1891 described the conditions she saw as "the present reign of terror in Armenia." There was no security at all for the lives and property of the Christians:

Law is being violated daily, and almost with perfect impunity, and peaceable and industrious subjects of the Porte, taxed to an extent which should secure them complete protection, are plundered without redress. Their feeble complaints are ignored, or are treated as evidence of 'insurrectionary tendencies,' and even their lives are at the mercy of the increased audacity and aroused fanaticism of the Kurd.⁵⁵

It was not surprising that the call might come from some leaders to their fellow Armenians to defend themselves.

Even the politically innocent traveler could see that the Christian minorities in Ottoman Turkey were in a state of turmoil. In 1849, Professor Abich already remarked about the sharp contrast between the intellectually superior Armenians who were at the mercy of "stupid" and rapacious masses of Turks and Kurds and felt that this problem would not come to a peaceful conclusion. The Armenians had awoken, and Abich saw their destiny to be the "yeast" that would ferment and regenerate the spiritual and political "germ" of life of a paralyzed Asia (p. 292).

What an utopian thought! This would never work; intelligent and educated the Armenians certainly were, but most travelers felt that they had always known that the Armenians were "a race with little political aptitude...they were divided by continual dissension" and this was not likely to change.⁵⁶ Anyhow, the Armenians, though their plight was great, should not expect much sympathy in their patriotic ambitions since they themselves "have never shewn the slightest sympathy or common feeling with their Christian bretheren the Greeks. No Armenian has ever yet been found to join their cause, or to assist in any way, either by money or influence."⁵⁷ Still, many Armenians continued to hope that help would come from Europe. The French should come; in Jerusalem Chateaubriand had been assured by the Armenian Patriarch Arsenios "that all Asia was anxiously awaiting the coming of the French; and that if but a single soldier of my nation were to appear in his country, the insurrection would be general."⁵⁸ The American missionaries, on the other hand--after they had spread education and the liberating spirit among the Armenians of Ottoman Turkey--in many cases "strongly advocated" that the British should sooner or later assume the government in Armenia "through consuls that might be sent out and who might then assume the position of 'residents' or administrative advisors, and that this might pass into a more definite control."⁵⁹

The traveller ordinarily did not speculate on the national identity of the saviour-to-be. He usually saw that the condition of life among the Armenians in the Ottoman empire had to change; he even noticed that within the Armenian community in Turkey especially a change had taken place after the Crimean War. Richard Davey termed it an "obstinate longing" for regaining their independence. However, the revolutionary parties and the revolutionary himself that both were the product of this change, the traveller could not readily appreciate. They presented a threat. Perhaps it was the fault of the romantic attitude or the political ambitions of Great Britain that "buoyed" these revolutionary hopes of the Armenians, for it encouraged them and "the revolutionary party, at home and abroad, has grown gradually bolder, and the Armenian agitation, which fifteen years ago menaced the peace of Turkey, now threatens the peace of Europe," wrote Richard Davey (p. 391). The "other" with his demands was invading the home of the traveller, and that was an uncomfortable thought.

The Armenian revolutionary to the average traveller was thus a dangerous figure, capable of "outrages far more terrible than is generally realised by the English public" (Davey, p. 391). Good Englishmen had often responded to the cry of anguish from the Armenians, and, according to some authorities, had been misled because "such Armenian propaganda as exists and is concerned with the cry of Armenia as a nation is practically all of foreign manufacture." Walter Thornbury cautioned his readership.⁶⁰ Therefore, European peoples and governments, including those of England, should be most careful because these "revolutionarists" tried to "curry favour with foreign nations and...have succeeded in exciting a maudlin sympathy in England, have been one of the prime causes of all the mischief that has been done, and of all the misery that has followed as a consequence. The so-called Christian Powers have either hypocritically or selfishly been their abettors," Hepworth warned.⁶¹

The revolutionary ideas, and sometimes support for them, then came often from Europe, came through education, from San Lazzaro and Etchmiadzin as well as from the various educational institutions that the American missionaries had opened to bring "sweetness and light" to the heathen by enlightening the Armenians first to that they, in turn, could serve as models for the Muslims. Such ideas were also imported by young Armenians who had studied abroad. Several of these revolutionaries "probably came from Europe, but the most extreme, who have been accused of being connected with the Russian 'Nihilists', would seem to have been Armenians from Transcaucasia" (Bryce, p. 503). The traveler Hodgetts had no use for such cowards, "permeated" as they were by the "vices inseparable from centuries of supplicants for mercy, astute Oriental mendicants," often "wanting in manliness and courage" (pp. 110f).

The Armenian as nihilist we finally meet on the slopes of Musa Dagh in the midst of the Armenian microcosm of Franz Werfel's novel *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh--The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (1933). Sarkis Kilikian, "the Russian", one day joins up with Gabriel Bagradian and the villagers who have

escaped from the Turks and have barricaded themselves on the slopes of the mountain. It is difficult to fight against the enemy from without, but with the arrival of this deserter Evil itself has come into their midst. From the beginning, he is a bad influence, this silent man with dead eyes, as he attracts the riff-raff of the camp as well as all the deserters who "gathered round him at once, as their natural head." His presence means danger to the community from within, for whatever he touches, he destroys. He does know how to fight bravely; but the Turkish bullets that miss his charmed body bring certain death to most of his men. There are simply too many things that count against him and from which he cannot escape. Since earliest childhood, he has suffered hair-raising atrocities; respite from the vicissitudes of life meant for him confinement in Turkish jails. The good people of Yoghonoluk should be compassionate with their brother in suffering, instead they are revolted by his presence. The women feel instinctively that he is "the Devil". Who wouldn't be frightened by him? "The skin of his face, livid for all its tan, seemed to be tightly, thinly stretched over a sardonic skull. His features appeared...Sated, satiated with life."

It is unnatural that he should still be alive, this personification of evil and death: "His eyes as dead as though he were dead, as though he were old...His secret lay in his being nothing at all explicit, in his seeming to belong nowhere, to be living at some zero point of incomprehensible neutrality." He feels no responsibility for the people whom he should protect; instead he plans to desert with the criminals who have flocked around him. In order to escape with their life, his "disciples" have put their sins on him. Eventually their scapegoat is executed by Gabriel Bagradian, the hero of the novel. The dead eyes and heart of Sarkis Kilikian, perhaps, found in death redemption and freedom.

These dead eyes bother his executioner. Even as he pulls the trigger, Gabriel cannot "rid his mind of the tinge of liking and respect which he felt whenever he saw" Kilikian. It is as if Gabriel has looked into his opponent's soul and recognised there himself. "The first shot missed fire. Nor had Kilikian shut his eyes. His mouth and nostrils were twitching. It was like a suppressed smile. But it felt to Gabriel as though he had turned the unspent bullet against himself. When he pressed the trigger again, he was so weak that he had to turn his head away." It is as if he has killed part of himself.

At first sight, these two men seem to have nothing in common: Kilikian the wretched outcast whose very being negates any positive aspect of life on one hand; on the other Gabriel Bagradian who has enjoyed the best of both Orient and Occident could offer to a man of his background and inclinations. Where Kilikian refuses to act selflessly for the benefit of the group, Gabriel acts, leads, guides, and eventually sacrifices everything and everybody dear to him. Was it worth the bother? The people for whom he makes his great sacrifice to serve them finally look at him not very differently than they looked at Kilikian. Both are shunned by them, and Gabriel in his greatest need after he has lost his son realises his profound isolation. After the people of Musa Dagh are rescued by the

French ships, Gabriel enjoying the "mighty sleep" that "God spread" over him, is left behind and dies on his son's grave through Turkish bullets.

Werfel presents Gabriel as a complex human being who is aware of the brightness as well as the darkness that dwells in everybody's soul: Turkish, Armenian, Kilikian's, and his own. He is tempted to give up and run away and not get involved and save himself and his family. Instead, he stays on and fights. Werfel did not have any actual person in mind after whom he modeled Gabriel, his "involuntary hero". By this term, Werfel describes, according to the literary critic Frederick R. Karl, "one whose heroism waits upon the right moment before it can be translated into meaningful action." Once confronted with the appropriate emergency, his repressed inner need will become apparent. This hero has to be a person of great ability and potential, and not a nihilist or a man resigned to Fate. Then he has to rise and transcend his daily and ordinary life. Gabriel is such a hero.⁶²

There are leaders who are born to struggle heroically for the survival of a whole people, others perhaps move only one soul through their quiet suffering and compassion. Such a hero is the saintly Armenian slave Sahak who through his faith and sincerity and death changed the way of life of the hardened sinner Barabbas whom we know from the Good Friday story. Both men had been chained together as they laboured in the Cypriot copper mines. Sahak was finally betrayed by a fellow slave for being a Christian and was crucified by the Roman authorities. Barabbas, who was not aware that he was still capable of any human feeling, nevertheless watched Sahak's death. There was no portentous happening, and only Barabbas realised when his friend's agony was over. "When he saw it, he groaned, fell on his knees, and it looked as if he prayed." No dramatic change at all has come over Barabbas's life; yet his "new" life will lead to a martyr's death in Rome.

Pär Lagerkvist chronicled all these events in his novel *Barabbas* (trans., Frankfurt, 1960) for which he received the Nobel Prize for Literature.⁶³

In our discussion of the presentation in Western literature of the Armenian as "hero", we have come full circle. No matter how many versions of Joseph Heller's anti-hero Yossarian of *Catch 22* (New York, 1961) ghost through the modern novel, the needs of the ordinary modern reader are basically not very different from those of Schiltberger's contemporaries. The colour and rendering of the familiar figure of saints and princes may be muted and presented in a less heroic manner, the figure itself, however, is the answer to the same psychological needs of the writer and his reading public. Lagerkvist resurrected the Armenian saint while in recent years a number of popular novelists have looked with interest, not always with great sympathy though, at that gallery of Armenian princes and spiritual leaders of former times, that "grim-looking race with long beards and still longer names."

What space and importance does modern Armenia occupy in our Western "ménagerie mentale"? We are invited by thrillers like Ralph Peter's *The Devil's Garden* (New York, 1998) to view an Armenia existing at the southern end of a decayed Soviet Union, and this world is disgusting. At the other extreme of the map of the "ménagerie", we find a perfect Armenia that Joan Peruchio took from medieval fairy tales and placed into his novel *Llibre de Cavalleries* (Barcelona, 1957). That is a never-never land! Other novels deal with medieval Armenia. In them, Cilician Armenia is doomed, its kings gone, and all there is left is the empty title of its past glory: "Dei gratia Jerusalem, Cypru et Armeniae rex illustrissimus." The title is passed on to the House of Savoy. This is the Armenia depicted by Dorothy Dunn's *The House of Niccolo: The Race of Scorpions* (London, 1989).

Cilician Armenia was doomed, nevertheless a few of its leaders, though not famous outside the pages of Armenian history, can add an exotic flavour to a historical novel or strengthen an already existing prejudice in its readers. King Hethum II (1289-1305) certainly was no great leader, and so the young prince we see in Robert Shea's *The Saracen* (Glasgow, 1989) does not bring credit to his country either. He and a band of his nobles act as bodyguards of two Mogol envoys who have come to Italy to negotiate peace with Christian Europe. Hethum and his braves are a sullen lot.

Roger, Duke of Lunel returned from the First Crusade with a positive image of Armenia. We read about his exploits in his chronicle in Stephen J. Rivelle's *A Booke of Days: A Journal of the Crusade*,⁶⁴ supposedly written by the Crusader himself and edited and translated by one of his descendants. According to the Duke, Armenia was something like a safe haven for the early Crusaders till princes like Tankred and Bohemund abused the hospitality and trust shown to them by the Armenian communities of the East. The Duke is a serious and guilt-ridden man, but there are moments of humour in his sober account. One of them involves an Armenian prince called Roupen, "a bell-shaped man in black with a long nose, dark-rimmed eyes and plunging moustaches," who calms down the quarreling Christian leadership at the Cilician Gates by engaging them in a theological debate about "how many natures does Christ have?" None of the crusading princes had ever pondered such a problem.

A long time ago, we read in Stephen R. Lawhead's *Byzantium*,⁶⁵ the Irish monk Aidan and a few other brothers were chosen by their bishop to make a pilgrimage to Constantinople to present the Emperor of All Christendom with a costly copy of the Irish *Book of Kells*. What was intended to be an honour to Aidan turns into a series of nightmare experiences when his party is kidnapped and condemned to labour in the mines somewhere in Anatolia. There Aidan is confronted by what he calls Armenian treachery and conspiracy "that originated in a city called Tephrike, and was thought to be the work of an Armenian named Chrysocheirus" and his evil kinsman Nikos. During the latter quarter of the eighth century, Chrysocheirus was one of the leaders of the heretical sect of the Paulicians whose members were mainly Armenian. The good Irish monk has no use for heretics who "were cast out of the Holy Church and driven from Constantinople....Their faith has been anathematized, and their leaders declared enemies of the emperor."

The words of the "innocent" monk anticipate one of the most cruel periods in European church history. The Paulician heresy, that originated in Armenia during the seventh century, from its inception was connected with widespread political and military rebellion. The group soon grew strong in the East, and

consequently threatened the establishment in Constantinople. They were persecuted by Emperor Michael II and subsequently found refuge in what is present-day Bulgaria. Their tenets centered around the two principles of an evil and a good God and were congenial to those of the Bogomils, a group of Cathari who spread their teaching to Italy and southern France. They included the Albigensians. The Catholic church considered all these groups heretical, more damnable than any infidel, and highly praised King Louis IX, or Saint Louis as he is commonly remembered, for his successful French crusade and the total defeat of the Cathars at Mt. Ségur in 1244. The history of the Paulicians and their descendants, however, is outside the scope of the novel.

What good can one expect to come from things Byzantine? Former centuries, as we have seen, have been kinder than ours. Byzantine rulers, of Armenian background or not, by modern definition are corrupt, a fact confirmed by the depiction of the Armenian king Arsaces, king by the grace of Emperor Constantine the Great, in Gore Vidal's novel *Julian*. This Arsaces is an especially repulsive example of our concept of a Byzantine potentate.

The historical Armenian prince Tigranes the Younger could even have taught this debased king a few tricks, had they been contemporaries. It is natural that the fictional version of this prince that we meet in the detective novel *SPQR* (New York, 1990) by John Maddox Roberts does not improve the reputation of the historical prince. The Tigranes of the novel, together with his mafia, has set the crime rate of Rome soaring when he visits the city in 70 B.C. on personal business. This "personal business" is to plot with the help of some shady Roman nobles the overthrow of his father's rule, of King Tigranes the Great as he is known in Armenian history. The younger Tigranes would love to hold court in Tigranocerta, the fabled city that his father built. Which good Roman citizen really cares about the identity or legal rights of any of those Oriental despots, especially this "slimy Armenian princeling"? None of them can shake the foundations of the Roman Empire, yet they, the "others" of antiquity, are a threat, for Rome in 70 B.C. is at war with King Mithridates of Pontos, and the elder Tigranes is his son-in-law. This elder Tigranes will have to figure in any historical account--fictional as well factual--that depicts the rise to power of Julius Caesar.

The great times of the Roman Republic, culminating in the rule of Julius Caesar, has been leisurely chronicled by Colleen McCullough.⁶⁶ Since the author respects the Great Men of this period in Roman history, their enemies do not fare so well. The Armenians may respect their national hero--in the novel we see very little that recommends him to us. On the other hand, the Romans of the novels are generous people and might forgive him all kinds of crimes on account of the

fabulous city that he built. The historical eastern legions returned with the great wealth of the looted city after Tigranes's defeat, and McCullough's Romans, too, have a chance to create their visions of the Orient and fill their coffers of state with the rich spoils taken from the "other".

Before this was to happen, Tigranes the Great was a threat. A great military man? Not by honest Roman standards. The great builder of an empire that stretched from the Caspian to the Mediterranean Sea, from the Caucasus Mountains to Palestine? Well, yes--but how was it gotten? The novelist shows us how tip he sells his soul to Mithridates, and how the two of them cowardly and sneakily eat up the edges of the Empire while Rome is otherwise engaged: "When the Romans are too busy to take much notice of us," in the words of King Mithridates (*Grass*, p. 135). How else could it be, this novel reminds us on several occasions, since Tigranes is really very much afraid of Rome? But he has an insatiable appetite for power. In the novel *Fortune's Favorites*, the author shows us that no trick is too low to appease his hunger for power; he simply has to be King of Kings at any price. But there is more to him. "Tigranes desperately wants to be the civilized ruler over a Hellenized kingdom--and what better way to Hellenize it than to implant colonies of Greeks within its borders?" (p. 451). And so he builds his famous city and imports Greeks and culture and heaps riches upon riches. Is this culture?

Only the truly civilised heroes who naturally come from Rome cannot take the king of Armenia seriously. For Sulla it is great fun to see the posturing Oriental as he watches the king during a number of processions and ceremonial occasions. The first time the two commanders meet, Tigranes approaches on a royal barge, a most pompous affair. The king emerges and "came down to the wooden jetty in a four wheeled golden car which hurt the eyes of the watchers...it flashed and glittered so." But how will the king get off this contraption and not lose dignity? Sulla marvels. No problem! Then two slaves step up to the cart where they link their arms. "Delicately the King lowered the royal posterior onto their arms, and was carried to the barge, deposited gently upon the throne." Sulla is amused by all this pomp and circumstance but cannot be fooled by the emptiness and artificiality of it all. At a moment when Sulla manages to stand behind the throne, he looks down and sees that Tigranes's diadem "was hollow, and that the King was growing very bald" (*Grass Crown*, pp. 311-9). Such a man poses no threat to mighty Rome.

Who in Rome really cares about these pompous Orientals? The city of Tigranocerta--this is another matter! Decius Caestius Metellus, the Sherlock Holmes of the novel *SPQR*, written by John Maddox Roberts (1990), dreams of the fabulous riches; the state coffers, for their part, yearn to be filled with

Armenian gold. It is a great occasion in McCullough's Roman saga when the conquering hero Lucullus finally sees the city for the first time:

a splendid city of stone with high walls, citadels, towers, squares and courts, hanging gardens, exquisite tiles of aquamarine and acid-yellow and brazen red, immense statues of winged bulls, lions, curly-bearded kings under tall tiaras. The site had been chosen with a view to everything from ease of defense to internal sources of water and a nearby tributary of the Tigris which carried away the contents of the vast sewers Tigranes had constructed...Whole nations had fallen to fund its construction; wealth proclaimed itself...Vast, high beautiful. (*Caesar's Women*, p. 172)

The king had brought Greeks and culture to his city, and much wealth. Unfortunately he did not stay to defend his city. After Tigranes had deserted Tigracerta for the second time, not a heroic thing to do, the Greeks who had been forced to live there opened the city gates. The legionaries had never seen such wealth, and the booty with which they returned to Rome was staggering. The gaping Roman crowds who welcomed their heroes had never dreamt of such riches. And Lucullus had been generous; he had not made any effort to capture the king and Tigranes spent the rest of his life as ruler of a shrunken Armenia.

Tigranes...Tigor...Tigran? The "hero" of Peter Stefan Jungk's novel *Tigor* (Frankfurt, 1993) himself becomes confused about his true identity. He realizes that there is a vague mystical connection between him and the King of Kings of antiquity. He is drawn to the East, to Erevan, Mt. Ararat, the Ahora Gorge. There under the ice of the gorge, he has reached his goal. In the long "dead city of Ahora", he discovers the pedestal of what must once have been a mighty statue. It is empty. Tigor kneels a long time reverently before the stone; the statue has long gone; all that has remained of the identity to the fallen hero is the date engraved in the pedestal: 120-55. Tigor has found Tigranes the Great.

Sic transit gloria mundi.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, London, 1841, p. 2.
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- ³ Karl Ulrich Syndram, "Der erfundene Orient in der europaischen Literatur vom 18. bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts," *Europa und der Orient: 800-1900*. Gereon Sievernich and Hendrik Budde, eds., Berlin, 1989, p. 324.
- ⁴ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, London, 1978, rpt., 1995, p. 203.
- ⁵ Philip Glazebrook, *Journey to Kars*, Harmondsworth, 1984, pp. 112f.

- ⁶ Syndram, p. 328; Julia Kristeva, *Fremde sind wir uns selbst*, trans., Frankfurt, 1990, pp. 199, 209.
- ⁷ Glazebrook, pp. 115f.
- ⁸ Richard Wilbraham, *Travels in the Trans-Caucasian Provinces of Russia*, London, 1839, p. 98.
- ⁹ Glazebrook, pp. 168f.
- ¹⁰ L. J. Hermann Tisch, *Andreas Gryphius: "Leo Armenius"*, Hobart, 1968, passim.
- ¹¹ Quoted by Speros Vryonis, Jr., "Byzantine Images of the Armenians," *The Armenian Image in History and Literature*, Richard G. Hovannesian, ed., Malibu, Ca., 1981, p. 75.
- ¹² The Byzantine general, together with his imperial patrons, stands at the centre of quite a lengthy tradition of historical romance writing. The history of this great general can be read in the second volume of Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776). For the German reader, Felix Dahn's still very popular *Ein Kampf um Rom* (1876) is perhaps still the best introduction. We meet Narses in Robert Graves's *Count Belisarius* (1938); in Harold Lamb's novel *Theodora and the Emperor* (1952); and more recently in Gillian Bradshaw's *The Bearkeeper's Daughter* (1987). In his popular history of the imperial couple, *Justinian and Theodora* (1971), Robert Browning writes very much in the tradition of Gibbon. He emphasises the general's courage, intelligence, and loyalty.
- ¹³ Robert W. Thomson, "The Armenian Image in Classical Texts," *The Armenian Image in History and Literature*, Richard G. Hovannesian, ed., Malibu, 1981, p. 13.
- ¹⁴ K. S. Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon*, London, 1965, p. 111.
- ¹⁵ For a short discussion of Muhammad Ali and his relationship to Boghos Bey Yusufian see: Levon Marashlian, "An Armenian Court of Egypt," *Ararat*, (Autumn, 1980), pp. 15-19. The recent study by Gilbert Sinoue, *Le dernier pharaon: Mehemet-Ali, 1770-1849*, Paris, 1997, discusses in detail the relationship of the Pasha with his Armenian advisors.
- ¹⁶ A. A. Paton, *A History of the Egyptian Revolution*, London, 1870, vol. 2, p. 166.
- ¹⁷ G. Belzoni, *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries in Egypt and Nubia*, 3rd ed., London, 1822, vol. 1, pp. 5f.
- ¹⁸ Quoted by Katherine Seins, *Jean Louis Burckhardt*, London, 1969, p. 168.
- ¹⁹ Dr. Charles Meryon, *Travels of Lady Hester Stanhope*, London, 1846, vol. 1, p. 159.
- ²⁰ Lord Lindsay, *Letters on Egypt, Edom, and the Holy Land*, 3rd ed., London, 1839, vol. 1, p. 52.
- ²¹ R.R. Madden, *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia, and Palestine*, London, 1829, vol. 1, p. 336.
- ²² Gustave Flaubert, *Reisetagebuch aus Aegypten*, trans., Frankfurt, n.d., pp. 77, 80.
- ²³ Hermann von Pueckler-Muskau, *Mameluken, Paschas und Fellachen*, Th. Freiherr von Muenchhausen, ed., Tuebingen, 1982, pp. 159-178.
- ²⁴ Vincent Bendetti, quoted in *Mameluken*, pp. 397-408.
- ²⁵ Karl Koch, *Reise durch Russland nach dem kaukasischen Isthmus in den Jahren 1836, 1837 und 1838*, Stuttgart, 1843, pp. 372, 436-8.

- ²⁶ Moritz Wagner, *Reise nach dem Ararat und dem Hochland Armenien*, Stuttgart, 1848, p. 81.
- ²⁷ Leo Hamalian, "The Image of the Armenian in Contemporary Fiction," *The Armenian Image in History and Literature*, p. 173.
- ²⁸ David Marshall Lang, *A People in Exile*, London, 1981, p. 150.
- ²⁹ James V. Mirolo has discussed Boccaccio's Armenian tale in *Ararat*, Spring, 1969, pp. 38ff.
- ³⁰ Aschot Johannissjan, *Israel Ory und die armenische Befreiungsidee*, Munich, 1913.
- ³¹ P. Judas Thaddaeus Krusinski presented a distorted picture of Ori in his book *Relatio de mutationibus memorabilis Regni Persanum*, Rome, 1727; in 1740 a new edition appeared. The work must have been popular, for soon after its first publication it was translated into both German and French.
- ³² Johannissjan, *passim*. For an account of Israel Ori's life and mission, see also S. A. Essefian, "The Mission of Israel Ori for the Liberation of Armenia," *Recent Studies in Modern Armenian History*, Cambridge, Mass., 1972, pp. 1-9.
- ³³ Jean-Christophe Rufin, *Sauver Ispahan*, Paris, 1998, pp. 59-64, 511.
- ³⁴ Two recent publications discuss the accomplishments and the short life of Khatchadour Abovian: Robert H. Hewsen, "Khatchadour Abovian: Father of Modern Armenian Literature," *Ararat* (1982), pp. 5-8; Hrant Adjemian, *Khatchadour Abovian et la renaissance litteraire en Armenie orientale*, Antelias, Lebanon, 1986.
- ³⁵ Friedrich Bodenstedt, *Tausend und ein Tag im Orient*, Berlin, 1865, vol. 1, pp. 153-165, 185; vol. 3, pp. 24-30.
- ³⁶ Quoted by Hewsen, p. 5.
- ³⁷ Moritz Wagner, *Reise nach dem Ararat*, *passim*; *Reise nach Kolchis und nach den deutschen Colonien jenseits des Kaukasus*, Leipzig, 1850, pp. 13, 46.
- ³⁸ Friedrich Parrot, *Reise zum Ararat*, Berlin, 1834, pp. 94ff.
- ³⁹ Hermann Abich, *Aus kaukasischen Laendern*, rpt., Vienna, 1896, vol. 1, pp. 70-76, 401.
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- ⁴¹ Richard Davey, *The Sultan and His Subjects*, London, 1907, p. 382.
- ⁴² William D. Howell, *Venetian Life*, rpt., Leipzig, 1883, p. 173.
- ⁴³ Armand von Schweiger-Lerchenfeld, *Der Orient*, Vienna, 1882, p. 291.
- ⁴⁴ James Bryce, *Transcaucasia and Ararat*, London, 1896, pp. 328f.
- ⁴⁵ M. A. Ubcini, *Letters on Turkey*, Part II: *The Raiahs*, trans., London, 1856, pp. 306f.
- ⁴⁶ Peter Stephan Jungk, *Franz Werfel: A Life in Prague, Vienna, and Hollywood*, trans. Anselm Hollo, New York, 1991, pp. 146f.
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- ⁵² Nassau W. Senior, *A Journal Kept In Turkey And Greece*, London, 1858, pp. 194f
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- ⁵⁴ George Barrow, *Lavengro*, London, 1845, pp. 262f.
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- ⁵⁸ F. A. de Chateaubriand, *Travels in Greece, Palestine, Egypt and Barbary*, trans., New York, 1814, p. 333.
- ⁵⁹ Henry F. Tozer, *Turkish Armenia and Eastern Asia Minor*, London, 1881, pp. 231f.
- ⁶⁰ Walter Thornbury, *Turkish Life and Character*, London, 1860, p. 191.
- ⁶¹ George H. Hepworth *Through Armenia on Horseback*, New York, 1898, pp. 156f.
- ⁶² Frederick R. Karl, "Thirty Years of Musa Dagh," *Ararat*, VI (1965), pp. 3-6. Even though the novel has been often reprinted and translated, there are few critical studies of it. The following I have found useful: D. J. Enright, "The Ghost of Apes: Franz Werfel's *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*," *The Apothecary's Shop: Essays on Literature*, London, 1957, p. 145-167; George Schulz-Behrend, "Sources and Background of Werfel's Novel *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*," *The Germanic Review*, XXVI (1951), pp. 111-123. See also the chapter that Peter Stephan Jungk has dedicated to the novel in his biography of Franz Werfel (pp. 137-47).
- ⁶³ For a brief discussion of this novel, see Leo Hamalian, pp. 183f.
- ⁶⁴ Stephen J. Rivelle, *A Booke of Days: A Journal of the Crusade*, London, 1996, pp. 209f.
- ⁶⁵ Stephen R. Lawhead, *Byzantium*, New York, 1996, pp. 741-4.
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ԳՐԱԿԱՆ ԾԱՂԿԱՔԱՂՂ
ՆՇԱՆԱՒՈՐ ՀԱՅ ԱՆՀԱՏՆԵՐՈՒ
(Ամփոփում)

ԴՈԿՏ. ԻՆԿՐԻՏ ՍԸՄԱՆ

Ուսումնասիրութիւնը կը ձգտի գրական շրջագայութիւն մը կատարել Արեւմտեան Եւրոպայի գրական անդաստաններու մէջ ու վեր հանել նոն կերպարուած հայը:

Գրական այս դեգերումը կը սկսի ԺԵ դարու հեղինակ Եոհաննէս Շիլթպերկէրի ստեղծագործութենէն, հասնելու համար Քորնէյի (1641), Անտրէաս Կրիֆիուսի (1650), Էտուըրտ Կիպլընի (1776), Շիլլերի (1786-1798), Կոտֆրի Թոմըս Վինլըրի (1843), Կիւսթաւ Ֆրոպէրի (1851), Ա. Փեթլընի (1870), Ֆելիքս Տանի (1876), Կորէ Վիտայի (1964), Կերհարտ Քեփնէրի (1985), Ամին Մասլուֆի (1988) Ժան Քրիսթոֆ Բուֆէնի (1998)... գրական տարեր սեռերու ստեղծագործութեանց՝ պատմուածք, Թատրերգութիւն, վէպ ու պատմավէպ...

Սկզբնական շրջանին, Արեւմուտքին համար Հայաստանն ու հայերը կը ներկայացուին իբրեւ քրիստոնեայ ժողովուրդ մը՝ հերոսներու, հաւատացեալներու եւ նահատակներու, որոնք տուրսը, անդին են... ուրի՛շ են իրենց շրջապատէն... եւ ուրի՛շ են նաեւ Եւրոպայէն:

Տակաւ սակայն, այս պատկերը կը վերափոխուի, կը մթազնի՛ մինչեւ իսկ ընդգրկելով մաֆիաներու կերպարի տարբերակներ:

Արեւմուտքի այս հեղինակները, չեն անդրադառնար միայն Հայաստանի պատմական ու մշակութային դէմքերուն ու դէպքերուն՝ Տրդատ արքայ հայոց, Լեւոն Թագաւոր Կիլիկիոյ, Իսրայէլ Օրի, Ռաչատուր Աբովեան..., այլեւ կը ներկայացնեն Բիւզանդիոնի նշանաւոր գորավար Ներսէսը, Բիւզանդիոնի Լեւոն Ե. հայազգի կայսրը, Մուհամմէտ Ալիի խորհրդական Պօղոս պէլը, Լիբանանի առաջին մուսթասարրիֆ Տաուուտ փաշան, Եգիպտոսի վարչապետ Նուպար փաշան, ... ինչպէս նաեւ՝ պարզ, շարքային հայեր: