

HARRY POTTER AND THE PROVERBIAL ARMENIAN MERCHANT

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PREFATORY REMARK

Back in 1961 when I came to Beirut for the first time, I got to know and respect the Armenians as a people. I was then a very young and inexperienced teacher, and it was at the Armenian Evangelical College in Beirut that I found my love for teaching and a group of lively and friendly and intelligent colleagues and many eager students. It was a good year. After earning two more academic degrees and having gained quite a bit more teaching experience, I was delighted to accept the invitation to teach at Haigazian College (now University). Like any new graduate, I worked my way up the academic ladder and became Associate Professor, then Chairperson of the Department of English, and eventually Director of Humanities. During all this time, almost two decades, I got to know the Armenian community quite well. I have enjoyed teaching their young people, and I have always felt at home among them.

My academic training has been in English Literature and Comparative Studies as well as in Social History. So it was quite natural that I had met Armenians in my reading long before my first year in Beirut. The great as well as the lesser writers of the West have always had a definite picture of the "Armenian" as such. Now with my new friends in mind, I became more and more conscious of this picture and how vast the literature is that tries to enlighten the innocent Westerner about this "Levantine", as they like to call him. The more I read, the more I came to realize that the gallery of literary Armenians that I met in the books and saw presented by the media of both America and Europe, bore very little resemblance to the people who were my friends and whom I was teaching. In my reading I had "discovered" the stereotype of the "ugly" Armenian of unsavory political and racist propaganda with which the Armenians have been and still are defamed. The world on paper that I had entered was ugly and disgusting. It was nightmarish; at times I had the feeling that I had woken up in the Berlin or Nuremberg of Adolf Hitler's time. I was surrounded by the same disgusting and obscene and xenophobic propaganda - no, it was much worse. My "experts" on things Armenian were sometimes ranting and spewing viler hatred and poison than even Hitler's propaganda "experts" were capable of doing.

We have become accustomed to recognize the evil monster Racism for what it is and usually associate it with one group and cry out loud: "Anti-Semitism!" In some so-called "civilized" countries, we even have to

go to jail for uttering anti-Semitic feelings. In the same "civilized" countries, anti-Armenian propaganda, however, is periodically churned out by the media and the best seller - serious writers as well indulge in the witch hunt - and it is even "fed" to children. Yet all these propagators of the lie go free. I do not think that anyone has ever noticed the scope of what looks like an international conspiracy of character assassination of the Armenians.

The Armenian as scapegoat - he is not the first nor the last one in history. Putting the blame, our own iniquities and sins, on the "Other" is part and parcel of what we like to call "the human condition"; it goes back to Adam's fall. But this long tradition does not make it holy - not even acceptable. In this same "condition" it is excruciatingly painful to look over the shoulder of the "Other" and see the distorted mirror image he has created of us. The experience would be too painful, and so we close our eyes and wish it away, or we convince ourselves that what is ugly does not exist. Only by closing our eyes or by pretending that a different "truth" exists, we perpetuate the lie and become even guilty of it ourselves.

Doing the research for this paper and then later writing it was a most painful experience. I am not a novelist, and I did not "creatively play" with the image of the "ugly" Armenian. And I am indulging in writing propaganda that can be used by the enemies of the Armenians. That propaganda has had a long history and has led to much bloodshed. I thought it was my duty as an ethical human being and as a scholar to shatter this conspiracy of silence in the case of the bigotry and hatred that has gone into the shaping of the image of the Armenian and make the general reader aware of this long tradition of racism very cunningly presented to him in books and by the media. This evil and distorted mirror image has to be broken. Perhaps, unfortunately, I will also have to shatter the deceptive mirror image created by the Armenians themselves, a people that has had to suffer so much on account of stereotyping and scapegoatism. This shattering of the comfortably deceptive mirror image is very painful, even devastating. But it has to be done - whether we like it or not, it is very important to know what the "Other" thinks about us, for his good or bad evaluation of us might shape our destiny as individuals or as a whole nation. But we have to fight the "lie". Before we can fight the "lie", we have to be able to see it and recognize it.

THE PROVERBIAL ARMENIAN MERCHANT

For a moment, the curtain lifts and we are treated to a pastoral scene in an Orientalized Rococo manner: while the members of the caravan on the way through the desert -- like the rest of mankind -- sleep, the lover dreams of his beloved, the Armenian merchant "doing his accounts quietly ... keeps vigil."¹ But vigil over what? Still, all seems well with the world in the care of the ever vigilant trader from the East. When, however, the charmingly tinted Oriental tableau with which Goethe concludes his poetic excursions into Eastern realms fades, we notice that behind this seemingly benign figure of the merchant that a man of the Enlightenment like Goethe could respect and emulate² looms his much darker Eastern prototype, a figure created and given credence by folk wisdom and the tradition of the proverb. Who will question the proverb since it gives us such comfortable, concise, and easy to follow insights?

Goethe's merchant, this shrewd and astute Levantine businessman, this "proverbial" Armenian trader, who will "trick not only a Jew but Sheitan (the Devil) himself,"³ has been a threatening figure in Western and Eastern experience alike. Like his merchant brother and fellow wandered and fellow outcast from polite society, the Wandering Jew, he ghosts through folk wisdom and literature. We meet this Armenian in the travel books of all those good and benevolent men and women who have enjoyed to travel either in body or in spirit to the East and have subsequent to their adventure shared their experiences with us: the adventurers, mountain climbers, politicians, missionaries, hunters, traders, and physicians; the journalists, poets, and novelists; the bringers of progress and the recorders of documentaries -- and more recently the writers of books for the younger members of society. These writers and reporters make up a varied crew with vastly different interests; yet no matter what their concerns might be, one of the figures with which the rich and colorful scenario they have traversed abound has not escaped their interest: the very competent yet witty, cunning, and wily Armenian merchant -- the embodiment, for them, of Armenianness.

We meet him, with very little variation, again and again through the centuries on the pages of popular and serious literature, and more recently on the screen as well. The Turks in their xenophobic "dislike" of the Armenians could not have asked for a better ally than these writers who have helped to spread the news of this archetypal "ugly" Armenian and thus have given their blessing to the "truth" and ardent desire of the Turkish proverb: "From the Greeks of Athens, from the Jews of Soloniki, and from the Armenians every where, good Lord deliver us!"⁴ And if the "good Lord" was a bit slow in obliging, it was quite all right to lend him a helping hand.

The consequences perpetuated by the stereotype created by folk "wisdom" literature can be disastrous, a truth borne out by Armenian history. That there never has been much love lost between Armenians and their Turkish or Kurdish or Azeri neighbors is the understatement of the millennium -- hence the proverb

and its historical consequences. The sentiments expressed by serious literature are no whit more positive. The novel *Ali and Nino* by the Azeri novelist Kurban Said (1905-1940),⁵ that celebrates the tragic love between the Muslim Azeri Ali Khan Shirwanshin and the Christian Georgian princess Nino, also "celebrates" the supposed hatred of all the Caucasian peoples for their Armenian neighbors. The heart of this *bildungsroman* centers around the change of the "innocent" protagonist who at first cannot understand the "stupidity of this blind hatred for the Armenians expressed by his Baku friends who taunt him for kissing, even embracing, an Armenian. The events of the novel, though, show us how he reaches the "mature" conclusion that "decent" Armenians do not exist; the young man had lived in a dream world. His "righteous" anger is eventually turned against his friend Melik Nacharaijan, an especially repulsive Armenian, both physically and morally. Melik has betrayed the friendship he claims for the two young lovers and his Armenian identity as well.

The fight in which Ali kills his former Armenian companion is regarded by his true Azeri friends to be the threshold experience, a rite of passage, that has so far separated him from manhood; in their eyes he has now become a hero. The novel that has been highly praised by both *The New York Times* and the German news magazine *Der Stern* as a beautiful and powerful work of art "celebrating love" -- we are assured on the cover of the German paperback edition -- is at heart a call to ethnic hatred. Melik certainly is a despicable person and his behavior merits condemnation by both protagonist and author, but all this does not justify the book's very outspoken approval of the fate of the Armenians at the hands of the Turks and their friends during the events of 1915 and 1916.

It is not at all surprising that Armenians should not fare so well in the tradition and literature of their neighbors in the Caucasus region and in Anatolia since the common history of all these peoples has been shaped by much bloodshed and fear and hatred of the "Other". Among them, the Armenian, though "he" has lived in these regions in most cases much longer than "his" neighbor, is very much the "Other". This is naturally expressed in their various traditions. Unsettling, however, remains the fact that in Western tradition and literature, the Armenians have suffered a similar fate. The basically Muslim East as well as the Christian West, generally speaking, have created and accepted a very negative image of the Armenian. The center of the composite picture of the Armenian is occupied by the "proverbial" Armenian: the Armenian merchant.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how that very mixed group of European and American writers about things Eastern and Oriental, whom we have already briefly met, have communicated their encounters and with often very ambivalent feelings have introduced the "proverbial" Armenian merchant to their reading public. This reading audience includes the learned as well as the general public, the old and the young. Armenian merchants can "pop up" on the most unlikely pages of Western literature. Usually it is quite easy to "spot" one of these "Sons of Haik": his sense of business, or his features, or his cunning, or his name can give him away. But who would suspect Gilderoy Lockhart -- he with the golden hair and tooth-paste grin -- otherwise Professor and holder of the

Chair of Defense Against the Dark Arts at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*⁶ to turn out to be perhaps the most recent descendant of that brotherhood?

Many of us have never seen an Armenian, confesses C. J. Willis, M.D., for many years one of the medical officers of the British Queen Victoria's (reigned 1837-1901) Telegraph Department in Persia. However, "those who have done so associate the name in their minds with small, active, dark-complexioned people with jetty hair ... and preternatural activity in business."⁷ For a moment, George Henry Borrow (1803-1881), preparing himself for his work with the Bible Society in Spain, thought the Armenians in general to be a "poetical" people; especially "the idea of doing business in the Armenian fashion intrigued him. Upon more mature reflection, he concluded that there was definitely something repulsive about the "Sons of Haik"; his own experience with the Armenians in London had shown him how true to life the commonly accepted negative image of the Armenians was."⁸

They had hardly ever seen an Armenian, but the travellers and their reading public thought they knew these "Levantine" quite well. The prospective visitor of the cities of the Levant and the regions around Mt. Ararat could very easily become an authority on the cities and countries and their inhabitants at home: his imagination only had to flesh out a bit the stereotyped picture that he found in the many books written by his brother travellers. On most occasions, he felt, that these accounts proved to be guides which could be trusted.

Clarissa Dalloway,⁹ a character in a work by the British novelist Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), may have had trouble in keeping Turks and Armenians apart. The traveller of the nineteenth century, however, was usually not plagued by such a problem; he knew what to look for, and that most popular traveller's guide, John Murray's (1741-1815) handbook for 1858, assured him that in the multitude of peoples of the East, "everyone ... can at a glance distinguish the Jew, the Turk, and the Armenian, each of whom is of a different race."¹⁰ One could, first of all, spot an Armenian and his womenfolk by their dress and general appearance: the *kalpak*, a high cylindrical cap of black felt, gave the Armenian away -- and so did "the most quiet, most money-loving countenance beneath."¹¹ In the traveller's dictionary, "Armenian" was synonymous with "exceeding" love of money, and many travellers were convinced that every Armenian carried a physical and visible token of his greed, his own variety of original sin and the brand of Cain, on his face. Thus it was not at all difficult to spot and classify an Armenian; the brand could not be erased.

Of course, not all Armenians looked drab and heavy-set; however, nothing could hide the mark of Cain, not even the "exceedingly picturesque and becoming" clothing of a group of Armenians that Captain Hunt describes,¹² nor their graceful bodies and handsome faces, for they have strongly marked features, so it was often observed, a fact which led many to believe that the Armenians were really of Semitic origin, a connection, which, in the mind of many a traveller, was not a recommendation at all. To some travellers, the Armenians resembled the Turks, "being for the most part tall, and corpulent,

with a grave, sedate carriage, but their complexity is light:" there the similarities suddenly ended. When looking closer, it became obvious the Armenians' proverbial sense of business and their servility to authority could "usually be read in their faces," sins of which the Turks were innocent.¹³ Depending on his previous experiences with foreigners, the traveller connected Armenians with other nationalities as well. The "Europeanised Armenian," in Captain Wilbraham's opinion, came closest to the Italian as far as his features and gestures were concerned.¹⁴ L.C. Beck, in turn, thought that their features resembled most closely those of the Persians.¹⁵ Murray certainly had been misleading a bit!

Their ponderous faces are long and oval with "large noses," and dark and deep and large eyes¹⁶--of this we are assured again and again. The traveller often set himself up as authority who could read and interpret from these physical givens the moral make-up of the Armenians. The signs and notations he could decipher in this open book were not good. For the traveller who had been taught to base his judgement of a person on phrenology, it was hard to imagine that a beautiful soul could possibly inhabit a body that had a face with such features and such a nose!

Often the nose gave the Armenian away -- him and his character. These Armenian noses did not appeal to the sensibilities and artistic feelings of the Western ladies and gentlemen of the morally superior nineteenth century. It was somehow improper to be blessed with such a feature, and the literary creations of Europe like their own *Cyrano de Berceraq*, or *Tristram Shandy*, of Hauff's *Zwerg Nase*, or *Punch*, or *Kasperle* came to their mind. People who owned such noses, in this tradition, were indecorous, obscene, even evil, and should therefore be avoided. This, in a superficial way, perhaps, was one reason why "the Armenian is not, as a rule, able to get much sympathy from English travellers." Furthermore, the Armenian was not "a sportsman, and he is apt to cringe -- an unpardonable offence, and one that quickly puts a stop to further intercourse." The brothers Noel and Harold Buxton saw after they became acquainted with some Armenians that this preconceived notion was wrong.¹⁷ Most other travellers, on the other hand, saw this negative picture confirmed and deepened.

Who could like people who embodied the opposite of what the traveller considered to be gentlemanly and morally correct? Often the supposed characteristics of the Armenians were used as a standard of measuring corruption against which other peoples were reckoned and found either better or "nearly as bad as the Armenians" who are all "full of deceit, making a great pretense of religion, but using it as a cloak for treachery and greed," as James Bryce (1838-1922) had been told. Thus many travellers had made up their mind and had decided that the Armenians "did not have any virtue at all."¹⁸ William M. Ramsay (1851-1939), the good professor from Aberdeen University and professor of classical archeology at Oxford, did not go quite this far. He did find a few good qualities among them, but as a people he had decided that they were objectionable:

Of all the races with whom I have mixed in Turkey, there is none that I have personally liked less than the Armenians, none among whom I have found so little interested in history, none of whom I owe so little individual gratitude for kindness shown to a traveller and a guest, none who have so often treated me as a stranger whose sole interest in their eyes was the possibility of making money off him, none whose character has seemed to me generally so burdened down to the estimate of life by the standard of money alone.¹⁹

This is an opinion shared by many travellers, even though it is not always so bluntly expressed. They had heard and found out for themselves that the love of money and their cheating ways were the passions that animated and gave meaning to the lives of the Armenians. This evaluation runs like a *leitmotif* through the generalizations on the "national" characteristics of the Armenians, be the writers Turkophiles or Armenophiles. The leading German geographer of the nineteenth century, Carl Ritter, contributed greatly to the spreading of this slander: he, in turn, had read it in the books and reports of Eli Smith (1801-1857), the great American missionary to the Armenians; Ritter had read also very similar things in the travel books of Humphry Sandwith (1822-1881), Liet.-Col. Chesney (1789-1872), Moritz von Kotzebue, Edmund Spencer, August Freiherr von Haxthausen, and Friedrich Bodenstedt -- to mention just a few of his sources.

The traveller had been told often enough that the typical Armenian's love for money was proverbial and his penchant for money-making a reliable instinct. It was also a commonplace well known by the travellers that the Armenians loved money, and for this reason there were so many rich and influential Armenians found throughout the Ottoman empire: the bankers, masters of the mint, the financiers and high officials of the empire, but especially very many merchants.

The figure to arouse the jealousy and "righteous" anger of both traveller and local population alike was the merchant, the businessman. He was clever and wily, and he ghosts through the travel and popular literature of a great part of Europe. The Greek folk tale "The Turk, the Italian, and the Armenian" tells of what happened to these men, all three of them shipwrecked merchants on the Greek island of Naxos, after they had been apprehended by the island's officials because they had been tempted by some figs. The Solomon-like judge asked each of the men how he would be punished back home. He would then be disciplined in the same manner on the island. Thus the honest Turk had the soles of his feet whipped, the good Catholic Italian his bottom, while the Armenian came off scot free. He had told the judge that back home in Armenia it was customary in a case like this to find first a person who had never stolen anything in his life. This person was then given a stick and commanded to beat up the culprit as long as he was able to do so. The court of Naxos, all honest men, had to confess that such an innocent, such a paragon of virtue, did not exist in their midst, and the Armenian was the hero of the day.²⁰

Clever Armenian merchants could be met on the remotest roads of the Ottoman and Persian empires trading with literally everything. John Fryer admired them for "studying all the Arts of Thrift ... setting out with a stock of Hard Eggs" and a measure of wine that will last them for the whole journey, "riding on a mean Beast ... travelling with no Attendance, their Mattress serving for Horse-cloth and then to lye on: they are a kind of Privateers in Trade.... From such Beginnings do they raise sometimes Fortunes for themselves and their Masters."²¹

In order to become rich, they traded with everything, learning the art of trade already in childhood. Traveller William J. Hamilton (1805-1867) complains that near Caesarea he was one day "suddenly surrounded by a motley group of ragged Armenian boys, who wished to dispose of some worthless Byzantine coins," but he would not be bullied!²² Other travellers had similar experiences. But no matter what they bought from any Armenian merchant, young or old, they cautioned each other to be very careful not to be cheated. Professor Ramsay confessed that he had been conned; he had ordered from an Armenian shopkeeper twenty pairs of hand-knit socks of Angora wool. When they were ready, he did not have enough time to inspect the merchandise in the shop; as he opened the package on the road he found out that of each pair "the inner sock was a tattered rag of common wool." Ramsay had the consolation that he was not the first and only person ever to be cheated by Armenian merchants: "I might multiply the examples; and so could every one that has ever been in the East."²³ It is difficult to find a traveller who refutes this assertion, and most agree with William Hopkins that it is better to trade with Turks who are much more honest than Armenians.²⁴

They may have shared such experiences; however, a few did bother to explain why the Armenian merchants they had encountered resorted to such tricks and concluded that this kind of behavior stemmed from the unjust oppression under which the Armenians as a people labored and which induced them to retaliate with artifice on their impervious masters, the Turks and Persians, and by sheer force of habit, on the travellers as well. Perhaps this was the subconscious desire of those Armenian vandals of Erevan "who are ready at all times to injure any Mohammedan institution, provided some gain accrues to themselves." One of these vandals showed to Walter B. Harris the roof of the very ancient mosque where they had stolen the "exquisite blue tiles" which they afterwards sold in Constantinople.²⁵

Acts like these were bad, yet other Armenian merchants engaged in much more shocking activities. The moral observers were angered that these supposed Christians were dealing in human merchandise, and conveniently forgot that the slave markets of the Western hemisphere had been recently or were still supplied by slave traders who were good Christians from Europe or the Americas. The German nobleman August von Haxthausen had it from a trustworthy authority that the Armenians enjoyed the privilege of the trade with slaves during the war of 1828 (one of the conflicts between Russia and Turkey in which Varna was occupied by the Russians)²⁶ and Daniel Schlatter reports that a certain class of

Armenian merchants were well known to be associated with Circassian and Turkish slave traders.²⁷ John McDonald Kinneir (1782-1830) knew that Georgian beauties are "sometimes brought from their native country by the Armenian merchants,"²⁸ and John Carne tells in 1826 of a war captive, a "young and lovely Greek who was offered for sale by an Armenian merchant at Constantinople for twenty thousand piastres.... One of the pashas owed him that sum, and sent him this lady ... as payment, with direction that he must sell her for the full amount."²⁹ The traveller was often ashamed to claim the Armenian as fellow Christian because of the latter's bad reputation.

Yet these despised Armenian merchants were envied, even feared; the Sultan and the pashas, however, had ways and means to get even and to take advantage of the precarious position of the rich Armenian merchants within Ottoman society. The prisons of the empire were vast and the whip and the hangman's noose ready. The Ottoman *plebs* especially found an outlet for their fears in the various pogroms and massacres and vicariously in folk literature: in proverbs and folk tales. Some of these tales have been admired by countless German listeners to the wireless and readers through Elsa Sophia von Kamphoevener's *An Nachtfeuern der Karawanen Serail*.³⁰ Artin, the sly and cunning Armenian in her tale "The Kawehdji and the Derwich," receiver of stolen property, does this class of his compatriots all honor. Right from under the nose of the prince of all Turkish slave traders -- who are not condemned for their activities -- Artin abducts a lovely slave to sell her himself. Yet in the world of this Turkish tale, a mere *rajah* (a simply "tolerated" Christian subject) will not get away with such an offence against Turkish privileges. The girl is naturally rescued and returned to her rightful Turkish owner, and Artin is tricked and loses his liberty.

With such tales, the popular German story teller amused her large audience over the radio and the many German soldiers who listened to her spellbound in the trenches of WWII. From where did she get her tales? Her father had been very fond of the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II (reigned 1876-1909), that "kind and lonely man on the Bosphorous" under whom he served as military advisor for many years. His daughter Sophia succumbed to the Turkish way of life, and disguised as a young *bei* she collected the folk wisdom of the Turkish tellers of tales. Later, back in Germany during and after the war, she wanted to entertain and improve the understanding between peoples through her stories. Even though the Turkish tradition of story telling forbade her to publish the material with which she had been entrusted, she did tell these tales in the form of books.

Similarly, Arthur and Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914) had fallen under the spell of Turkish life and found very few favorable things to say about the Armenian subjects of the Ottoman empire. Bertha von Suttner is remembered as one of the great champions of peace, and for her efforts in behalf of ethnic minorities she received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1905, the first woman to win that honor. Her husband, who supported the work of his wife wholeheartedly, translated their travel experiences in Turkey and Russia into novels.

The naturalistic world of Arthur von Suttner's novel *Daredjan*, unlike the world of Kamphoevener, is not controlled by the laws of poetic justice. The

beautiful Georgian lady Daredjan cannot resist to buy pretty trinkets from the clever merchant Ter-Tzapianz and thus becomes completely indebted and dependent on him. Since she trusts him, she signs anything he presents to her, and so she signs away everything she owns, including her "virtue". Mr. Ter-Tzapianz, sporting a diamond as big as an egg on his little finger, eventually becomes the pimp of this unfortunate Georgian beauty.³¹

Death ends the career of Artiom Fadinow, von Suttner's other greedy Armenian merchant. He started out as a petty tobacco merchant, became rich through marriage, and caused his sensitive wife to die of a broken heart. In the eyes of Agathe von Puchta, the German governess he hired for his two motherless daughters, he is totally objectionable: through cunning and deceit, she is sure, he has emerged from the lowest level of money-making; has spread slander about his cultivated Georgian brother-in-law; has been, together with several monks from Etchmiadzin, involved in the printing of counterfeit money. Most of all, he keeps the company of several loutish Armenian brother-traders. Every Sunday they invade the home of her two lovely charges, these dolts, who have no manners at all, speak no civilized foreign language, eat with their fingers instead of knife and fork, get drunk, stare at her, and flash their diamonds! The lady is disgusted and marvels that such a crude man as her employer has such lovely daughters.³²

Even though the traveller was convinced that the Baron Artiom Fadinows were the great cheats of the market place, he did enter their shops now and then. Walter Thornbury describes such an escapade: he went to Zenope, "a sleek, short well-to-do-looking Armenian, with the deep rich darkness in his eye that Armenians have," yet "as bland and dignified as the richest shopkeeper in Bond Street" of London. As Thornbury enters the shop, the storekeeper invites the European bowing with "a little not unpleasing Oriental abjection" to come into "a little deep well of a room, lighted from the top, and hung with silk robes, camel hair cloaks, trophies of amber-coloured shields," and all kinds of odds. Then, from some hidden nooks and pigeon-holes, he produces "all sorts of rubbish in the worst condition," ranging from an "Arab haik" to rose-water sprinklers, all along laying traps for the unsuspecting prospective customer.³³

The "laying of traps" and cheating of the innocent customer, Eli Smith, the missionary to the Armenians, considered as "universal" among Armenian merchants "and is regarded only as an authorised act of trade. Conscience ... allows it to be sinful; but they say, 'are we in a convent, that we should be able to live without it?'" This art of stretching one's conscience was especially due to the fact that the Armenians "in the character of the nation 'are' peculiarly intolerant of competition." Smith, this "very acute observer of character", as the geographer Ritter called him, concludes "that when the bad passions of an Armenian are fully awake, no deed is too base or too dark for him to do."³⁴ We should remember that the missionary's opinions were regarded by many travellers, and naturally all the supporters of his missionary endeavor and authorities like Ritter, to be very close to the gospel's truth.

A few observers of Oriental life do present a different picture of the Armenian merchant. In J. L. Stephen's opinion, "the Armenian merchant is now known in every quarter of the globe, and every where distinguished by superior cultivation, honesty and manners."³⁵ This evaluation fits Austen H. Layard's (1817-1894) picture of the Armenian merchants of the city of Van, especially of "one Sharan, an Armenian merchant and a man of liberal enlightened views" who had "established and endowed several schools."³⁶ Mrs. Bishop, the former Miss Isabelle Bird, was similarly impressed by the generosity of Armenian merchants. She had heard that Sanassarian College at Erzerum, too, "was founded and handsomely endowed by the liberality of an Armenian merchant". The education and moral and intellectual training of students received there "are of a very high type," but the lady traveller from Scotland deplores the fact that most of these philanthropists of Armenian background owe their prosperity "to usury no less than to trade."³⁷

The traveller usually did not meet these rich merchants personally. Miss Pardoe (1806-1862) was so struck by the fetching appearance of a boatload of Armenian merchants in the harbor of Constantinople: their cloaks and shawls were very becoming, "and there is a refinement and *tenue* about the wearers singularly attractive. Their well-trimmed mustachios, their stained and carefully shaped eyebrows, their exceeding cleanliness ... their whole appearance, interests the eye." She could not keep her eyes off "their jeweled rings, and their pipes of almost countless casts, grasped by fingers so white and slender that they would grace a woman." The spinster lady promptly fell in love with the sight.³⁸

On closer look, these merchants were not quite this attractive. That was Borrow's experience; his London Armenian businessman was a bundle of contradictions: he tyrannized his staff, followed questionable business practices, yet was concerned about the welfare of his friend, patronized the arts, was aroused by patriotic sentiments, but above all, he loved money.³⁹

Money and profit breathed life into the hearts and souls of almost all the Armenian merchants the traveller met on his way. Miss Pardoe eventually came to complain of the "moral inertness" of the Armenian merchants as a class: "In all affairs of commerce, where the subject may be reduced by rule, and decided by calculation, they are competent," but it was impossible to get them "beyond the charmed circle of their money-bags; to detach their thoughts for a moment from their piastres; and they cannot utter three consecutive sentences to which it is not a waste of time to listen."⁴⁰

They were progressive in their methods, and Captain Fred Burnaby (1842-1855) tells how the Armenian merchants of Sivas during the 1870s employed the telegraph for their speculations. Their proceedings may not have been very ethical, but they had become very rich by this means.⁴¹ They knew their business, were experts like the rug merchant Kashanlijan, a sly old fox who tried to softtalk Omar Effendi out of his fabulous Dshushegan rug for a pittance.⁴² At times, they were generous like the Armenian merchant who presented Karl Humann with an antique statue and asked to be photographed in return to which Humann gladly consented. The merchant got his money's worth, for the picture

was to include more than eighty persons and the huge house of the merchant as well.⁴³ Their shops were interesting, and their manners of conducting business were most strange and flamboyant -- and we remember Thurnbury's Zenope, that archetype of all the Armenian businessmen of the Levant who beneath all his pleasantries was out to snare his "victim".

If the traveller kept his mind and eyes open, he could also meet Armenian merchants like E. Crawahay William's Gulzad, "a friend, philosopher, politician," who does not appear "to make something out of life and his fellow creatures. But he is above all a man of the world," and the other unworldly and venerable figure, the bookseller whom Williams was to remember as always "poring over his illuminated Hafiz."⁴⁴

Gulzad, though, was an exceptional Armenian merchant. Dr. Thomas Howell's experience with "his" Coja Bogos was much closer to reality, almost all travellers would agree. This Coja Bogos, an Armenian merchant from the Ottoman capital, acted as guide to the good doctor's travelling party in 1787 from Bagdad to Constantinople. At first he seemed to be such a companionable fellow, but once on the road one after the other of his "bad" Armenian characteristics surfaced. The Armenian guide grew into the most selfish brute the doctor had ever met. On one occasion, it had rained all day; when the party finally got to an inn Bogos "took possession of the fireside, in such a manner as to exclude us ... from deriving the least comfort from it," while Lieutenant Morris, a member of the group, was burning with fever. The doctor had to wait till this Armenian "brute" was fast asleep to be able to sit at the fire to dry his clothes. Insolent he was too. Did the poor sick man lag behind on the road, Bogos would grow furious even though he himself would stop "and come up slowly, that we were frequently obliged to wait for him." Despite his bullying manners, he himself would often be whipped by groups of Tartars encountered on the road. Then he would not even complain, the coward! After such encounters, he and the Tartars would go off together to steal horses.

That was not all! He was very stingy; he refused to pay his bills in the inns where the party stopped, constantly flew into rages and then horsewhipped everybody within sight, the Tartars excepted. One day he drank the complete supply of medicinal alcohol of the group from which he became so drunk that he whipped and evicted the sick Lieutenant from his bed. To crown it all, half way to Constantinople, this good Armenian Orthodox Christian changed his identity and metamorphosed himself into the Muslim Ibrahim Aga. He played his new role with such gusto and conviction that none of the Muslims they came across on the way detected the deception. The Armenian was delighted with himself. With the new identity, Howell reflects, Bogos "had assumed all the insolence and violence of a real Tartar" which finally angered the cool Briton so much that "I at last presented my pistol at him." This calmed the offender for a while, but not for long.⁴⁵

That was a Victorian account of an international encounter. The twentieth century has not been any kinder to the Armenian man of business. Friedrich Duerrenmatt's rich old Zachanassian must have been a thoroughly corrupt

businessman who shaped his wife, the evil old lady of *Der Besuch der alten Dame* (The Visit),⁴⁶ after his own image. When the play opens, he has been long dead. Almost as evil and corrupt is Mr. Saint, alias Dikran Sareyan, of Joan Aiken's thriller *Last Movement*,⁴⁷ a very successful businessman, yet a most unpleasant person: a thief, a kidnapper, a murderer many times over, and an international gangster. At the end of the novel, he very appropriately is plunged into a gorge and his opposite number, the kindly Turkish healer, shines even brighter than before.

The rug merchant is considered in Europe and America to be the archetypal figure of the Armenian. Naturally, he is not to be trusted; it is a figure that is most aptly exemplified by the Sarrafian brothers of Elia Kazan's novel *The Anatolian*.⁴⁸ Cunning, corrupt, debauched, enamoured of their wealth they are, but they are a bit redeemed because of their affection for their family. On the other hand, there is absolutely nothing to redeem one of the more recent Armenian merchants of popular entertainment. In the first episode entitled *Der Vampir* (The Vampire), shown on German television in the spring of 1990, the "vampire" turns out to be an Armenian from Greece who deals with infected blood that he and his gangsters have literally sucked from the population of several Caribbean islands. He is properly punished.

So far, it seems, those Armenian merchants dealing with weapons and armament whom we meet in literature have escaped retribution. Krikor Bekarion, the proud owner of an Aleppo shoe factory, a role that he uses as cover, is probably still supplying terrorists with plastic explosives. The Scotsman William Dalrymple describes his visit to one of these shoe factories back in 1986: "Never have I seen a place like the ... shoe factory outside textbook pictures of sweatshops in the Industrial Revolution." After they "descended into the hot, hammering depth... The floor was littered with old pieces of cut leather, and half-made or discarded shoes cluttered the bench tops. Around the debris buzzed a workforce of ragged children...none of the factory's staff had yet reached puberty" -- children the Bekarion Brothers had "bought" because "it's profit." To this type of merchant, it has never mattered with what and with whom he trades. Be the customers the Seljuk Turks, Genghis Khan and his hordes, or the bloodiest terrorists, all these "were unmistakably men with whom the Armenians could do business," and, according to Dalrymple, still do. Such a collusion with their worst enemies, quite a tradition with the Armenian merchants, does not surprise the seasoned traveller who knows that "there was no more unpleasant race in Asia, and the Armenians were renowned as such throughout the civilized world," William Dalrymple wrote this in 1989.⁴⁹

As far as the best seller is concerned, those Armenian merchants breaking the laws that protect archeological sites and antiquities have often grown wise to these laws. Such a pillar of this branch of trade is Mr. Nicholas Papazian in Barbara Wood's novel *The Prophetess*. If the price is right, he would sell his soul. What have he and his family not done for money? To begin with, he forged the Sinai Scrolls, very important documents in Jewish history according to the novel, and then sold them at an exorbitant price. He did all this just to

incriminate the heroic and intellectually incorruptible archeologist Catherine Alexander. Everyone in Egyptian archeological circles knows about his activities. He "has a history of faking and selling forged documents." For selling the so-called Pontius Pilate Letter, his creation, he "spent six years in prison." The Egyptian authorities were forced to take action after this fraud, and his license to sell and export antiquities was revoked. Even the innocent archeologist had heard that the Papazians are "one of the biggest underground sources for illegal artifacts in the world. The man is obscenely rich and hides his criminal activities behind a facade of newfound respectability!"⁵⁰

Not many positive things have been said about the Armenian merchant. Not even that avowed Armenophile Armin T. Wegner in his novella "Der Bankier" ("The Banker") can forget the old proverbial prejudice when he created Onig Karibian who through his trade with the excrement of dogs becomes the richest man in Bagdad. Perhaps his mother had a fondness for him -- it is hard to find anything positive to say about Onig.⁵¹ Unlike Karibian, Achazian of Johannes Mario Simmel's *Es muss nicht immer Kaviar sein*⁵² - (*It Can't Always Be Caviar*), never gets caught betraying his business partner and continues to amass money through his deals with swindlers and traders with arms.

They certainly are not a pretty lot, those Armenian merchants we have met so far. The few Armenian ladies who have entered the free market system of the twentieth century are a bit more sympathetic. K. C. Tcholak in James Clavell's best seller *Noble House*⁵³ started her career as very competent business tycoon in her grandfather's carpet business. Edward Whittmore in his novel *Jerusalem Poker*,⁵⁴ stages a fitting entry for Sophia Wallenstein into the business world. Sophia has bought up after WWI all the oil concessions of the Ottoman empire while the whole business world has remained ignorant of the identity of this tycoon. When she finally makes her first personal appearance, she does so with much flamboyance but not with much good taste from what appears to be a flying carpet. Her family history, too, is not characterized by much refinement. One of her ancestresses, a young Armenian girl, back in the seventeenth century, was brought to an Albanian castle as a slave. There she started the tradition that she and all her female descendants would keep the Armenian blood flowing in their veins pure with the help of itinerant Armenian rug merchants who would happen to appear at the castle gate whenever their services are needed. Sophie, the last "daughter", is a credit to them all! But she does not have a daughter, and her son's blood is diluted since in his case the wandering Armenian rug merchant father-to-be failed to turn up.

Mr. Julius Karakin of *Upstairs, Downstairs* (London, 1971) -- the series shown on television based on the novel by John Hawkesworth and Mollie Hardwick -- is to leave the London rug store of his father far behind. This suave, cultivated, and very capable wizard on the London Exchange and of the bedrooms of the London high society through his abilities is dramatically climbing the social ladder till the novel leaves him at the height of his success: he has become the prospective financial advisor of the Tories, the present-day Conservative Party, the friend of the philosopher and statesman Arthur Balfour --

and, to crown it all, the Athenaeum Club has accepted him as member! He did not always behave like a perfect gentleman on the steep road to this pinnacle, "but what can you expect from the son of an Armenian rug merchant?" Julius asks himself at one point in one of the TV episodes.

JULFA

In the popular literature of the West, the established or the itinerant Armenian merchant was not bound to a particular location; he appeared when needed in the wildest parts of Albania, all the cities of the Levant, the spas of Europe, or in London like the father of Borrow's Armenian merchant who was "a native of Isphahan, one of the celebrated colony which was established there shortly after the time of the dreadful hunger, which drove the children of Haik in swarms from their original country, and scattered them over most parts of the eastern and western world." The particular gentleman about whom Borrow speaks had come from New Julfa, the Armenian suburb of Isphahan in Persia.⁵⁵ In the minds of the travellers of the nineteenth century, New Julfa, though in sad decline, was still the town that was closely associated with the Armenian merchant.

On his way to Isphahan, the traveller often passed through Julfa, a town on the Persian border, an ugly, mean, and dirty place, the Persian part "built of mud; that of Russia of wood." It was so infested with vermin that a sensitive, Victorian traveller like Hodgetts did not dare use the bed in his caravanserai.⁵⁶ Once, it had been a flourishing Armenian town, but already back on April 21, 1621, when the pious Silesian pilgrim Heinrich von Poser crossed the river, the ruined "Sulpha" was a memento to the power of the shah who had destroyed the town on the River "Arassu" and had transplanted its people and those of the neighbourhood as well.⁵⁷ What had happened?

As he lay sick with a pernicious fever in the comfortable house that his compatriot Boré had provided for him in New Julfa, M. Eugène Flandin had plenty of time to trace and to reflect on the fate of the two towns.⁵⁸ Like many other travellers, he more than likely had read about the history of the place in the accounts of previous travellers the account of the suffering of the Armenians under Shah Abbas I the Great (reigned 1587-1629) as told by the Armenian historian Arak'el of Tabriz had not yet been translated by M. Brosset.

It all started in the last decade of the sixteenth century during the various campaigns that Shah Abbas I the Great conducted against the Ottoman Turks on his western border after he had moved his capital city to Isphahan. The Turks had been in the habit of making frequent incursions across the Araxes River, and to discourage any further activities in this line and to secure his own border area and his own success on the battle field, the shah decided on a burnt-earth strategy. It seems that Shah Abbas appreciated the intelligence and sense of business of his loyal Armenian subjects that lived in the disputed region so that he wanted to keep them for himself. For those times and circumstances, Shah Abbas proved to be a generous ruler who wanted to reward especially the Armenians of Julfa who did not like the Turks any better than their new imperial

master did. Sir Robert Ker Porter (1777-1842) had been told how their opposition to the Turks "particularly conciliated his favour." They had expelled "their Turkish garrison, at sight of his troops, and opening their gates to receive him; the conqueror treated them as friends."⁵⁹ According to some interpretations, he expressed his "friendship" in the most peculiar manner by demolishing their town and driving them in the depth of winter in advance of his army across frozen deserts and mountain ranges. Well, Persian potentates, like some parents and gods, punish whom they profess to love.

True, but he could have ordered the summary execution of the border population; instead, he evacuated them and resettled them outside his own new capital city and called the new suburb of Isphahan after Julfa from where a great part of the people had originally come.

Their Persian ruler had acted very shrewdly, for he knew that these industrious Armenians would bring a new impetus to the sluggish economy of Persia and therefore granted them all kinds of financial securities and benefits and protected them from the misguided religious fervour of the local Shiite population. It did not take very long, and the Armenian colony flourished, and the six thousand initial inhabitants had doubled in the "magnificent suburb", as Goethe (1749-1832) called New Julfa in his Notes to the *Divan*.⁶⁰ They built beautiful houses and churches, imported artists from Italy, and sent their own merchants to all the corners of this world. New Julfa had become the stronghold for Armenian trade.

The story reads like a fairy tale account of how an ugly town of merchants was charmed and transformed into a society of Medicis, the high-minded Florentine merchant princes of the Renaissance, by a benevolent fairy-tale prince: Shah Abbas I the Great. This great prince of folklore has also enchanted the judgement of quite a few of the travellers. This liberal monarch, we are told, granted great benefits to the Julfaite; they, whom he could have treated as slaves, were under his mild rule encouraged to build "over-against his own Palace.... Costly and well-endowed Temples, without any Molestation, to the Honour of the Blessed Name of Christ," shaking off "thereby the dreadful fear of captivity".⁶¹ For the same reason, the shah who was a good psychologist and knew the reverence which the Armenians accorded their holy relics, had one of their most sacred relics, the arm of St. Gregory, brought to New Julfa.⁶² The potentate had acted wisely when he made the Armenians leave their old homes: "They had no reason to regret this treatment!", we are assured.⁶³

Well, perhaps he dealt with the Armenians a bit violently when he resettled them, nevertheless, he was a grand emperor. An emperor to be great may have to massacre whole tribes and nations; what befell the Armenians in 1605 under Shah Abbas was a "great calamity," other travellers and historians reflect. He conquered a town that was loyal to him, intimidated its citizens by having several of them beheaded; others had their ears cut off; and many of the refugees died on the long trek in the icy snow drifts and freezing rivers they had to cross. The American missionary Eli Smith, though he really did not care much for the Armenians, was upset with the "eulogies that have been bestowed upon" the

shah, who certainly was "one of the most unfeeling devastators that Armenia, whose acquaintance with tyrants has not been small, has ever known. That he might defend his borders against the Turk, he coolly determined to draw through Armenia a broad intrenchment of perfect desert." The missionary continues that the unoffending inhabitants, after seeing their houses and every vestige of cultivation and of home disappear, "were collected in the plain of Ararat and driven like so many cattle to Persia, husbands and wives, parents separated, multitudes drowned in the Arras, others subjected to the cruelty and lust of the soldiery, and all under the very eye and influence of the monarch."⁶⁴ Later, after the Armenians were already settled, the relationship between them and their benefactor was at times clouded, and Goethe recalls the brutal punishment Shah Abbas meted out to the menfolk of one whole village near New Julfa just because the women had said a few uncomplimentary things about their monarch. The shah, in the manner of the Abbasid Caliph Harun-el-Rashid (reigned 763?-809), had roamed the countryside in disguise and had eavesdropped and overheard a group of gossiping women.⁶⁵

Still, a good number of the survivors "thrived" as merchants in New Julfa under the "benevolent" protection of this shah, who, along with his country, profited "by that which appeared at first sight an act of humanity, secured a great additional influx of wealth into his dominion" when he created "the Armenian merchant, now so well known in every quarter of the globe ... and to the same act the European world is indebted for an increased and perpetual supply of the most precious and costly of all Oriental commodities," namely silk. These New Julfa merchants then were good people, of "persevering tempers, sober and patient in all their pursuits, honest although skillful in their dealings, accommodating in their habits and manners," as John C. Hobhouse, Lord Broughton (1786-1869) praised them.⁶⁶

The Armenian merchant of New Julfa during the days of Shah Abbas I was a respected personage and was considered to be "the most efficient agent" between Asia and Europe for the "mutual transmission of rare goods, and their value in gold. In short, he might justly claim the title, that in civilised countries is esteemed the most honourable character in society. He was, what the merchants of Venice and Genoa were; what the merchants of England are; in every respect, the *gentleman*." Ker Porter was very impressed.⁶⁷

Unfortunately, these merchants did not leave such a good impression on all travellers. In Fryer's time, New Julfa had become already very rich from trade, and the Englishman saw many of these same Julfa merchant-princes "sit lazily at Home, their Factors abroad in all parts of the Earth return to their Hives laden with Honey." They had heaped up great riches and in doing so, they had stooped "to any base means, for they arise from the most avaritious Temper."⁶⁸

This "temper", after all, had enabled them, together with their Persian brother-merchants from across the river in Isphahan, to rise "to be such princes of wealth and influence as to be able to affect the prices in the bazaars of Bombay and Alexandria; they loaned money often at a rate as high as sixty per cent."⁶⁹ People with such business ethics could not be Christians; they had to be

"Jews in disguise"! Boré was merely quoting the opinion of the Mufti of Isphahan.⁷⁰

Shah Abbas I the Great may have been a tyrant; in comparison to his successors he was most benevolent as far as the Armenians were concerned. Under Abbas they had established a complex trading network "stretching from the Far East to Europe, with Julfa at the centre." Among the goods shipped from the East to Persia were "cotton, musk, spices, and Chinese porcelain." Persian silk, in turn, was shipped to "Venice, Leghorn, Marseilles.... In Europe it was sold by the Armenian merchants in Holland, France, England, Italy, Germany, Poland, and Sweden." It is recorded that Armenian merchants from New Julfa had outlets in Spain as well. The goods brought back from Europe to Persia by these merchants included: woolen cloth from England, Holland, and Venice; brocades; looking-glasses; "Venetian glass, coloured glass for windows, glass rosaries, false pearls, amber, paper, spectacles, watches, clocks, enamels, knives, needles, and paintings," to name just a few items.⁷¹

Those were good times – "*mais le bien est éphémère en Perse*" – Flandin reflected on his bed of sickness. Shah Abbas I died in 1629, and his successors did not always harbour friendly feelings for the Armenians. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the relationship between Isphahan and New Julfa had become strained. The reason for this state of affairs, according to Flandin, was to be found in the jealousy of the Persians of the Armenians, and the hatred of the former for the latter was based on religious prejudices.⁷² Shah Hussein (reigned 1694-1722), a feeble and timid man, did not think it was in his interest to defend the Armenians against the mollahs, and therefore deprived them of many of their privileges. Despite the humiliation they were made to feel, the New Julfaïtes remained good neighbors with the Isphahanies. Flandin recalls "that the Armenians recorded one of the most beautiful pages in their history books with their own blood" when the inhabitants of New Julfa alone resisted the invading army of the Afghans. The town never recovered from this disaster.

Then came the times of the cruel Shah Nadir (reigned 1736-47) who plundered and tortured and bled his Armenian subjects dry.⁷³ It was difficult to remain loyal to such a ruler and his officials, and after a particularly heinous atrocity committed against some notables in January 1747, the people of New Julfa started to emigrate.⁷⁴ Sir William Oussley sums up the situation of the Armenians under the successors of Shah Abbas I: they, "adopting the ruinous system of excessive taxation, of imposts and confiscations regulated only by caprice or avarice, have reduced to misery the scanty remnant of that once flourishing and numerous colony; and its present members are daily exposed to the brutal insolence of their Muhammedan neighbours."⁷⁵ Thus, when the swarm of nineteenth-century travellers reached the outskirts of Isphahan, they found an indolent, even dead, town inhabited by superstitious knitting old women, young girls waiting to be married off to Armenian men from foreign parts, and priests. "But their day has gone by: instead of thousands there are now only a few hundred of them; with their numbers, their wealth had decreased, and they are now not only poor, but oppressed," August H. Mounsey deplored.⁷⁶

There was an air of misery about the town; it was a place that many travellers would have liked to avoid. However, they could not; as Christians they were not allowed to even overnight in Isphahan since their presence there would have defiled "la sainte Ispahan", one of the holy places of Islam, which would have aroused the ire of the Shiite population. Yet the French novelist Pierre Loti (1850-1923) had spent so much time and effort on the road "vers Ispahan" that he thought he deserved to be allowed to stay in "la belle ville bleue" -- but no; he, too, was condemned to be with the "infidels" in the dingy "mercantile faubourg". He had tried so hard to get his heart's desire; no matter. He was found out in that charming kiosk in the arbour of roses in the heart of Isphahan that he had managed to rent and was told in no uncertain terms by the representative of Persian law and order to get himself either "à Djoulfa ou au diable!"⁷⁷

Loti felt that he did not have much of a choice, and so he preferred the somewhat lesser evil. New Julfa, in his opinion, was not much different from the City of Dis, (Dante's infernal city in *Inferno*). He had come to a dead town. As he walked and walked, he saw nothing but vistas of ruins and the gray crumbling walls of windowless houses; he smelled the stench of the countless dead dogs that littered the streets; it was stifling hot despite the many rivulets that traversed the town and the great number of trees that grew wherever he looked. The town was a trap, a labyrinth, a nightmare. And where were the people?

Most of them had gone, had emigrated to the far corners of the world, had abandoned their houses and churches; had left their knitting female relatives behind. Parts of the newly gained riches of the emigrants in foreign parts flowed back to support their impoverished relatives. Of the menfolk, there remained basically the "less intelligent and enterprising" who through the remittances of their relatives enjoyed a life of "dolce far niente". The knitting women, the girls waiting to be married, the good female merchants who sold their daughters as prostitutes to the travellers, the widows, a few nuns who were very ugly and very fond of strong spirits: this "large army" of lazy pensioners, and a somewhat smaller "army" of priests -- all these made up the population of what had once been a fair and prosperous city.⁷⁸

James Morier (1780?-1849) admired "these remains of magnificence still apparent in some of the walls of the former houses."⁷⁹ Robert Curzon (1859-1929), on the other hand, did not see any such grand remains: for him "the younger Julfa is a place wholly destitute of superficial attractions, consisting ... of a labyrinth of narrow alleys closed by doors and plentifully perforated with open sewers. Life there is 'cabined, cribbed, confined' to an intolerable degree, and it is a relief to escape from its squalid precincts to the fair Persian town across the river."⁸⁰ On the contrary, wrote E. Crawshaw Williams, "the streets are infinitely better kept, the smells are fewer, and the shops a deal more civilized than is usually the case in Persian quarters."⁸¹ The traveller had no difficulties to confirm his or her prejudices whatever they might be.

In New Julfa, Mrs. Bishop found a refuge from a stone-throwing mob of fanatical boys from Isphahan and their fiendish laughter. The "quaint narrow streets, 'the open vestibules of the churches', the pictures of the 'thorn-crowned

Christ and the sweet-faced Madonnas," the priests, the women -- they all offered the lady from abroad "a haven from the howling bigots of Isphahan." The rivulets were clean, the air breezy and fresh. She had to admit that the town was made of a "labyrinth of alleys" in which she always got lost, but she did not mind since she could admire the "exquisite" wild flowers that grew between the cobble stones. The local Armenians were friendly, the European colony provided her with many of the amenities of civilised life. She felt quite at home in this town where missionaries of the Church of England had established schools -- there was even one for girls -- a library, a hospital, and an orphanage.

Mrs. Bishop was fascinated by the picturesqueness of the women of New Julfa, in their "bright red dresses and pure white robes ... visions of bright eyes and rosy cheeks." How could they keep their robes always immaculate? The buildings of New Julfa, too, found favor in her eyes: "Many of the houses of the rich Armenians ... are extremely beautiful inside, and even those occupied by the poorer classes ... are very pretty and appropriate. But no evidence of wealth is permitted to be seen from the outside. It is only a few years since the Armenians were subject to many disabilities, and they have even now need to walk warily lest they give offence."⁸²

The New Julfa that Mrs. Bishop saw was attractive; nevertheless, gone were the good old days of the "benevolent" shah, and the Armenian population enjoyed very few rights and no privileges. It was then not surprising that the once flourishing population had shrunk from thousands of families to a mere fifteen hundred individuals. Though Mrs. Bishop saw the town in "*couleur de rose*" and its inhabitants as respectable citizens, most other travellers did not. The Armenian merchant who had once been regarded as gentleman had become "poor, doubted, and contemned ... the character of the man has sunk with his fortunes, and estimation in the public mind." The merchants of New Julfa in most of the nineteenth century were known throughout the world as "cheats in the business of life; these once respectable people had now sunk to the lowest depths, in the loathsome vices of drunkenness and gluttony; even their women partaking these habits to the most disgusting excesses."⁸³

If we are to believe the travellers, New Julfa of Victorian times was a cursed and crumbling sepulchre of a town, haunted by the spirits of legions of greedy Armenians -- such as the ghost of the recently demised "greasy" Armenian merchant Kojah Zeitun, as we are told in C. J. Willis's exemplum of Armenian "iniquity" and cunning "The Dead Man's Secret". Atkins, the guileless bringer of the telegraph and Victorian progress to Isphahan, like so many other Europeans, had to live in New Julfa and thus had an Armenian landlord, one Kojah Zeitun, a man completely impoverished and debased. To cheat the innocent Atkins out of a bottle of brandy, the Armenian, an accomplished liar, told a fantastic tale of how his grandfather once hid a treasure in the then opulent New Julfa house and how he, the last of his illustrious family, has inherited this same house and its tradition. In fairy tales, the heir to such a secret always has to be innocent; this Armenian does not qualify. He trades in his birthright for a

bottle of cheap spirits, gets drunk, falls off the roof of his house, and breaks his neck.

It would offend the moral sense of such a tale were a mere Armenian landlord to take advantage of a European; thus Kojah Zeitun has not really cheated the "duped" Englishman, and the true *locus genus* of New Julfa, the Armenian "gentleman" ancestor of Shah Abbas's times, appears to Atkins in his dream and directs the European to his reward, the hidden treasure. This figure at first looks like the merchant-landlord, "but the face was strangely altered: instead of the cunning of the Armenian Kojah Zeitun, a grand benevolence shone from the clear eyes, which streamed with tears; the figure pointed over Atkins's head with a commanding gesture." The ancient Armenian does not cheat the foreigner who is the true heir -- Atkins does find the treasure and absconds with the inheritance of the late Kojah to England where "he was apparently very flush of money."⁸⁴ The story of Atkins as heir to the disinherited Kojah Zeitun -- it could be taken as an allegory of Armenian history.

KARL MAY

When the Victorian traveller, along with his European and American companion came to New Julfa, the trading "Sons of Haik" had already left the town -- otherwise the traveller thought that they were ubiquitous and ever-watchful on the face of this earth, never sleeping, as Goethe would have it. No wonder then that this Armenian merchant figure has also found his way into the European books written to acquaint children with foreign lands and peoples. For instance, in Mary Drewery's *Hamid and His White Donkey*, (trans., Constance, 1972), we hear about an Armenian shopkeeper in Jerusalem, who, when he does not steal cameras from teenage tourists, sits in the doorway of his shop and casts evil and malicious glances at passers-by. The Armenian merchant as bogey man to scare European children -- what an illustrious career for this once so proud figure! But this is the fate he has experienced especially in German-speaking countries.

There this tradition started one day in the 1870s when Kara Ben Nemsî, a poor German travel author, sets out to experience the mysterious East. He does not undertake this journey haphazardly: during his visits to the Americas he has gathered much valuable practical experience on how to deal with natives anywhere, and in the privacy of his study he has mastered the geography and various languages of Europe, Africa, and Asia. He does travel light, but among his luggage is a great store of moral conviction that he, a latter-day imperial German Galahad, that innocent culture hero of King Arthur's Round Table, has a mission in life, is called to go forth into the wilderness of the non-German and non-Catholic world to seek out Goodness and through his own example root out Evil. Thereafter he will enlighten his readers at home. And report he does. It takes Karl May (1842-1912), the creator of Kara Ben Nemsî, six novels of more than five hundred pages each⁸⁵ to chronicle the adventures of Kara's first extended trip to the Muslim world. The innocent contemporary German reader who devoured these volumes probably had not been prepared by the press and

public opinion of his day to find as much goodness among Bedouins and Kurds and Turks as Kara did; but more than likely his own as well as public suspicions were confirmed by this popular authority on history and ethnography that Evil was rampant among the Christian Levantines: among Greeks, Albanians, Romanians, Bulgarians -- but especially among Armenians.

What had these peoples, especially the Armenians, ever done to Karl May to justify so much ill will and hatred? But first of all: Who was this Karl May? Why should we bother with him so many years after his death?

Karl May was born on February 25, 1842, as the fifth of fourteen children to Heinrich August and Christiane Wilhelmine May, respectable citizens of Ernstthal in Saxony; very respectable but as poor as church mice. His background could not prepare this imaginative young man for life; this he very painfully found out when in 1856 he entered a teacher-training institute. The most outstanding incident in his career there was his dismissal because he had stolen a few left-over candles. He was re-admitted and did become an elementary teacher only to exchange his first position as teacher with a cell in prison. His room mate had accused him of having stolen a watch. There is a pattern in May's life: involvement with unsavoury people, lies, deceit, theft, fraud, then jail. It was not exactly a confidence-inspiring life.

German youth, though, was to profit from the young May's misfortunes. He spent a good part of his formative years in a succession of jails where he educated himself. He was a studious young man who read voraciously in the prison libraries, and it was in jail that he was encouraged by one of the chaplains to write. Thus, in the confinement of a series of Saxon penal institutions May's imagination travelled on the wings of Pegasus to the remotest corners of the earth; and throughout life Pegasus remained his faithful horse. May's two long journeys fall into the latter part of his life and did not inspire the Kara Ben Nems stories.

When the young man finally left jail, he had several manuscripts in his pocket and the general plan for what turned out to be more than fifty volumes of travel stories in his head. It was not difficult to find a publisher, but since his reputation followed him like a malign shadow, he had to be satisfied for a long time with publishing houses that specialised in scandal and colportage literature. He had a bad and a good marriage, a few good and many bad friends. Fame did eventually come, especially through his work for several established Catholic publishing houses. When Death came on March 30, 1912, he robbed German youth of their favorite writer. Yet May had left a legacy of more than seventy volumes of adventure stories behind. And he had become the alternative German educational establishment par excellence. He still is the great teacher of geography and ethnography as far as German popular culture is concerned. "Karl May? Absolutely super. One can learn something from him. Geography and such things. Ethnography and languages as well. And he knew everything about Islam." Very few old and young Germans of today would disagree with this typical evaluation of the author of their favorite stories.⁸⁶

CHAPTER FOUR



AT FLOURISH AND BLOTT'S

"Gilderoy Lockhart Promoting
the Sale of His Autobiography"
by Mary Grandpre, taken from the
American edition of J. K. Rowling's
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, p. 42.

As May's Kara Ben Nemsî rode from adventure to adventure, he also rode into the hearts and souls of generations of German-speaking readers and made his creator one of the most successful authors of best sellers of all times. It is estimated that since their first publication, at least 175 million German-speaking readers have fallen under the spell of May's travel stories. Statistics compiled in 1976 show that 50 million copies of novels by Karl May have been sold. His novels have always been a good read. During the two wars when the bombs were falling and the enemy was *ante portas*, many Germans at home and in the trenches found consolation in reading Karl May. Now Austrian and German boy scouts have adopted him as one of their moral guides; one can write a doctoral dissertation at a respectable university on the works of Karl May; the recruits of the German army love to while their free moments away with a volume of Karl May; and in France star students have often been rewarded with translations of the adventures of Kara Ben Nemsî.⁸⁷

These enthusiastic readers are in good company. Many a budding orientalist has been awakened to his calling and academic fame by Kara Ben Nemsî; and German intellectuals and thinkers and writers like Ernst Bloch (1880-1859), Carl Zuckmayer (1896-1977), Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), Heinrich Mann (1871-1950), Albert Einstein (1879-1955), Hermann Hesse (1877-1962), Bertha von Suttner, Karl Liebknecht, Theodor Heuss (1884-1963) -- one could go on and on -- all remembered their excursions in the company of Kara with fond memories.

So also did Adolf Hitler. Tradition has it that on March 20, 1912, then days before May's death, the future Leader of Germany listened spellbound, like the rest of his audience, to May's mystical revelations entitled "Empor ins Reich der Edelmenschen" -- (Up into the Realm of the Exalted) -- May's last public reading from his works, and thought the revelations to be heady stuff, tradition has it.

Not all of his readers have been hoodwinked by the fabulist from Saxony. For a while, it was quite fashionable to label May as a liar since he pretended he was telling his own adventures, adventures that never happened to him. Several moral and religious teachers found fault with his simplistic and sentimentalised versions of Christianity; more recently several Muslim voices have been raised against his falsification of the tenets of Islam. Parents and teachers at times have not been quite comfortable with both form and content of the adventure stories. What, after all, can be learnt from reading his novels? Certainly nothing about the appreciation of literary creation. The geographical and linguistic details are not always correct; and May's protestations about his various roles as educator, pacifist, and anti-colonialist should be taken with a huge grain of salt. Psychologists have pointed out that a child's fascination with May's characters is at best a very dubious blessing. They are all "flat characters" and consequently are distortions, even falsifications, not the models that a child needs. Even several of Hitler's henchmen had great misgivings about the educational value of their leader's favorite author and would not have minded in the least to make a bonfire of all of his novels. And by getting rid once and for all with all the ugly Armenian merchants and their villainous money grabbing and tax collecting

progeny with whom the world of Kara Ben Nemsi teems, they would have done common human decency a great favor.

Kara Ben Nemsi himself has, of course, known from previous personal experience that all the Christian virtues had fled long ago from Orthodox Armenian to Muslim bosoms. This he assures us when he renders his version of the traditional proverb: "A Jew outwits ten Christians; a Yankee cheats fifty Jews, but an Armenian is a match for a hundred Yankees. This is a common saying; my experience has shown me that though it is an exaggeration, it is based very much on truth." No one visiting the Orient with open eyes would have to agree with him, and he continues:

You can be certain that wherever malice and treachery are hatched, a hawk-nosed Armenian is involved. Should even the unscrupulous Greek refuse to carry out a villainy, without doubt there will be an Armenian who is ready to earn the wages of sin. Generally speaking, the Levantines do not enjoy a good reputation, but the Armenian is the worst of them all."⁸⁸

It is difficult to find any more blatant stereotyping and character assassination even in Hitler's very own propaganda campaign against the Jews.

Kara naturally is not the least bit surprised to find at the very outset of his latest journey in the waste land of the Atlas Mountains new proof of the iniquity of the Armenians. Kara has not yet fixed a definite goal for his quest, but like any hero of romance he has found a faithful horse and a trustworthy companion. The damsels in distress and the corpses whose wounds are demanding justice will turn up in time. Sure enough; behind one of the first sand dunes, our chivalrous travellers stumble over a corpse, that of a young French merchant. The criminal has left very foolishly clues flying about; not far from the dead man Kara discovers three newspaper accounts, all reporting about the murder of yet another rich French merchant. The local authorities suspect an Armenian merchant to be the murderer and have issued a warrant for his arrest.

Soon they meet two people who must be the Armenian murderer and his companion, at least according to the Swiss educator, Lavater's teaching on phrenology. And Kara indulges in another orgy of stereotyping: "Neither of the two visages inspired in any way confidence. The older chap was tall and gaunt. He wore his cloak as if he were a scarecrow. Two narrow and piercing eyes were peering threateningly from beneath a dirty blue turban; his bloodless thin lips were crowned by a measly beard; his pointed chin showed a definite tendency to climb up." Most striking, however, is his nose that especially reminded Kara "of the vultures which I chased a short while ago from the body of the slain man. This was not a noble nose reminding me of an eagle or a hawk; it definitely had the shape of the beak of a vulture. I had observed that such faces are very often found among men of Armenian background -- and wasn't it an Armenian merchant who had murdered the Blidah merchant and the warrant for whose arrest I was carrying in my pocket?"⁸⁹ How easy it is for Kara, how easy it becomes for the reader, to hunt down corrupt Armenians even though he may yet, or ever -- as it is probably true about the reader -- know anything about

Armenians. No matter. Kara has established in short order the unquestionable fact that "Armenian", especially the Armenian merchant, is a synonym for the lowest human being imaginable. He hammers this fact home by repeating the word "Armenian" again and again so that after this first encounter with these two men they have become representative of all the Armenians that have ever lived -- and their descendants as well.

On the spot, Kara Ben Nemsî unmasks the older man as Armenian; his nose and chin have given him away. Suddenly his quest has a purpose: more than three thousand pages after this initial encounter, Kara will leave a regenerated Orient behind since he will have cleansed it of all the undesirable Armenians. The chase of this evil merchant provides the plot for this mountain of "good" reading material!

Kara will find the rejects of decent society wherever he will go, and thus his adventures in Ottoman regions are not devoid of villains since Karl May throws in a few corrupt Turks and Bedouins and Kurds for good measure; but among Armenians the crooks are not the unfortunate exception: crookedness, rapacity, dirtiness, and evil are their sole characteristics in the whole *oeuvre* of Karl May, and Kara's feeble single protestation is simply not convincing: "I myself have met many a worthy, honest, and dependable Armenian," for Kara continues right away "but if you know the situation, you will also know that among the ten persons who will do anything for money, there are among them at least six or seven Armenians. Much more sad is the fact that the Armenians are Christians," Orthodox Christians, to be sure.⁹⁰ Orthodox or Catholic, May never introduces us to an Armenian who does not belong to the damned.

They have all been ugly customers, those Armenians Kara has met, but Dawud Sulejman, alias Musa Wartan, alias Assad Benabi of Mecca to whom Kara introduces us in the short story "Der Haendler von Serescht" ("The Trader from Serescht")⁹¹ is perhaps even more corrupt. Once again Kara and his companion, the Hadji are riding through the Mesopotamian countryside as they hear about a Ky-Kapan, a kidnapper of young girls. Very soon they meet an Armenian. From the very beginning Kara dislikes him for his appearance, the unkempt beard, the bloodless lips and the "strongly hooked hawk's nose". Only "half of his small and crafty eyes could be seen. The over-developed chewing mechanisms, and the very pointed chin indicated egoism, ruthlessness, and predominant animal characteristics. The upper part of his face betrayed consciously hidden cunning. If this person was not an Armenian, there were no other Armenians!" This Dawud likes to please the two hadjis and thus introduces himself as Armenian who prefers Islam to Christianity. As soon as he realises that he has hit a sore spot in Kara, he compounds his mistake by pretending to be entrusted with the holy oil consecrated by the Catholicos of Echmiadzin. This lie is simply too much for Kara who is an expert in Armenian religious affairs, who knows the current catholicos and has been himself to Echmiadzin four times. Kara is convinced that this person must be the kidnapper.

The next time they meet again, Kara and the hadji have been kidnapped by unfriendly Kurds. Our two heroes hear from their place of captivity how this

Armenian merchant, now in the guise of a hadji, is selling the holy blood of the Prophet. The Kurds finally get to trust Kara, and our German friends unmask the Assad Benabi of Mecca as Ky-Kapan. The merchant denies his Armenian background, and Kara is consumed by righteous anger when the most savage beating does not make the Armenian confess. The merchant is assisted by thirty Kurdish and twelve Armenian helpers, all of whom Kara captured while they slept. Kara generously forgives the Kurds for having followed such a master, but first they must witness the torture and slow death meted out to their Armenian comrades, the true culprits. We are informed that they were merely "Armenian riff-raff from Dschulfa, a suburb of Isphahan, once the most flourishing Armenian community in Persia." Kara cannot forgive them. But out of the generosity of his tender heart, Kara would like them to do penance before he has them shot; instead they die cursing him and their faith. So does their leader as he is awaiting his death. On Kara's recommendation, he was tied to one of the small floating marshy islands that are found in the estuary of the River Euphrates and is slowly sinking into the waters of the river. The miserable wretch did not deserve any better -- Kara is convinced of that.

Karl May has prepared us well for his most violent xenophobic outrage which was published at the height of the Armenian massacres under Sultan Abdul Hamid II's rule. The outrage does not really come from his pen, but he found it in a newspaper article, written by a gentleman of the cloth who was in Constantinople during the German emperor's visit there during the latter part of 1898.

We were in the club of the craftsmen when we discussed the Armenians. Seated across from me was a German master potter who has been living for the last nineteen years in Constantinople and who knows life in Anatolia as well. The following is a paraphrase of his words: 'I am a Christian and think that charity is the highest commandment, but I tell you, the Turks did the right thing when they killed the Armenians. This is the only way in which the Turk can protect himself from the Armenian....The Armenian is the basest fellow in the whole wide world. He will sell his wife and his young daughter; he will steal from his own brother. The whole of Constantinople is polluted by the Armenians....Nothing happened to the Catholic Armenians, only to the Orthodox, because these are incorrigible. That the Armenians of Asia Minor are of superior quality, as far as their character is concerned, is a British lie....There, too, it is the Armenians who practice usury. It is of no use that German Christians educate Armenian children. When they grow up, they will become just as base as the rest of them....The Turk acted in self-defence!'⁹²

It must have gladdened the heart of Hiltler to receive such moral insight from his favorite teacher!

Unfortunately German youth is still presented with the same call to bigotry and hatred on their birthdays, even on their Confirmation. The eye of the German Law watches vigilantly that no anti-Semitic element creeps into the literature for

children--about the now more than a century-old scandal concerning the German genocide through the book--who cares? This is not a punishable crime.

Most of Karl May's contemporaries enjoyed visiting vicariously through his novels the places that they saw mentioned in the newspapers. Many of them also found confirmation in Kara Ben Nemsi's behavior that they, the other Sons of Germany, too, were sent to bring progress and order into this world, were the champions of the underdog. Such a conviction can be intoxicating. Perhaps even more important, Karl May possessed the talent to captivate a child's imagination. I will never forget how as child, with goose bumps and bated breath, I participated in Kara's hunt of all those Armenian merchants, and how I was puzzled by the identity of the "Armenian riff-raff from Dschulfa." It sounded so exciting and exotic. Heady stuff it was!

These Armenian merchants were the first Armenians I ever met; for the average German child, more than likely, they will be the only Armenians he will encounter. As Kara Ben Nemsi has left his imprint on the child's memory, so have all those ugly Armenians. Precisely here lies the danger. Studies that deal with the German fascination with the works of Karl May have shown that for many children and later as grown-ups, these Mayan characters are not vague and shadowy figures but are real and in many cases assume the role of teachers. Carl Zuckmayer, the German novelist, has perhaps expressed this fascination a bit flamboyantly, nevertheless, he shows great insight when he writes: "The characters that Karl May has created are truly our companions who will guide us through our life; it is as if we have always lived with them. They are not shadowy creations that inhabit merely our imagination; their existence is very real for us and therefore we shall never forget them since they will always remain faithful to us."⁹³

The child has also learnt a lesson in ethnology. That it has been at the same time an insidious lesson in xenophobia, skillfully driven home through the fetching hero, the exciting adventure, and a simplified syllogism, very few of even the brightest children will have realised. The line of argument is easily reduced to a jingle: "Dawud and Hamed are crooks. Dawud and Hamed are Armenians. Therefore, all Armenians are crooks." Who cares that the reasoning is fallacious?

It is easy to find an excuse for May's xenophobic attitude; he had not created the unpleasant image of the Armenians. Others before him, as we have seen ourselves, had done so. May, an avid reader of newspapers and magazines, did not actually have to meet an Armenian merchant in the flesh to know all about him and his compatriots. The German press of his day had well-defined opinions about the arch enemy of the Ottoman sultan, the emperor's ally. The Armenians, therefore, were by extension and empathy also the enemy of the German emperor. The German empire in May's time had already discovered deep sympathy for the "Sick Man of Europe" and through military and economic help wanted to lure him into the German sphere of influence to "cure" him. Obviously the image of the "ugly Armenian" was a godsend to make their friend, the sultan, look more sympathetic.

The Armenian seen as personification of jealousy, superstition, greed, malice, malignity, coarseness is an old tradition and probably was amply represented in the reading May did in and out of jail. May's imagination fed on the books he read; he then spun out character, incident, and place that he had encountered on the printed page; and he succumbed, like many of his contemporaries, to the spell of the Orient. In his case, it was the second-hand East of the books and illustrations. There he found the prototype of his Armenian.

It has been argued by several critics devoted to Karl May that the novelist, a dedicated pacifist and champion of the oppressed, had perhaps in his youth misguided notions about human dignity, and the Armenian activities in the Ottoman empire and that the conventions of contemporary popular literature and much of the reporting in the travel books of his time provided him with the ready-made clichés that he needed for his early adventure stories. May did not create the negative image of the Armenians; others before him, as we have seen, had done so. The work of the mature sage and mystic May is a different case altogether -- sadly this is not true. The Armenians who wander into May's utopic visions of brotherly love among the nations and peace on earth -- *Im Reiche des silbernen Loewen* (*In the Empire of the Silver Lion*) and *Winnetous Erben* (*The Inheritors of Winnetou*), novels that have been accepted by the canon of serious German literature and have won a place in the prestigious *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon* (*Kindler's Literary Encyclopedia*) -- brutally jar this paradise. They are as evil as their early brothers.

Rainer Jeglin reminds us of the fact that May, though he was a Lutheran himself, wrote all the early volumes containing the anti-Armenian passages and sentiments for popular Catholic publishing houses that disseminated strong nationalistic and colonial propaganda along with a deep longing, even missionary fervour, to widen the sphere of influence of Rome at the expense of the Orthodox church -- and the Armenians are basically Orthodox Christians.⁹⁴ As we know, the relationship between Rome and the Eastern churches has usually been strained; therefore, the *oeuvre* of Karl May, on one level, can be regarded as reflecting the conflict between West and East Rome. We recall that according to May's gentleman of the clergy, even the murdering Turks respected these distinctions between Christians and played according to the rules of Rome, as the man of the cloth and Karl May seem to have interpreted them.

The Armenians had the reputation of being wealthy, and in May's limited experience of the world, wealth could only be acquired through questionable means. All the Armenians May introduces to us are richer than most of the ordinary mortals around them; "from this perspective, the Armenians are symbolic figures of exploitation and oppression," and Jeglin is tempted to find positive aspects in May's xenophobia. "Strange as it may sound, despite all its unpleasant aspects, there is a comforting side to May's anti-Armenian sentiments." This is his "praiseworthy involvement against exploitation and oppression. I am not going too far in asserting that in this matter May is concerned with something like anti-capitalism." The study of tax laws in

Ottoman Turkey and their enforcement among the non-Muslim minorities might have cured both the novelist and the critic from their blatant ignorance and naiveté about the goodness of the Ottoman soul and the idea of progress respectively.

Jeglin's line of argumentation provides a very poor excuse indeed; it is very hard to find "a comforting side" to May's blind hatred for the Armenians, especially when we remember that most dedicated of May's disciples, Adolf Hitler, who, along with countless other German-speaking youths, had learnt so much about ethnography in May's novels. There he also found the idea expressed that justifies that certain minorities simply had no right to live on this earth. One can readily agree with the historian Klaus Mann, the son of the writer Thomas Mann (1875-1955), that "it is not at all an exaggeration to maintain that Karl May's childish and criminal figments of imagination, though on byways, have set the course of world history in motion."⁹⁵

They have as well spawned other popular literature embodying the ethos of their creator. These updated Mays, too, make exciting reading for undiscerning youth. For instance, there is the Asolik family from whom the spiritual and physical heirs of Karl May's Kara Ben Nemsi and Hadji Omar buy their guns in the Cairo of the 1930s. They have been very successful Armenian merchants in the armament line. This Armenian-father-son-grandson trio and their store in Edmund Theil's *Im Schatten der Pyramiden*⁹⁶ (*In the Shadow of the Pyramids*), an adventure story written for boys, have definitely stepped out of the pages of the May novels, an author whom Theil admires and imitates. They display the same big ears and noses as May's Armenians, the same cunning and nastiness; they, too, embody evil. They are greed personified in their demand of money for their "merchandise"; eventually the mountain of precious rugs is carefully removed from the floor -- as good traditional Armenian merchants they naturally deal with carpets -- and a secret door is revealed behind which the Asoliks store a huge collection of weapons and ammunition "which would be enough to equip a whole military division."

Because the young German rants against cowardice and the sin of defiling one's Christian identity to the ancient Armenian who is one hundred and twenty eight years old, this survivor of many massacres, Tamus Asolik, tells the story of his life: how, as a youth, he fled from Erzerum, became the servant of Dr. Moritz Wagner, one of the most prominent German travellers of the nineteenth century, then set up as merchant in Constantinople where eventually his whole family was cruelly murdered except for one son and one grandson. The old man pronounces the Western politicians and the American missionaries, especially the latter group, as guilty since they first corrupted and then abandoned the Armenians. Tamus prospered in his trade--why should he now, a man who has suffered so much and therefore should have become wise and forgiving and generous, a man who has literally both feet in the grave, why should he deal with the implements of death? Money he does not need, but he needs to satisfy his lust for destruction and vengeance: "Because I hope and desire that through these

weapons as many people as possible will kill each other" -- this desire gives meaning to his life.

It is amazing with what "moral insights" and "ethnic truths" German young people supplement their education!

There seems to be no respite for this slandered and maligned figure of the Armenian merchant. The most recent representative, though at first glance gives the impression that he has undergone a sea change before he metamorphosed himself into the golden-haired best-selling author of a series of text books for courses which, he as Professor and holder of the Chair of the Defense Against the Dark Arts at the Hogwart School of Witchcraft,⁹⁷ will use as teaching material. Pray tell, what or who on earth is "an ugly old Armenian warlock?" -- with emphasis on the ethnic identity in a series of books that otherwise does not indulge in stereotyping -- the inquisitive adult or young reader might ask. No need for the hero to bother his brain about such trivialities -- he has known all along about the despicable and totally fake and cheap characteristics of this mountebank salesman of "himself". The reader will have no problem in establishing the identity of this "Armenian" -- the only foreigner who makes his appearance in this most typical of recent British public school adventures -- though we are dealing with witches and warlocks, of the British variety, of course. Armenian? No problem: the reader has long ago figured out who and what the chap is.

We, who have examined the "archetype" of the "ugly" Armenian merchant have no problem either. While reading *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, I could not get rid of the feeling that Lockhart seemed so familiar -- and he did not remind me of any teacher I ever had. And that feeling was enhanced by the illustrations of the American edition of the book by Mary Grandpré. Then the puzzle was suddenly solved for me when at one of the most intense moments of the story he drops his masks and confesses to being a cheat and a charlatan because nobody "wants to read about some ugly old Armenian warlock."⁹⁸ He could have said "Armenian merchant" as well. We hear the word "Armenian" just once, but it comes at such a crucial moment that it will echo through the halls and corridors of Hogwart School, and, I am sure, through the memories of many of the young and older readers of the best seller as well.

J. K. Rowling has provided thousands of young and adult readers with many hours of pleasurable reading experience -- but, wittingly or unwittingly, she has also indulged in a very insidious exercise in ethnic stereotyping of the worst kind.

ENDNOTES

¹ *West-Eastern Divan, Goethes werke*, Hamburg ed., 1819, vol.2, p.124.

² For a history of Armenian trade, see K. S. Papazian. *Merchants from Ararat: A Brief Survey of Armenian Trade through the Ages*, rev. ed. (New York, 1979). Moritz Wagner, *Reise nach dem Ararat (Journey to Mt. Ararat)* (Stuttgart, 1848), p. 246. John Carswell, *New Julfa: The Armenian Churches and Other Buildings* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 5f.

- ³ Edmund Spencer, *Travels in the Western Caucasus* (London, 1939), vol. 2, p. 32, n.
- ⁴ Frederick David Greene, *Armenian Massacres* (Philadelphia, n. d.), p. 450.
- ⁵ Kurban Said, *Ali and Nino*, rpt. (Frankfurt, 1992). Yet for this exercise in anti-Armenian sentiment we cannot really blame an Azeri writer. As I revised the references of this paper, I came across bibliographical material that indicates that the name "Kurban Said" serves as pseudonym for two Viennese minor writers: the somewhat shady Jewish *litterateur* Lev Nussimbaum and Baroness Elfriede von Ehrenfels. The lady was married to a well known Austrian Orientalist. The book was a best seller since it dealt with the "taboo" theme of a love that tried to bridge cultural and religious boundaries. *Buchjournal (Book Review)*, 3 (2000), p. 66.
- ⁶ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, (New York, 1999).
- ⁷ C. J. Willis, *Persia as It Is*, 2d. ed. (London, 1887), p. 251.
- ⁸ George Henry Borrow, *Lavengro* (London, 1857).
- ⁹ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (London, 1925).
- ¹⁰ John Murray, *A Handbook for Travellers in Syria and Palestine* (London, 1858), p. xxxix.
- ¹¹ Lieut.-Col. Chesney, *The Expedition for the Survey of the Rivers Euphrates and Tigris* (London, 1850), vol. 1, p. 372. Jules Verne's character, Passpartout strolling through the bazaars of Bombay, too, can spot Armenians on account of the long cloaks they are wearing; see *Le tour du monde en quatre-vingt jours* (Paris, 1873).
- ¹² Capt. G. H. Hunt, *Outram & Havelock's Persian Campaign*, 2nd ed. (London, 1858), pp. 326f.
- ¹³ Richard Davey, *The Sultan and His Subjects* (London, 1907), p. 367.
- ¹⁴ Capt. Richard Wilbraham, *Travels in the Trans-Caucasian Provinces of Russia* (London, 1839), pp. 152f.
- ¹⁵ L. C. Beck, *Die heutige Tuerkei (Present Day Turkey)* (Leipzig, 1879), p. 102.
- ¹⁶ Henry Fanshawe Tozer, *Turkish Armenia and Eastern Asia Minor* (London, 1881), p. 228.
- ¹⁷ Noel and Harold Buxton, *Travel and Politics in Armenia* (London, 1914), p. 64.
- ¹⁸ James Bryce, *Transcaucasia and Ararat* (London, 1896), p. 179.
- ¹⁹ W. M. Ramsay, *Impressions of Turkey During Twelve Years' Wanderings* (London, 1897), pp. 190, 216f.
- ²⁰ Christian Strich (ed.), *Das grosse Maerchenbuch (Collected Fairy Tales)* (Zurich, 1987), pp. 257-277.
- ²¹ John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia, 1672-1681*, rpt. (London, 1909), vol. 1, p. 249.
- ²² William J. Hamilton, *Researches in Asia Minor, Pontus, and Armenia*, vol. 1 (London, 1842), p. 269.
- ²³ Ramsay, pp. 201f.
- ²⁴ William Hopkins, *Sketches of Turkey in 1831 and 1832* (New York, 1833), p. 305.
- ²⁵ Walter B. Harris, *From Batum to Bagdad* (London, 1896), pp. 68-70.
- ²⁶ August Freiherr von Haxthausen, *Transkaukasien (Transcaucasia)* (Leipzig, 1856), vol. 1, p. 86, n.
- ²⁷ Daniel Schlatter, *Bruchstuecke aus einigen Reisen nach dem suedlichen Russland (Fragments Collected on a Journey to Southern Russia)* (St. Gall, 1830), p. 26.
- ²⁸ John Macdonald Kinneir, *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire* (London, 1813), p. 26.
- ²⁹ John Carne, *Letters from the East* (London, 1826), p. 9.

- ³⁰ Elsa Sophia von Kamphoeven, *An Nachtfeuern der Karawanen-Serail: Maerchen und Geschichten altuerkischer Nomaden* (*The Campfires of the Serails: Fairy Tales and Stories of the Nomads of Turkey of Old Times*) rpt. vol. 1 (Hamburg, 1956), pp. 28-40.
- ³¹ A. G. von Suttner, *Daredjan: Mingrelisches Sittenbild* (*Mingrelian Picture of Social Life*) (Leipzig, 1886).
- ³² Von Suttner, "Herr Gregor" in *Kinder des Kaukasus* (*Children of the Caucasus*) (Dresden, n. d.), pp. 75-149.
- ³³ Walther Thornbury, *Turkish Life and Character*, vol. 1 (London, 1860), pp. 266-271.
- ³⁴ Eli Smith, *Researches of the Rev. Elie Smith and Rev. H. O. Dwight in Armenia* vol. 1, (Boston, 1833), pp. 213f.
- ³⁵ J. L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Greece, Turkey, Russia, and Poland* (Edinburgh, 1889), p. 4.
- ³⁶ Austen H. Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (London, 1853), pp. 391f.
- ³⁷ Mrs. Bishop (Isabella Bird), *Journey in Persia and Kurdistan*, vol. 1 (London, 1891), pp. 391f.
- ³⁸ Miss Pardoe, *The City of the Sultan*, vol. 2 (London, 1837), pp. 340, 385.
- ³⁹ Borrow, *passim*.
- ⁴⁰ Pardoe, vol. 2, pp. 381f.
- ⁴¹ Captain Fred Burnaby, *On Horseback Through Asia Minor*, vol. 2 (London, 1877) p. 309.
- ⁴² Peter von Woinovich, *Alle Schaetze der Welt* (*All the Treasures of this World*) (Stuttgart, 1950).
- ⁴³ Karl Humann, "Reise nach Angora und Boghaz-Koi" ("Journey to Angora and Boghaz Koy") in Humann, ed., *Reisen in Kleinasien und Nordsyrien* (*Journeys in Asia Minor and Northern Syria*) (Berlin, 1890), pp. 200f.
- ⁴⁴ E. Crawshaw Williams, *Across Persia* (London, 1907), pp. 7f.
- ⁴⁵ Thomas Howel, *A Journal of the Passage from India* (London, n. d.), pp. 63 -131.
- ⁴⁶ Friedrich Duerrenmatt, *Der Besuch der alten Dame* (Zurich, 1956). The Swiss novelist himself translated this play *The Visit of the Old Lady* and shortened the English title.
- ⁴⁷ Joan Aiken, *Last Movement* (London, 1987).
- ⁴⁸ Elia Kazan, *The Anatolian* (New York, 1982).
- ⁴⁹ William Dalrymple, *In Xanadu: A Quest* (London, 1989), pp. 48-51, 64f.
- ⁵⁰ Barbara Wood, *The Prophetess* (New York, 1997), pp. 343f.
- ⁵¹ I have discussed this tale in my study "Armin Theophil Wegner: Armenophile (1886-1978)," *Haigazian Armenological Review*, vol. 15 (1995), pp. 433-482.
- ⁵² Mario Simmel, *Es muss nicht immer Kaviar sein - (It Can't Always Be Caviar)* (Zurich, 1964).
- ⁵³ James Clavell, *Noble House* (New York, 1981).
- ⁵⁴ Edward Whittmore, *Jerusalem Poker* (New York, 1978).
- ⁵⁵ Borrow, *Lavengro*, p. 255.
- ⁵⁶ Hodgetts, p. 219.
- ⁵⁷ Heinrich von Poser, *Lebens- und Todes Geschichte* (*A Journey From Life to Death*) (Jena, 1675), p. 24.
- ⁵⁸ M. Eugène Flaudin, *Voyage en Perse* (Paris, 1851), vol. 2, pp. 2-20.
- ⁵⁹ Sir Robert Ker Porter, *Travels in Georgia*, vol. 1 (London, 1822), p. 421.
- ⁶⁰ Goethe's discussion of Shah Abbas, *Notes to West-Eastern Divan, Werke*, vol. 2, pp. 230-242.
- ⁶¹ Fryer, p. 259.

- ⁶² Eugène Boré, *Correspondance et mémoires d'en voyage en Orient*, vol. 2 (Paris, 1840), p. 89.
- ⁶³ Augustus H. Mounsey, *A Journey Through the Caucasus* (London, 1872), p. 187.
- ⁶⁴ Smith, vol. 1, p. 39.
- ⁶⁵ Goethe, p. 236.
- ⁶⁶ Lord Broughton, John C. Hobhouse, *Travels in Albania*, vol. 1, new ed. (London, 1855), p. 79; vol. 2, pp. 270f.
- ⁶⁷ Ker Porter, vol. 1, p. 424.
- ⁶⁸ Fryer, pp. 258f.
- ⁶⁹ Henry Ballantine, *Marches Through Persia* (Boston, 1879), p. 156.
- ⁷⁰ Boré, vol. 2, pp. 385f.
- ⁷¹ Carswell, pp. 5f.
- ⁷² Flandin, vol. 2, p. 11.
- ⁷³ Flandin, vol. 2, pp. 10-13.
- ⁷⁴ Boré, vol. 2, pp. 379f.
- ⁷⁵ Sir William Oussley, *Travels in Various Countries of the East*, vol. 3 (London, 1819), p. 47.
- ⁷⁶ Mousney, p. 187.
- ⁷⁷ Pierre Loti, *Vers Isphahan* (Paris, n. d.), p. 189.
- ⁷⁸ C. J. Willis, *Persia as It Is*, 2nd ed. (London, 1887), pp. 253ff.
- ⁷⁹ James Morier, *A Journey Through Persia-Armenia, and Asia Minor* (London, 1812), p. 146.
- ⁸⁰ Robert Curzon, *Armenia* (London, 1854), quoted and refuted by Mrs. Bishop, vol. 2, p. 246.
- ⁸¹ Williams, p. 282.
- ⁸² Mrs. Bishop, vol. 2, pp. 244-250.
- ⁸³ Porter, pp. 424f.
- ⁸⁴ Willis, pp. 257-289.
- ⁸⁵ Kara's first journey to the Muslim world is told in the following volumes: *Durch Wueste und Harem (Through Desert and Harem)* (1880); *Durchs wilde Kurdistan (Through Savage Kurdistan)* (1881); *Von Bagdad nach Stambul (From Bagdad to Istanbul)* (1882); *In den Schluchten des Balkan (In the Savage Valleys of the Balkans)* (1884); *Durch das Land der Skipetaren (Through the Lands of the Scipeters)* (1887); *Der Schut (The Saïd)* (1887). Other anti-Armenian passages appear in *Winnetous Erbe (The Inheritors of Winnetou)* (1910); *Im Reiche des silbernen Loewen (In the Empire of the Silver Lion)*, vols. 1-4 (1897-1903); "Der Haendler von Serdescht" (1897) and "Maria oder Fatima" (1894) in *Auf fremden Pfaden (On Unknown Roads)*; "Christus oder Mohammed" ("Christ or Mohammed") (1892) and "Der Verfluchte" ("The Cursed One") (I 893) in *Orangen und Datteln (Oranges and Dates)*; "Ein Raetsel" ("A Riddle") (1899) in *Der Loewe der Blutrache (The Lion of Blood Revenge)* and *Verschwoerung in Stambul (Conspiracy in Istanbul)* (1883). I have used the paperback edition of the collected works of Karl May published in 1983 by the Manfred Pawlak Verlagsgesellschaft, Herrsching, Germany.
- ⁸⁶ For a discussion of May's popularity see, for instance, Katlin Kovacevic, "Makedonien bei Karl May," *Lenau Forum*, 2 (1970), pp. 97-110; Wesselin Radkov, "Eine Stimme aus Butgarien," *Mitteilungen der Karl-May-Gesellschaft*, 13 (1972), pp. 27-31.
- ⁸⁷ Wolf Dieter Bach, "Mit Mohammed an May vorbei," *Jahrbuch der Karl-May-Gesellschaft*, 11 (1981), pp. 377f.
- ⁸⁸ Karl May, *Auf fremden Pfaden*, p. 199.

- ⁸⁹ May, *Durch Wueste und Harem*, pp. 16f
- ⁹⁰ May, *Auf fremden Pfaden*, p. 199.
- ⁹¹ May, *Auf fremden Pfaden*, pp. 100-150.
- ⁹² May, *Im Reiche des silbernen Loewen*, vol. 2, pp. 243. The "gentleman of the cloth" is the Protestant theologian Friedrich Naumann, and May is here quoting from the latter's book *Asia*, pp. 31f. The book was popular, and by 1904 it had gone already through four editions.
- ⁹³ Carl Zuckmayer, "Palaver mit den jungen Kriegen ueber den grossen Haeuptling Karl May," ("Pow-Wow with the Young Indian Warriors about their great Chief") *Karl-May-Jahrbuch* (1939), pp. 35-43.
- ⁹⁴ Rainer Jeglin, "Karl May und die Armenier," ("Karl May and the Armenians") *Mitteilungen der Karl-May-Gesellschaft* (*Notes from the Karl May Society*), 6 (1970), pp. 20-24; 7 (1971), pp. 22-24.
- ⁹⁵ Klaus Mann, "Cowboy-Mentor des Fuehrers," ("Cowboy Mentor of the Fuehrer") in Helmut Schmied (ed.) *Karl May: Suhrkamp Materialien* (*Karl May: Suhrkamp Literary Materials*), (Frankfurt, 1983), p. 34.
- ⁹⁶ Edmund Theil, *Im Schatten der Pyramiden* (Munich, 1986), pp. 123-160.
- ⁹⁷ Rowling, p. 297.

Հեղինակը իր յօդուածին նիւթ կը դարձնէ օտար՝ անգլիական, ֆրանսական եւ գերմանական անցեալի թէ ժամանակակից գրական եւ ճանապարհորդական հատորներու մէջ ներկայացուած հայու ընդհանրական կերպարը:

Ան կը խմբաւորէ հայու կերպարներու միջանի տարբերակ. վաճառականը, նոր ջուղայեցին, հայ կինը՝ բոլորն ալ ներկայացուած ընդհանրապէս ժխտական գիծերով:

Օտար հեղինակներու շարքին ան կ'առանձնացնէ մանաւանդ գերմանացի Քարլ Մայը, որուն բազմաթիւ հատորներուն մէջ միշտ ալ հայը ներկայացուած է իբրեւ ժխտական կերպար: Յատկանշական է այն որ Մայի հատորները իբրեւ ընթերցող նկատի ունին պատանիներն ու տակաւին մտային կազմաւորման տարիքի մէջ գտնուող գերմանացի պատանի սերունդները: Հեղինակը հարց կու տայ այն մնայուն տպաւորութեան որ այդ սերունդները կը գոյացնեն երբ աշխարհի հեռու անկիւններու եւ տարբեր ժողովուրդներու մասին կարծիք կը գոյացնեն հայու կերպարը ժխտապէս ներկայացնող Մայի հատորներէն: Ան իրաւամբ կը մատնանշէ թէ նոյնինքն Հիթլէր զօրաւոր ազդեցութիւնը կրած է Մայի հատորներուն:

Ինկրիտ Սրման ընդհանուր գիծերու մէջ կը ներկայացնէ Մայի կեանքի ու կազմաւորման զանազան հանգամանքները՝ բանտին մէջ թէ ալլուր: Ան կը մէջբերէ նաեւ այն բազմաթիւ մեկնաբանութիւններն ու դրդապատճառները որոնք առիթ հանդիսացած կրնան ըլլալ Մայի այս վերաբերումին:

Սրման, մեկնելով հեղինակներու՝ հայ կերպարներուն տուած ընդհանրացման ուժէն, մտահոգութիւն կը յայտնէ թէ եղածը հայու դիմանկարի խաթարումն է, համազօր՝ սպաննութեան:

Հեղինակը կը նշէ թէ հակասեմականութեան համար օրէնքներ որդեգրուած են զանազան երկիրներու մէջ, կարծէք յուշելով թէ Թերեւս այդ օրէնքները պէտք է հասցէագրուած ըլլան ընդհանրապէս բոլոր հակացեղային ուղղութիւններու:

Ան մտահոգութիւն կը յայտնէ թէ հայու դիմանկարի այս խաթարումը կը շարունակուի նոյնիսկ մեր օրերուն, ի տես պատանիներու հասցէագրուած *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* հատորաշարքին, ուր հակառակ անոր որ ընդամէնը մէկ անգամ, այդուհանդերձ հատորին պատմութեան թաւալքի շատ ուշագրաւ մէկ պահուն կը յիշատակուի հայ ազգութիւնը հատորին ժխտական գլխաւոր կերպար Լոքհարթին: