

Institute of Ethiopian Studies

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Source: *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 21 (November 1988), pp. 155-183

Published by: [Institute of Ethiopian Studies](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41965966>

Accessed: 15-12-2015 08:40 UTC

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Dreams in Amharic Prose Fiction¹

Taye Assefa

I. Introduction

Dreams are regarded as important indicators of good or bad fortunes to come by a very large section of the Ethiopian society. Since such prophetic dreams are believed to be divinely inspired, they are often taken seriously by all concerned and acted upon in waking life. This situation can easily be illustrated by an anecdote in Mängestu Lämman's biographical work.²

A housemaid of the chief-priest of the church of St. Michael in Ankobärr tells her friends that she saw in her dream the sun coming out of her womb. News of this reaches the chief-priest who recommends that she join the palace staff. As the Aläqa's pronouncements are seriously taken by the parish, news of the dream and his comment come to the attention of the wife of Sählä Sellassé who happily takes the maid into her household. Being very desirous that the prophesied "sun" in the dream should be born to her favourite son Säyfu, the mother advises him to sleep with the maid and sends her to his place. As Säyfu happens to have an appointment with his lover on that night, he passes over the maid to his brother Haylä Mäläkot, who sleeps with her on that and the following nights. Many months later the maid gives birth to Menelik, the future emperor of Ethiopia who is symbolized by the sun in the dream.³

There are many such accounts of prophetic dreams seen by Aläqa Lämman himself and other people cited in this biography: Abba Täsfä's dream about the birth of Wäldä Täklé (pp. 62-63), Märiyéta Yänénäh's dream about the coming of the four new students to his school (pp. 73-75), Aläqa Lämman's dream about his falling ill and recovering (p. 113), about his getting married and begetting children (p. 165), and about his deceased wife's soul entering paradise (p. 197).

Since so much importance is attached to the meaning of dreams and, very often, as dreams occur in symbolic form, their interpretation requires being well-versed with the cultural

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codes of the society and some degree of experience. Hence when a person is troubled by a particular vision, it is elderly people, especially clergymen, that he is likely to consult for an interpretation. In the above-cited example of the maid's dream, for instance, the authenticity of the elderly Aläqa's interpretation was taken for granted by Sahlä Sellassé's wife when she advised her son to sleep with the new maid. And when she learnt that the maid had been made pregnant by Haylä Mäläkot rather than her favourite son, she is reported to have put the pregnant maid in iron shackles.

Such an attitude towards dreams is quite at odds with the modern psychoanalytic conception of dreams. In his seminal work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud asserts that the dream is a product of the dreaming psyche and that it represents a wish as fulfilled. In some dreams such as those of little children, the wish-fulfillment is manifested without disguise as their psychic activities are not as complicated as those of adults. But adult dreams, especially those representing painful emotions or disagreeable desires tend to occur in an unrecognizable form in order to evade censorship. The more intense the force of the repression of the desire the more obscure the encodings become. The symbolisms in the dream are thus a result of the distortion by the censorship. Freud thus differentiates between the latent dream-content (the forbidden dream-thoughts) and the manifest dream-content (the censored and hence disguised series of images remembered by the dreamer).⁴

Contrary to Freud's view of the manifest dream-content as a disguised version of certain latent thoughts which truly represent the dreamer's subjective state, Carl Jung regards the manifest dream-contents as natural facts which give the truest picture of the dreamer's subjective state. He also takes the view that dreams are produced by a compensatory process in which the unconscious seeks to correct unbalanced or inadequate conscious experience. Thus he says:

The psyche is a self-regulating system that maintains itself in equilibrium as the body does. Every process that goes too far immediately and inevitably calls for a compensatory activity. Without such adjustments a normal metabolism would not exist, nor would the normal psyche.⁵

Whereas Freud attributes the function of disguise to the symbols in the manifest dream-content, Calvin Hall regards them as fulfilling an aesthetic and vivifying function. Thus he says:

There are symbols in dreams for the same reason that there are figures of speech in poetry and slang in everyday life. Man wants to express his thoughts as clearly as possible in objective terms. He wants to convey meaning with precision and economy. He wants to clothe his conceptions in the most appropriate garments.⁶

Freud relates art to the dream analogically. He regards the creative writer as a "dreamer in broad daylight" and his creations as day-dream fantasies. The motive forces of night-time fantasies being unsatisfied wishes seeking illusory fulfillment, in the same logic, the creative writer's works, too, are wish-fulfilling day-time fantasies. He says:

A strong experience in the present awakens in the creative writer a memory of an earlier experience (usually belonging to his childhood) from which there now proceeds a wish which finds its fulfillment in the creative work. The work itself exhibits elements of the recent provoking occasion as well as the old memory (p.41).⁷

In the following survey, an attempt is made to show the function of dreams (in terms of their role in the plot scheme, character delineation, and thematic development), the type of dream symbolisms used and the similarities and contrasts in the use of dreams in representative Ge'ez works and Amharic prose fiction.

II. Dreams in Ge'ez Narratives

There are two kinds of dreams seen by very pious characters in *Käbrä Nägäst*.⁸ One is a prescriptive type of dream in which the dreamer receives instruction from a divine agent on what to do or not to do in waking life. It is this kind of dream that is seen by Azaryas before he departs with

Menelik to Ethiopia (pp.68-69). Here the angel of God appears in Azaryas' dream and tells him the type of animals to be used in the sacrifice to Zion as well as the manner of the sacrifice, and instructs him to remove the Tabernacle of the Law of God from its holy chamber after the offer of the sacrifice.

The second type is the prophetic dream seen by Solomon on the night he and the Queen of Sheba sleep together (pp. 35-36). In his dream Solomon sees a brilliant sun descend from heaven and shine over Israel. After staying there for some time the sun withdraws to Ethiopia, where it settles for good and shines with even greater brightness. While Solomon is waiting for the sun to return to Israel he sees a second sun come down from the heavens and shine over his country in greater splendour than before. But the Israelites dislike this sun and try to destroy Him. Though they bury Him and set a guard over His grave, He ascends his former throne and henceforth pays no heed to Israel.

In this dream, the withdrawal of the first sun to Ethiopia is a symbolic prediction of the removal of the Tabernacle Zion from Jerusalem, whereas the coming of the second sun to Israel and the people's attempt to destroy Him symbolize the coming of Christ and His crucifixion by the Jews. He is symbolized by the sun because he is believed to bring the light of hope to those in the darkness of sin and redeem the world. The symbolism alludes to the biblical characterization of Christ as "the sun of righteousness" (Malachi 4: 2). The Tabernacle, too, is symbolized by the sun because it is considered as the abode of God on earth.

As in *Käbrä Nägäst*, there are prophetic and non-prophetic dreams in the *Gädlä Täklä Haymanot*,⁹ too. But unlike the former one, this *gädle* contains expository dreams as well, i.e., enlightening dreams containing explanatory information. There are also some notable parallels in the type of symbolism used in some of the prophetic dreams in the two Ge'ez works. At the beginning of the story, the narrator informs us about the many prayers and vows made by Egz'e Haräya and her husband Šägga Zä'ab so that God would bless them with a child. But their prayers are unanswered for a long time. After their separation during Motälämi's invasion of their homeland, the two spouses individually have predictive visions, while fully awake, in which the Archangel Michael announces that a child will be born to them in the future. On the night that the two spouses sleep together following their reunion, each of them sees a dream.

Egzi'e Haräya dreams that a pillar of light with its peak reaching the sky is standing in her house. It is surrounded by kings and bishops some of whom are genuflecting before it. Also numerous birds of various colours are perched on it. On his part, Şägga Zä'ab sees the sun rising behind the curtain of their bed. On its wings are countless twinkling stars, and the whole country is lit bright by their light.

When the spouses wake up, they recount to each other their dreams without yet trying to interpret them. Later in their sleep, they each have expository dreams in which Michael again appears and tells them that their promised son has been conceived on that day. On the day their son Fesseha Şeyon is baptized, Michael again appears in Şägga Zä'ab's dream and interprets for him his earlier dream. In a similar vision, the angel interprets Egzi'e Haräya's dream, too. According to the interpretation, both the pillar of light and the rising sun represent Fesseha Şeyon, and the light emitted by these signifies his redemption of those who are emersed in the darkness of sin. The stars and the birds are the spiritual children of Fesseha Şeyon. The genuflection of the kings and bishops signifies their actual submission to his spiritual authority when he later becomes Täklä Haymanot. The similarity between the representations of Fesseha Şeyon here and Christ in Solomon's dream lies in the fact that both are symbolized by light, particularly by the sun.

We can also observe from the preceding account that in *Gädlä Täklä Haymanot* the prophecy could be conveyed either through sleep-dreams or waking visions. Sometimes the expository dreams only serve to convey messages confirming the fulfillment of the prophecy. Thus when Michael appears in the dreams of the two spouses and announces the conception of their promised son on the night of their reunion, he is just confirming the fulfillment of his prediction in their previous waking visions. Furthermore, as far as both the characters and the narrator are concerned, there is little difference between the sleep-dream and the waking vision. They hence use the words "helme" (sleep-dream) and "ra'eye" ("true" vision) interchangeably when referring to their illusory experiences. According to Dästa Täklä Wäld's *Addis Yä-Amareñña Mäzgäbä Qalat*¹⁰ "helme" is the illusory experience that one gets when only in a state of sleep whereas "ra'eye" is a vision which can be experienced either when one is asleep or when one is awake. Sleep-dreams could include nightmares ("qežät" or "false" vision) whereas "ra'eye" is truly revelatory or prophetic. This can explain why the narrator and the two spouses refer to their

illusory experience both as "helme" and "ra'eye", since the prophecies and revelations never prove to be false. Also, these "true" visions are generally experienced by the idealized protagonists in particular and are, in a way, privileges they are bestowed upon for their religious virtuosity.

Since the dreams are considered by Egzi'e Haräya and Şäga Zä'ab as truly revelatory or prophetic and as signs of the good favours of the Lord, they generally serve the dreamers as confirmation that they have been following the path of righteousness and as indirect inducements to strengthen their faith. This thematic feature is one which is lacking in most of the prophetic dreams employed in Amharic prose fiction. However, because of the episodic nature of the plot of the *gädlä*, the dreams are loosely integrated into the narrative structure.

The mode of representation or expression in the sleep-dreams is often symbolic while that of the waking visions is consistently literal, i.e., there is no difference between the object in the vision and its actual referent. However, there are also some instances of the use of a literal mode of expression in a sleep-dream as in Bishop Qérlos' dream where Michael instructs him on how to receive the young visitor the next morning and describes to him in detail what Fesseha Şeyon looks like and how he will approach him. Another example of such a prescriptive dream is that of Abba Hezqeyas (pp.196-198). St. Täklä Haymanot appears in his dream and instructs him to remove the remains of his body from the graveyard and bury it inside the church near the altar. Here the role of the prescribing agent shifts from an angel to that of a righteous man.

As in *Kebrä Nägäst* and *Gädlä Täklä Haymanot*, *Tä'amnä Maryam*,¹¹ too, contains prescriptive, prophetic, and expository types of dream. But unlike the former two, this work contains many illustrative dreams, i.e., dreams which demonstrate either the rewards of virtue or the punishments for vice, or the elevated attributes of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ - attributes such as omnipotence, purity, love, mercifulness and responsiveness to the lamentations of the bereaved or the prayers of the devout.

Some of the prescriptive dreams have a biblical origin. Such is the case with Joseph's dream in which the angel of God instructs him to take the new-born baby and His Mother to Egypt (p.97).¹² But there are also others which are not biblical in

origin and which appear to have other functions apart from prescribing an action.

In the sixty first miracle (pp. 245-248), for instance, we are told how robbers break into a church consecrated to the Virgin Mary, steal all the sacred objects, and while carrying away their booty are thrice ordered by Mary to return the objects to the church. But as they do not heed her she appears in a dream of the governor and orders him not to take into his house what the robbers would bring him the next day. Though he has been warned of the consequences of disobeying her, he accepts what the robbers give him and entertains them at his home. For this reason, the Virgin Mary appears in the dream of the governor's loyal servant and instructs him to remind his master of her orders to return the stolen objects to the church and punish the robbers. She also repeats her threat that she would destroy the governor if he again disobeys her. When the governor learns of his servant's dream, he is so frightened by the warning that he severely punishes the robbers and returns the stolen goods to the church. Here the dreams serve as a medium for conveying the action to be taken in waking life as well as a warning on the consequences of failing to take that action.

In another dream (pp.287-291), a woman consecrates her daughter to the Virgin Mary so that she could serve her all her life in purity in a monastery. After fulfilling this for some time, however, the girl falls to the temptations of the flesh and sleeps with many men. One day she has an accident and falls mortally ill. Realizing the punishment that awaits her in the here-after world for breaking her vow, she bewails her weakness and weeps for many days. Her mother and the Sisters in the monastery join her in the lamentations and prayers. One night the Virgin Mary appears in the dream of one of the Sisters and orders her to collect all the sick girl's tears and the sins she has committed so far and to weigh them on a scale. When the tears outweighed the sins, Mary orders the Sister to have the sick girl immersed in sea water three times and then to take her back into the monastery. Since the narrator only tells us that the Sisters happily thanked the Lord for being merciful to the sick girl, one can assume that she has been cured of her illness.

At the outset, this dream appears to be prescriptive by function, but it is not clearly evident in the text whether the prescribed actions are carried out in the dream itself or in the waking life of the dreamer. What is apparent is that the

girl has been cured as a result of the lamentations and prayers. Also, unlike most of the aforementioned prescriptive dreams, this one has a symbolism - that of immersion in the sea water. The water has a double cleansing role: cleansing her from her past sins as well as from her present physical ailment.

The symbolism of the prophetic dreams in *Tä'ammrä Maryam* is very complex. In the second miracle of Our Lady (pp. 20-25), we learn that Hanna and her husband Joachim go to the house of God to give alms and pray to God to bless them with a child. One day, while they are walking in a place full of vegetation, they see doves merrily playing with their offsprings. This scene reminds them of their being childless, and in sorrow they fall asleep. Hanna then dreams that the rod held by her husband is blossoming and bearing fruit, while Joachim dreams his wife is holding a sweet fruit unlike any other in this world.¹³

The dream predicts not only the birth of the Virgin Mary, here symbolized by the fruit borne by Joachim's rod as well as by the fruit held by Hanna in her husband's dream. That Joachim's rod blossoms and bears fruit is indicative of the Virgin Mary's conceiving without carnal union. That the Lord is likened to a fruit is because He is commonly regarded as the food that sustains the eternal life of mankind. Hanna's dream is therefore a signal to her that Isaiah's prophecy (Ch. 11: Verse 1) will be fulfilled through her daughter Mary.¹⁴

Some dreams in the *Tä'ammrä Maryam* have a multiple function. In the account of the fifteenth miracle (pp. 211-214), a young Jew always asks whether it is Judaism or Christianity that is the true religion. One night he has a dream in which the house he is sleeping in is engulfed by snow and fire. In fright he cries out aloud and at this time a roaring lion carrying a cross comes from the east. Very much scared by the lion he implores it to stop in the name of God, the Creator of Daniel. He says the same to the fire, too. At this time the lion smiles. As the lion walks towards the fire and snow, they move away from it. The lion then calls the Jew by name and holds his right hand. It also orders the monk behind it to heat up the iron rod he is holding until it glows. After making the sign of the cross with its claws on the hand of the Jew the lion orders the monk to do the same with the hot iron rod on the Jew's hand. Following this, the lion tells the Jew that he smells badly and, with the young man's consent, takes him to a clean sea water below a precipice. There it tells him to clean himself so that the smell would leave him.

While cleaning himself, the Jew wakes up from his sleep in shock.

As the fire and snow by nature represent heat and cold, they symbolize hardship here. The lion holding the cross symbolizes Jesus Christ, for it smiles when the Jew pleads to it in the name of the Creator of Daniel. There is a biblical allusion here to the story of how the Lord closed the mouth of the lions when Daniel was thrown into their den and prayed to the Almighty for deliverance.¹⁵ The bad smell is symbolic of the corruption that attends disbelief. The imprinting of the sign of the cross alludes to Christ's crucifixion to redeem the world and hence symbolizes the salvation of those who believe in Jesus Christ. That the Jew is cleansed of his bad smell when he immerses himself in the clean water is symbolic of the purification from his sins in his conversion to Christianity. Since the Jew used to be a follower of Judaism, the act of cleansing himself in the sea water wakes him up in shock, for it signifies a radical transformation of his faith and life, a conversion to Christianity. The dream serves, on the one hand, to demonstrate the omnipotence and mercifulness of the Christian God (since the lion saves him from the fire and snow), and, on the other hand, to predict his embracing the Christian faith in his waking life (since he is soon converted to Christianity and becomes a monk). The lion's ordering the Jew to cleanse himself in the water could also be taken as an instruction on the action to be carried out in waking life, since he is soon baptized in waking life thus giving the dream a prescriptive function as well.

The *Tä'mmrä Maryam* is rich with examples of illustrative dreams, and this is quite in keeping with the demonstrative orientation of the genre of miracle stories. One typical example of illustrative dreams is the one seen by the wealthy merchant Silan (pp. 191-195). Silan has a merchant friend called Philippos, who has become bankrupt because he gave out all his money as alms to the poor. One day Silan lends Philippos ten thousand wäqét of gold so that he could do business with it and give him some interest. Every time they meet, Philippos tells Silan that he has made a lot of profit with the money and that he has put the money in a safe place where no thief could ever dare to steal from. One day Silan goes to Philippos' home to see for himself the profits earned. There, however, he finds his friend's compound crowded with beggars. He inquires the cause of their assembly there and learns that they were waiting for Philippos to give them alms as usual. Silan realizes what his friend has done with the

money he lent him and, in rage, physically assaults him the moment he meets him on the street. Philippos' protestations that the money has been invested in an everlastingly profitable venture falls on deaf ears and so mediators had to intervene and make the debtor agree to show where Silan's money is kept. On that day, Silan sees in his dream the arrival of the day of Judgement. He sees that the instruments of punishment are ready, with the angels standing on one side, the devils further away from them on the other side, and the Lord of Justice presiding over his court. Tigers with claws of fire snatch away some of the souls of the sinners and chew them with their hot iron teeth. Some souls are stung by snakes and swallowed by cobras. The devils then suddenly seize Silan and bring him to the court of justice. After claiming that his soul belongs to them they drag him away to hurl him into a seething sea of fire. At this time the Virgin Mary appears in great splendour and orders the devils to set free this soul. She tells them that he has lent ten thousand wāqét of gold to her loyal servant Philippos, who has earned with it a fourfold profit and put the money in a strong box kept in the non-transient domain of her son Jesus Christ. When she tells them that she has accepted what Silan has done for the needy, they reply that he has not given the poor anything of his own free will, and that the alms was given by Philippos. Then she commands the angels to go and find out whether he has given the alms of his own free will. When the angels depart to find out about this, Silan wakes up and rushes soon to the home of Philippos to express to him his great happiness at his investment.

This dream has very little symbolism and serves to illustrate not only the punishment for greed, but also how the Virgin Mary can come to the aid of those who choose the path of righteousness. It also serves as an indirect warning to the sinful, for the prospect of hellish punishment induces Silan to mend his character and follow Philippos' example.

In another illustrative dream (pp. 202-207), the demonstration transcends the dream-world by providing a proof of the miraculous nature of the illusory events in the form of a material object. A pious woman by the name of Sophia persuades her husband to go with her to the church and confess their sins. After they did this the father-confessor notes their being dressed in bright and ornamented garments and advises them to donate the garments to the needy, lest they breed pride and arrogance in their hearts. The husband is displeased with this advice but Sophia obeys the priest and gives away all her valuable garments and money. Very much

angered by her deeds, while her husband is waiting for a pretext to quarrel with her, she one day asks him to let her go to St. Mary's Church to receive the Eucharist. He reprimands her for degrading herself by going to the Church dressed in mean attire while her friends were wearing very expensive clothes. Being thus forbidden to go to the church on the day of the festival of the Virgin Mary, she laments deeply and falls asleep in sorrow. She then dreams she is attending the service in the Church. She sees children, old people, men and women descending from heaven into the Church. The priest, dressed in the most beautiful robes, goes around and serves the Eucharist to the congregation in the Church and gives each person a white wax candle to light. When he sees Sophia, he realizes that he has not given her a wax candle and therefore orders the deacon to give her one. Sophia is pleased by all this and seeing light shining out of the priest's face, she desires to stay behind and kiss his hand. At the end of the service, as the other people begin to return the candle and leave the Church, the deacon tries to collect the candle from Sophia. But as her desire is to return the candle to the priest, she holds it firmly and thus the candle is broken into two pieces in the course of the deacon's attempt to take it from her. At this point Sophia wakes up and finds herself still holding the other half of the broken candle.

This piece of broken candle transcends the dream-world and becomes the object of the miracle as well as a material sign illustrating the Virgin Mary's favourable response to the lamentations and prayers of her devout servant. The candle in Sophia's hand persuades her husband to accept her righteousness and hence he decides to follow her path. Though Sophia could not physically partake of the Eucharist, the Virgin Mary has enabled her to do so in spirit. Her meeting, in the Church, the people descending from heaven is meant to signify that both the earthly and the heavenly can communion in the house of God and share in His grace in spirit.

From the foregoing brief survey of the dreams in the Ge'ez narratives, we can note that the dreams are varied in the functions they fulfill and in the symbolisms they employ. Though the symbols are predominantly public in origin one can easily appreciate the considerable degree of subtlety and complexity involved in their employment, particularly in those with biblical allusions. Such symbolisms are found mainly in the prophetic and illustrative type of dreams. The contents of the prescriptive and expository type of dreams tend to be expressed in literal terms. Probably because of their religious

orientation, hardly any of these dreams appears to be used primarily for the delineation of the dreamer's mental state. Also it is generally the illustrative type of dreams that tend to assume a predominantly thematic significance whereas the prescriptive dreams tend to contribute more to the development of the plot.

III. Dreams in Amharic Prose Fiction

A. Prophetic Dreams

The influence of traditional narratives on Amharic prose fiction is also apparent in the use of dreams as a predictive device. Such an influence is clearly evident in a number of Mäkonnen Endalkaččäw's works. In *Ṭayetu Beṭul*¹⁶, for instance, the title-character prays to the Virgin Mary to reveal to her her future destiny. In answer to this, Our Lady appears in her dream and predicts that Ṭayetu will marry a descendant of Zärä Ya'eqob in Shoa, become an empress, and live with him for forty years, though without bearing him a child. After the death of Téwodros, the narrator reports the fulfillment of the prophecy.

In *Ṣähay Mäsfen*¹⁷ Alämu Dästa abandons his self-imposed reclusive life and is reunited with his foster-children because he learns of their return from abroad in a dream. There is no indication whether the revelation came to him through the agency of an angel. The mode of expression in the two dreams is literal and the dreams have no dramatic quality.

Ag'azi, in a novel of the same title,¹⁸ also has waking visions and sleep-dreams very much akin to those in the traditional narratives. The agents of prophecy here range from the personified angel-like Ethiopia to biblical figures such as Paul and David. In one of his sleep dreams (pp. 78-80), Ag'azi sees a beautiful woman sitting in his room and talking to him. A fascist Italian comes from behind her and is about to decapitate her with an axe when his attempt is suddenly aborted by a young Ethiopian who strikes him with a sword. Following this, Ag'azi sees a fascist woman drink her fluid dough because her baking plate is broken. When the Ethiopian lady sees the Italian woman dying of diarrhea and being buried, she sings a war song in a victorious mood. At this point the dreamer wakes up in excitement. The dream is here used to predict the invasion of Ethiopia and the eventual downfall of the Italian fascists. The prediction in the dream is redundant since the same idea has been repeated over and over again in the

pronouncements of the biblical figures that appear in Ag'azi's waking visions earlier. The author draws upon the stock of public symbols for the expression of the prophecy. Thus Ethiopia is represented as a beautiful woman, and the fascists are identified by their own symbols - the blackshirt and the axe. The broken baking plate and the drinking of fluid dough signify hardship in the Ethiopian culture codes. The young Ethiopian wielding a sword is apparently Emperor Haile Sellassie, since the narrator repeatedly portrays him elsewhere as the saviour of Ethiopia.

As in *Ag'azi*, the most religious character in *Gälṭän Bennayāw*¹⁹ is also privileged with a series of prophetic dreams. In one of these (pp. 109-110), Abäba meets her father, from whom she had been separated when she was a mere infant, and learns where he had been all this time. Surprisingly enough, her father proposes to her there and then and tries to take her away by force. In the ensuing struggle her lover comes and separates them, but is wounded by a gun shot fired by her father. Although the dreamer considers her dream as a mere nightmare, these events are repeated in more or less the same manner later in her waking life. Since the crude prediction is not recognized by the dreamer as a forewarning its role appears to be just to prepare the narratee for the coming events.

The dreamers in *Ag'azi* and *Gälṭän Bennayāw* have one similarity with the protagonist in *wäṭṭät Yefrädaw*:²⁰ they have all received Western education. But while Ag'azi's and Abäba's being deeply religious appears to be the primary reason for their being privileged with prophetic dreams, heredity is suggested to be the main factor in the case of Ašé. The narrator cites two instances (pp. 19-20) in which the prophecies in the dreams of Ašé's mother are fulfilled. On one occasion she sees the sun fall to the ground and break into pieces. The next day, a very popular and respectable elderly man whom people regarded as a peace-maker dies in her village. On another occasion, she sees herself carrying a sturdy stick. Four months later she delivers Ašé as predicted.

Although prophetic, Ašé's dream (pp. 20-21) is not as symbolic as his mother's. One night he dreams his girlfriend is calling him from somewhere near the shore of a lake. While looking for her he finds a hermit who takes him to a cave where a shabbily dressed girl is standing. Upon seeing Ašé, the girl covers her face with her hands. The dream predicts the girl's running away from home to lead a monastic life. She does this because she is raped by a houseboy from whom she conceives, and

hence feels so much shame that she could not bear to face her boyfriend and parents. The credulous Ašé, however, takes the dream literally and vainly searches for his girlfriend in the province where he saw her in his dream. Although Ašé does not realize the prophetic nature of the dream, to the narratee it foreshadows the girl's fate.

The dream in *Polisna Dañña Bä-Balagär*²¹ is both prophetic and symbolic. A corrupt petty official sees in his dream a winged lion come flying fast and then tearing the flesh and drinking the blood of his crime partners and himself. His friend the judge tells him that the lion is the symbol of power, the monarchy and the law. That the lion is winged is taken to mean that their crime will soon be exposed before the law whereas the tearing of their flesh and the drinking of their blood signify their impoverishment and hardship. Soon the prediction comes true and those corrupt officials who have been arbitrarily arresting people to extort bribes are in turn thrown into jail. But the prediction in the dream serves little purpose as the petty officials' downfall is already realized by themselves and the narratee. What is worth noting about the dream is that such a prophetic vision occurs to the villains. This feature makes it contrast with the preceding dreams.

Emperor Téwodros' dream in *Ande Lännatu*²² also symbolically conveys its meaning. One night he dreams that he is rowing a boat down the little Abbay. Soon the river is filled by a sudden flood, and as the boat shoots forward, it becomes so uncontrollable that Téwodros abandons the rowing and desperately holds on to it. When he reaches Lake Ṭana, the water calms down and the boat floats smoothly. While Téwodros is enjoying this temporary respite, his boat is violently rocked by freak waves rising from all four corners. When he heads towards Däq and the other islands to land safely, they are swallowed by the massive waves. Unable to keep the balance of his boat, he tries to save himself by swimming in the lake. But at this time he sees a great wave rising high and about to bury him underneath and this wakes him up in shock. Abbé here adapts well known public symbols such as the ship and its captain to fit into an Ethiopian context. The prophetic nature of the dream is understood by Téwodros himself, for he realizes that the constant rebellions against him (here symbolized by the storm) would one day bring about his downfall. Though the dream aptly illustrates the turbulent reign of the Emperor, its predictive value is minimized by the intrusive narrator's constant mention of his downfall and the dreamer's passive reception of the forewarning.

Another dream with water symbolism is the one seen by Sahlu in *Hulätt Yä-enba Däbdabbéwoč*.²³ For the sake of his son, Sahlu goes to Addis Ababa to search for his wife who has eloped with a smart Alec from the capital. Every morning, before starting his search for Abäba, the first thing he does is to go to St. George's Church to make his regular prayer. One night, he dreams that Abäba is calling his name while he is walking in a marshy forest. He follows the direction of the voice and comes to a spot where he finds Abäba swallowed up to her neck in the muddy water and waving her hands for help. Sahlu cuts a piece of creeper and tells her to hold it while he pulls, but then the creeper snaps in the attempt. While he is trying to give her another piece, Abäba disappears into the water and only her fingers remain pointing to him. After taking off his clothes when he is about to jump into the water, he wakes up. He is deeply disturbed by the dream and the next morning he goes to St. George's Church to make his daily prayer. There he discovers that the woman wrapped in rags and lying dead near the church fence is his own wife Abäba. The muddy water in which Abäba is slowly drowning here symbolizes the gradually deteriorating life that she has led as a prostitute after leaving Sahlu. Earlier when she feels that she can bear the hardship no longer, she decides to appeal to Sahlu to forgive her and writes him a letter of reconciliation. One rainy day she goes to the bus station to dispatch the letter. While crossing the road, however, she is knocked down by a fast-driven car. She loses one leg as a result and this makes her abandon her attempt to be reunited with her husband. It is her plea in the undispached letter that is symbolized by the hands waving for help. As in the case of Téwodros' dream, Sahlu's dream is an apt illustration of the ironic destiny of Abäba, although its significance to the reader in this respect is minimized as the symbolic depiction comes after the fact. Yohannes Admasu, however, attributes to the dream a thematic significance,²⁴ i.e., that Sahlu's dream could be our dream too, and that the fingers that remain above water pointing to Sahlu are pointing to our conscience as well, perhaps in a plea for understanding.

Berhanu Zärihun again employs, with some modifications, the motif of drowning in a muddy water in the dream of W/ro Zärfäšewal.²⁵ On the day that news of the attempt to assassinate the First Vice Chairman of the därg is announced on Ethiopian Television, W/ro Zärfäšewal has a terrifying dream. She sees herself frantically struggling to get some air by raising her head out of the dark muddy water that is gradually filling up her room. In the course of her desperate attempt to

save herself from drowning, she sees the head of a snake protruding through the hole in the ceiling. She makes futile attempts to edge away from the approaching snake whose eyes and tongue are glowing like flames. But the boggy water she is in wouldn't let her move. As the snake slowly comes out through the hole, it issues forth tentacles that soon multiply and fill out the room. Then, when it draws its tentacles round W/ro Zärfäṣewal's body as if to suck her into itself, she cries out in fear and wakes up.

Unlike many of the dreams in the Amharic works cited earlier, this dream has some ambiguity in its symbolism, in that neither the snake nor the dark water can be assigned specific referents in actual life. There also appears to be a reversal in the connotations of a public symbol in accordance with the dreamer's interest and ideology. Normally, a snake is employed to designate something evil and yet it is employed here to represent what is depicted as a positive phenomenon in the value-scheme of the novel, namely, the revolution. Nevertheless, in view of the fact that this social upheaval is antagonistic to the feudal interests of Zärfäṣewal, the symbolization of the revolution by the snake would not be inconsistent from her point of view. The muddy water in which she is drowning here signifies the hardship she will encounter when the political struggle is intensified in the form of the "white" and "red" terror, for she will be abandoned in the scorching desert of Djibouti during her attempt to flee the country and the revolution. The tentacles drawing round her body signify the mounting pressures on her as the wife of Colonel Dämemällaṣ and Nägadräs Agäññähu scheme to destroy her, and as her daughter gets dangerously bogged down in the bloody clashes between the rival political groups.

There are certain parallels in the symbolism of the dream in *Hulätt Yä-Enba Däbdabbéwoṣ* and the one in *Kä-Admas Baṣṣagär*.²⁶ In the latter novel, Wäyzäro Bafäna dreams that she and her son Abärra are standing on the bank of a river. As she is afraid of using the bridge to cross the river, Abärra tries to help her. He cuts a piece of reed and gives it to her to hold it. When she looks at the reed, it is transformed into a snake, and the lady wakes up in shock. On Abärra's request, she interprets the river as a symbol of life and expresses her premonition regarding her inability to cross it. She takes the snake as the symbol of evil and warns Abärra to take care. The predictions come true, for Abärra is thrown into jail because of his wife (who is here symbolized by the snake) and W/ro Bafäna dies before his release and before becoming a

grandmother. The dream not only subtly foreshadows Abärä's later difficulties because of his wife, but also heightens the tension in the atmosphere by reinforcing his present dilemma.

Haddis Sahlé's dream in Bā'alu's second novel²⁷ is more complex than that of W/ro Bafāna, in that it predicts the opposite of its immediate implication for the dreamer's current situation. After being falsely accused of murdering the school director, Haddis is thrown into jail. While waiting for the verdict, he dreams that he has been taken to the market place of Suppé and made to stand on a barrel under the gallows. His hands are tied behind him and he is waiting for the hangman to put the noose of the rope round his neck. It is noontime on Friday and hundreds of people have gathered in the market place to witness the execution. Haddis begs one of the policemen to untie his hands and then is lost in deep thought as he sees the unfinished school building and his wife. But he is alerted back by the shouts of the people: "Thou shalt receive what is unto the deeds of thy hands! ... Hang him! Hang him! ... Thou shalt receive what is unto the deeds of thy hands!..." When the noose is put round his neck and the barrel pushed from under his feet, he wakes up in shock.

Given Haddis' present situation, it wouldn't be illogical for one to interpret the dream as a manifestation of his intense anxiety in jail. But we are encouraged to suspect that the dream might after all be a good omen when one of Haddis' jailmates tells him that a bad dream has a positive meaning. Later, the real murderer gives himself up and Haddis is released from jail. The jailmate's interpretation turns out to be correct not only when Haddis is set free, but also, and more importantly, when his great wish, the completion of the school building, is realized. What used to worry Haddis most while he was in jail was that he might have to die without achieving his long-standing ambition of building a school for the people of Suppé. With the help of his wife and father-in-law, the building is completed and now ready to take in new students. So to herald the good news, Haddis climbs the stela-like tower to hang the school bell. As in his dreams he is being watched by hundreds of people who are looking up at the tower. The gallows in his dream turn into the bell-tower and in accordance with what the people have been shouting at him in his dream, he hangs the bell (rather than himself being hanged) and lives to see the fruit of his labour.

The dreams in the Amharic works discussed so far have a negligible influence on the subsequent course of events.

Gäbreyyé's dream in *Yä-Téwodros Enba* (as well as in its revised version - *Yä-Tangut Meştir*²⁹), however, marks a turning point in the development of the plot. It is when they realize that their tactless inquisitiveness about his dream has exposed their secret plot against Téwodros that Aklilu and Garäd swiftly act to destroy Gäbreyyé. From then on the central conflict reaches a point of no return. In this respect, this dream is closely integrated into the plot structure than are the other dreams. Ironically, too, the dream's prediction that Gäbreyyé will be accused of plotting against Téwodros and brought before him does come true in some sense. In his waking life, his enemies falsely accuse him of treason and he does appear before the Emperor, although of his own free will and to plead his innocence. In the dream, Téwodros' figure is transformed into a flame - a traditional image with which his wrath has been associated in both the oral and written literature about him.

With the exception of that of Haddis and perhaps Sahlu, hardly any of the dreams discussed so far occur at moments of emotional crisis for the characters concerned. The dreams of Bäzzabeh and Säblä Wängél,³⁰ however, occur at moments of acute anxiety. According to Freud, "the dream is the (disguised) fulfillment of a (suppressed, repressed) wish" (p.235). Bäzzabeh's dream can be taken as an illustration of such a case. Furthermore, though Thomas Kane might not have noticed it,³¹ Säblä Wängél's vision is an interesting example of a dream used both as a foreshadowing and suspense-generating device. It has the subtlety and private symbolism that are lacking in most of the Amharic dreams discussed earlier.³²

Dämmäqäč's dream in another novel by the same author,³³ however, is very simplistic and without suspense in comparison with Säblä Wängél's. After learning that her son can now join the boarding school free of charge, Dämmäqäč has mixed feelings about her son's good fortune. One night she sees in her dream her son come to her wearing new clothes and shoes. When she asks him where he got these from, he tells her that a neighbouring wealthy merchant gave them to him. She tries to hug and kiss him but feels like embracing thin air. He tells her that she has this feeling because she has given him to the wealthy merchant and that he is now no more her son. Then the Moslem merchant comes wearing a turban like a Christian priest and takes away her son. As she tries to pursue him, the level ground before her turns into a deep crevice which she cannot cross. She wakes up as her son disappears into a mist, telling her that they will never meet again. While manifesting her

anxiety over the prospect of being separated from her son when he joins the boarding school, the dream also predicts her son's later denying her being his mother and their permanent separation when he goes abroad on a scholarship without even bidding her farewell.

Unlike the above visions in Haddis' works, the dream in *Wanjäläññaw Dañña*³⁴ is both retrospective and anticipatory. It is also a dream in which the prophecy is not at all related to the dreamer. W/ro Šäffené, the wife of the landlord of the hero, sees in her dream that a big breast has grown on the left side of Ṭelahun. As he doesn't want other people to know about it he tries to hide it by covering it with his cloth, but he doesn't succeed. Although he is embarrassed by it, he loves it so much that he often kisses and suckles it when alone. When someone jealous of his breast comes towards him with a knife hidden in his clothes and intending to cut off that breast, Ṭelahun is unable to defend himself and flees to the top of a mountain. There he tries to fondle the breast and discovers that it is no more there. Instead he finds a beautiful woman standing beside him. It is pitch dark all around them and when they open their mouths, the sun comes out of them and engulfs the whole region with its light.

According to the landlord's interpretation, the big breast is a woman - the same woman that stands beside him on the top of the mountain. His attempt to hide the breast signifies his marrying her in secret. Although the landlord is only told that Sophia is Ṭelahun's sister, his interpretation so far accurately shows in retrospect their getting married secretly in order to prevent news of this from reaching her father as well as Wändeyerad, the jealous man carrying a knife in the dream. The rest of the dream is predictive, for it foretells how Wändeyerad tries to prevent Ṭelahun from going away to Illubabor together with Sophia, and how the two spouses bring forth a radical transformation in the style and standard of the life of the people of Yäki through their exemplary work in respect to health, education, agriculture and cultural practices.

It is their reforms in these spheres and the love and honour accorded them by the people of Yäki that are symbolized by the sun coming out of their mouths and bringing day-light to the region around that mountain.

In contrast to the Amharic dreams surveyed so far, Gännät's dream³⁵ is not only prophetic but also prescriptive.

After her former husband, Mähari, kills her father and present husband in revenge for having him thrown into jail, he takes her by force back to their former home. Although she used to love Mähari deeply before her father deceptively gave her away to her deceased husband, fear of being ostracized by her people for living with the murderer of her father now throws her into a depressing dilemma. It is while lamenting her situation that she has a dream in which she tries to flee from Mähari, who is carrying a gun. While being pursued by her husband, she reaches a cave where she supplicates God. She then sees something coming towards her with wings outstretched and telling her that she will be relieved from her husband. At first, the creature appears to her like a vulture, but soon it is transformed into a raging fire. In fright, she genuflects before it and begs for mercy. When she raises her head she sees standing in front of her a light-brown man wearing silken garments and holding a sword. The moment this man disappears from her sight, Mähari reaches the cave and orders her to come out. But the man with the sword suddenly plants himself in front of him. When the angry Mähari aims his gun at him, the man snatches it away, breaks it into two pieces with a stroke of his sword and then tells him that he has no power to kill him. As Mähari bows on his knees and begs for mercy, the man tells him that he will be punished severely if he destroys any more lives and orders him to atone for his past sins by becoming a monk and leading a monastic life. He also tells him that he will never find Gännät as he is going to relieve her from her misery. Saying this, when he makes the sign of the cross with his sword, the cave is rocked as if by a violent storm and collapses with its debris burying her inside. At this point Gännät wakes up. Mähari later overhears her recounting the dream to a friend.

As predicted by the dream, the angel of God (here represented by the vulture, the fire and the man with the sword) relieves Gännät from her violent husband and her misery, for she dies of her illness a few days later. The cave that collapses and buries her in its debris signifies her death (as apprehended by the dreamer later). Some years after her death, Mähari fulfills the instruction in the dream by becoming a monk and joining a monastery. The dream is not effectively used as an anticipatory device as there is little textual space (or too little narratable material after the dream) between the narration of the dream and the end of the story.

B. Non-Prophetic Dreams

Some dreams in Amharic works are used primarily for the portrayal of a character's current mental state. The title-character's dream in *Yä-almaz Eda*³⁶ is, for instance, a simple manifestation of her anxiety that her brother and fiancé might harm the houseboy who has fallen in love with her. So is Marta's dream in *Sostäññaw Säw*,³⁷ where she sees her fiancé confess at his trial that he killed his father because he fell in love with his step-mother, and is consequently sentenced to death. As in *Yä-Tangut Meştir* (p.74), here, too, (*Yä-almaz Eda*, p.39, *Sostäññaw Säw*, p.66) there is a suggestion that dreams are manifestations of a suppressed or unfulfilled wish or thought from waking life and latent in the sub-conscious. Nevertheless, this suggestion by some of the characters is not fully borne out by the dramatization of the dreamers' lives.

The central character's dream in *Ar'aya*³⁸ acts as a catalyst in the rehabilitation of this degenerating protagonist. In his dreams Madame Dubonne Foi appears out of the clouds and, seeing that he is in a wretched condition, advises him to reform his ways. When he wakes up, Ar'aya interprets the dream as an illustration of his decadent life and firmly decides to reform himself. The French woman here acts as a substitute for the guardian angel seen in the more traditional narratives and the dream is hence prescriptive by function.

There are a number of dreams related to the fulfillment of a recent wish. In *Sämämän*³⁹ Abél has a dream in which his sweetheart comes to his bedroom and, after declaring her love for him, reproaches him for being too shy and not telling her how much he loves her. Carried away by her open confession and caresses, he tries to make love to her during this first visit. But his attempt is cut short by her protestations that she is a virgin. In waking life, the couple have been too shy to declare their love to each other and this has caused considerable mental strain on Abél in particular. The dream is thus a simple manifestation of his desire in waking life.

Däjäne's dream,⁴⁰ too, is an illusory outlet for his longing to be with his fiancée and enjoy their love. He dreams that he is being visited by his fiancée from Addis Ababa who reproaches him for forgetting her. He takes her to an open place where he makes love to her.

In Tädälä's dream⁴¹ also, he is visited by his fiancée,

who now kisses him and tells him that she has recovered from her illness and been pardoned by the government. What she tells him in his dream is what he has been eagerly desiring to happen. But, unfortunately, she dies of her illness and for this reason as well as the dreamer's apprehension of their permanent separation, the dream can be regarded as predicting the opposite of what it literally conveys.

Agafari Endäṣaw's dream⁴² shows his contendings with death, with both of them chasing each other in alternation and with death assuming different forms to outwit and beat his victim. Since the Agafari has spent most of his adult life roaming around in an attempt to avoid death, his dream only reflects that futile endeavour. But unlike the other dreams the content of this one is more exciting and constitutes the greater part of the story about the dreamer.

In *Ṣāhay Mäsfen* (pp. 44-52) there is a transference of dream-experience to waking life by the emotionally disturbed central character. On the day that Ṣāhay goes to her lover's home to be introduced to his mother, she is made to stay in the servants' quarters because her lover feels that her being poorly dressed would be an embarrassment to him if he were to entertain her together with his sophisticated guests. Ṣāhay has already been feeling guilty about her relationship with her lover because she has falsely told him that she was unmarried and childless. Her present mistreatment aggravates her feeling of guilt. Exhausted by anguish and having to wait for many hours for her lover, she falls asleep and dreams her little son fall to the ground from a window of an upstairs room. She wakes up instantly and, believing that her son is really dead, rushes to her home in Aqaqi late in the night. Blaming herself for his death, when she is about to jump into the Aqaqi River, a benefactor of hers arrives by coincidence and prevents her from committing suicide. But she still thinks the man has come to tell her about her son's death. It is only when she arrives home and sees her son soundly sleeping in his bed that she is convinced of his well being. Her actual denial of having any children is equated in her dream with the death of her son. The dream here serves to convey to the reader the intensity of her remorse.

Such an employment of dreams for the reflection of intense emotional crisis is also found in Mäkonnen's *Salsawi Dawit*⁴³ and *Yä-Dehoč Kätäma*. In *Salsawi Dawit* (pp. 237-239), Čann Yaläw, although he is married and a father, madly falls in love with a rich and attractive court singer who later becomes the

cause of humiliation and misery for himself and his family. In revenge he tries to drown her and commit suicide by driving his gharry into Lake Ṭana. Although he succeeds in saving himself, the singer dies. Struck by remorse he accepts the advice of a mystical monk to seek redemption by going through physical and mental suffering. As predicted, while lying at the foot of a steep and snowy mountain, he sees a dream in which his wife carrying his beloved son calls him from the top of the mountain. He tries to climb the mountain, but finds himself too weak for the task. Then a gharry driver comes by and takes him to the top where his son and wife are waiting for him. Čann Yalāw is overjoyed at the sight of his family. But before he gets off, his joy is cut short by the gharry driver who at that instant removes her veil and reveals herself as the singer he has drowned. She tells him that she will now have her revenge and, loosening the reigns of the horse, turns the gharry back. As they tumble down the precipitous mountain the dreamer wakes up in shock. Too exhausted by his experience in the dream, he is even unable to breath normally and dies in a few moments.

The dream presents a re-enactment of the murder of the singer by shifting the roles of victim and avenger. Although the dream shows the magnitude of the psychological crisis of the guilt-ridden Čann Yalāw, its primary function is to illustrate that the sinful can gain redemption only by paying for their evil deeds through pain. It is such a moralizing intent that can be deduced from the mystic monk's prophetic announcements. Furthermore, it is this moralizing and the monk's inartistic prediction that tend to diminish the aesthetic appeal of the dream. In view of the fact that there is no one near Čann Yalāw during and immediately after his vision and since he dies the moment he wakes up without getting any chance to tell his dream, Lej Mäsfen's knowledge of the dream is unjustified and implausible.

The motif of persecution by one's victims in a guilt-inspired dream is repeatedly used in *Yä-Dehoč Kätäma* (pp. 174-176). But unlike Čann Yalāw, Habteh Yemär also sees other dreams (pp. 120, 162-163) which only illustrate the extent of his greediness. The visitations of angels commonly seen in Ge'ez narratives are here substituted by the apparition of ghosts, phantoms, and soul-images in Habteh Yemär's waking visions.

Mäkonnen also uses moralizing dreams which are neither prophetic nor indicative of the dreamer's psychological crisis. Yayné Abäba's dream (pp. 54-58) in *Aläm Wäratäñña*, for

instance, is an allegorical illustration of how the inconstant world traps the innocent with the temptations of transient pleasure and then suddenly abandons them to eternal damnation. This dream is a summation of Mäkonnen's most favourite theme⁴⁴: that one should shun worldly pleasure and gain transcendental pleasure through humility, suffering, and the seclusion of monastic life. Apart from this, by providing an example of the adverse consequences of falling to the temptations of this world, the dream is intended to give solace to the two pilgrims who have opted for the spiritual life of the devout in a monastery.

IV. Conclusion

As is evident from the foregoing discussion, one of the major roles of dreams in Ge'ez narratives is the prediction of future events. The prophecies are generally revealed to very pious characters and often conveyed through angelic agency. The revelations come to the idealized protagonists also through waking visions. The mode of expression in the dreams can be either literal or symbolic. Just as the symbols are varied, so are the functions of the dreams in the Ge'ez works discussed here. Also, one cannot easily appreciate the subtlety and grasp the meaning of many of the symbolisms unless one is well acquainted with the contents of the Bible.

Probably due to the influence of scriptural literature, the most common function of dreams in Amharic fictional works is the prediction of future events. Dreams are used as prophetic devices irrespective of whether the dreamer and the author have received modern education and also whether the theme is religious or secular. As in Ge'ez narratives, the prophetic dreams generally occur to the most virtuous characters. The influence of religious narratives is most evident especially in those works where the prophecy comes through angelic or supra-human agency and in both waking visions as well as sleep-dreams. Among the traditionally oriented Amharic writers the ones that are heavily influenced by hagiographic literature in their use of dreams are Mäkonnen Endalkäččäw and Wäldä Gyorgis Wäldä Yohannes.

While most of the Amharic dreams lack subtlety in their predictions and generally have a negligible impact on the outcome of the central action, quite a few are innovatively used to develop the plot and/or generate suspense. Where the

dream-language is metaphoric, the symbols are often of a public origin and vary in type from work to work.

A marked feature worth noting in many of the Amharic dreams is their abrupt or inconclusive ending. In such contexts the dreamers wake up in shock or excitement at a very critical point in the development of the dream-action, either when they (or those very dear to them) are facing grave danger or are about to take a decisive action or reach some other turning point. Such is the ending of the dreams of Şāhay Māsfen, Ṭayetu Beṭul, Téwodros, Sahlu, Haddis, Gābreyyé, Gännät, Säblä Wengél, Çann Yalāw, and Habteh Yemār. This kind of ending has the advantage of maintaining the reader's interest, for he will continue reading with the added motive of getting more clues to decipher the meaning of the inconclusive dream.

One other innovative use of dreams contrasting with the one in Ge'ez narratives is their employment as devices for the psychological portrayal of characters in crisis situations. Among the writers that resort to this method, the most prominent one is again Mākonnen EndalkaḤāw. But his narrators' overriding didactic interest leads them to be over-explicit through literalness of mode of expression, repetitiveness, and moralizing commentary. As a result, the tension in the dreams tends to be dampened even when they depict characters in emotional crisis. Also, hardly any of the dreams are used by the dreamers for self-analysis.

The use of dreams for showing the unconscious and the irrational as gateways to hidden factors about the dreamer's personality or past experience is still very uncommon in Amharic prose fiction. Also rare is the use of dreams of pure fantasy, designed as the adventure of the imagination with the sole aim of entertaining the reader. Furthermore, except perhaps Agafari Endāṣaw's, the other dreams in the fictional works discussed here are used as embedded narratives, and I have not come across any Amharic work composed as a self-sufficient dream. Illustrative, prescriptive, and expository types of dreams such as those seen in the Ge'ez works are also uncommon in Amharic prose fiction. I have not also come across any dream seen by a Moslem character.

NOTES

1. A slightly shorter version of this paper was first presented at the 10th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies held in Paris from 23-26 August 1988.
2. Mängestu Lämna 1959 E.C. *Mäṣehafä Tezeta Zä'Aläqa Lämna Haylu Wäldä Tarik*. Addis Ababa: Berhanenna Sälam Printing Press, pp. 23-26.
3. For a slightly different version of this dream by Menelik's mother see also: Gäbrä Sellassie Wäldä Arägay (Ṣähafé Te'ezaz) 1959 E.C. *Tarikä Zämän Zä'Dagmawi Menelik Negusä Nägäst Zä'Ityopya*. Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press, p.42.
4. *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*. Translated and edited by A.A. Brill, The Modern Library, 1938, P.208. All subsequent page references are to this edition unless stated otherwise.
5. Jung, Carl Gustav 1933. *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*. New York: Harecourt Brace and World, pp.16-18.
6. Hall, Calvin 1966. *The Meaning of Dreams*. New York: McGraw Hill, p.95.
7. Freud, Sigmund, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," in *20th Century Literary Criticism*, edited by David Lodge. London: Longman, 1972, pp. 36-42.
8. *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek*, 2nd edition. Translated by E.A. Wallis Budge, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932.
9. Yohannes Käma (EḂḂagé) 1973 E.C. *Gädlä Täklä Haymanot*, 3rd reprint. Addis Ababa: Tensaé Book Publishing Agency. (This edition contains both a Ge'ez version and its Amharic translation.)
10. Dästa Täklä Wäld 1962 E.C. *Addis Yä-Amareñña Mäzgäbä Qalat*. Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Press.
11. Täsfä Gyorgis (Abba) 1976 E.C. *Tä'amnä Maryam*, 2nd reprint. Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Orthodox Church. (This edition contains both a Ge'ez version and its Amharic translation.)

12. Mathews 2:13
13. For a different version of this dream see also *Legends of Our Lady Mary the Perpetual Virgin and Her Mother Hanna*. Translated by E.A. Wallis Budge. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932, p.19. In this version Hanna dreams a white bird that is more glorious than the cherubim and that holds the cord of life descend from heaven and take its abode in her womb. And from the loins of Joachim a Pearl goes forth and is received by Hanna according to the ordinance of carnal union. The white bird here symbolizes Jesus Christ and the Pearl symbolizes both Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary.
14. I am greatly indebted to Aläqa Ayaléw Tamru, Chairman of the Council of Scholars of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, who has enlightened me on the interpretation of the symbolisms in this and a few other dreams in *Tä'ammrä Maryam*.
15. Daniel 6: 16-23.
16. Mäkonnen Endalkaččäw 1950 E.C. *Tayetu Betul*, n.p. pp.56-61.
17. ----- 1949 E.C. *Sähay Mäsfen*. Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press, p.100.
18. Wäldä Gyorgis Wäldä Yohannes 1948 E.C. *Ag'azi*. Addis Ababa: Täsfa Gäbrä Sellassé Printing Press.
19. Béka Nämo 1949 E.C. *Gälṭän Bennayäw*. Addis Ababa: Täsfa Printing Press.
20. Sahlä Sellasé Berhanä Maryam 1959 E.C. *Wäṭṭat Yefrädäw*. Addis Ababa: Central Printing Press.
21. Yerga Mängestu 1957 E.C. *Polisnna Dañña Bä-Balagär*. Addis Ababa: Täsfa Gäbrä Sellassé Printing Press, pp.65-66.
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