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Author(s): Richard Pankhurst

Source: *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente*, Anno 48, No. 2 (GIUGNO 1993), pp. 267-284

Published by: [Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente \(IsIAO\)](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40760785>

Accessed: 15-12-2015 09:19 UTC

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IMAGINATIVE WRITINGS ON ETHIOPIA AND THE HORN OF AFRICA: SUPPLEMENT AND UPDATE

Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, as noted in a previous article⁽¹⁾, have been the subject over the centuries of considerable number of novels, short stories, plays and poems. The present study, which is based on further investigation in an area scarcely charted with bibliographies, is designed to supplement, as well as to update, the earlier work. Both articles, it should be noted, are concerned exclusively with works in languages other than those of the region. The latter deserve a study, or studies, of their own.

Ancient Writings

The ancient Greeks, whose writings were scarcely covered in the earlier article, used the term Ethiopia, as is well known, to designate all dark-skinned people south of Egypt. They made many references to Ethiopia in their literature. In the 9th century B.C. Homer in his *Odessey* writes of the Ethiopians as *eschatoi andron*, or the most remote of men. In Book I of his *Illiad* he has Zeus, the king of the gods, leave heaven for twelve days, with all the other gods, to visit the "blameless Ethiopians", while the goddess Isis later goes to their country to participate in sacrificial rites to the immortal gods. In the *Odessey* the sea god Poseidon is likewise said to have "lingered delighted" at one of the banquets of the Ethiopians.

Later, in the fifth century B.C., the dramatist Aeschylus had Io, the wandering woman of *Prometheus Bound*, travel to "a far-off land" inhabited by "a nation of black men" who lived near "the fountain of the sun" and the "river Aethiops".

Such ideas were slow to die. In the first century B.C. the historian Diodorus Siculus thus wrote, in Homeric vein, that Hercules and Bacchus, the son of Zeus, were both "awed by the piety" of the Ethiopians.

In the 7th century A.D. the Byzantine writer Stephanus Placidus likewise observed that the Ethiopians were "loved by the gods because of justice", and adds: "Juniper frequently leaves heaven and feasts with them because of their justice and the equity of their customs. For the Ethiopians are said to be the justest men and for that reason the gods leave their abode frequently to visit them". (Quoted in F.M. Snowden, *Blaks in Antiquity*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1970, p. 148).

(1) R. PANKHURST, "Imaginative Writings (Novels, Short Stories and Plays) on Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa", *Africa*, Anno XL n. 4, dicembre 1985, pp. 637-663.

Sixteenth, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century European Writings

Among European literary works referring to Ethiopia in late medieval times mention must be of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, published in Italian in 1515-33. Prester John figures in Book XXII, while Astolfo flies over Ethiopia in Canto XXXIII. The historic background to these passages is discussed by Enrico Cerulli in "Il volo di Astolfo sull'Etiopia nell'*Orlando Furioso*", *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche (1932), VIII, 19-38.

The subsequent visit to France in the seventeenth century of the Ethiopian adventurer Saga Krestos inspired the writing of a short anonymous French historical novelette *La reine d'Ethiopie. Historiette comique* (Paris, 1670). The author, presumably wishing to distinguish the hero from other, and more negroid, Africans, notes that he was handsome, had an aquiline nose, and was "without thick lips".

In 1789, the year of the French Revolution, there appeared in Treves a curious two-volume anonymous French work, entitled *Grandor ou le héros abissin, histoire héroï-politique*. It purported to be a translation of an Ethiopian manuscript "sold by a Copt in Egypt to a European traveller". Set in Gondar and other parts of Ethiopia during the reign of King "Saghd" (presumably a distortion of one of the royal names of the period, such as Malak Sagad or Adyam Sagad), it tells the imaginary story of an Ethiopian nobleman called Grandor. Its main thrust is, however, to provide a discussion on questions of greater interest to late eighteenth century France, such as Democracy, Aristocracy, "Arist-Democracy", and Despotism, etc.

The Legend of Prester John

In addition to the creative writings inspired by the legend Prester John, which were referred to in the previous article, mention may be made to a little known seventeenth century fictional French work: Philippe d'Alcripe's *La nouvelle fabrique des excellents traits de verité* (Rouen, 1620?) which bore the sub-title *Livre pour inciter les resveurs [sic] tristes et merancoliques [sic] à vivre de plaisir*. It was long afterwards reprinted in Paris in 1853. The latter edition states that it was "augmenté des Nouvelles de la terre de Prestre Jehan".

For the history of the Prester John legend see in addition to the earlier cited works: Pierre Gustave Brunet, *La légende du Pretre-Jean* (Bordeaux, 1877), reprinted from the *Actes de l'Académie des Sciences, Belle-Lettres et Arts de Bordeaux*; Giuseppe Manacorda's "La leggenda del Prete Gianni in Abissinia", in Luigi Ferrari's volume of essays *Tonioli* (Perugia, 1906); and Robert Silverberg, *The Realm of Prester John* (New York, 1972), which contains a valuable bibliography on pp. 325-8.

Nineteenth Century Songsters and Pseudo-Travel Literature

The term Ethiopia was appropriated in the middle of the 19th century by a number of Negro, or Black American, minstrels. Several of them produced musical works which bore the title "Ethiopia", but in fact had no connection with the country of that name. These publications included: *Ethiopian Quadrilles. Dances and Songs by the Virginia Minstrels* (New York 1843), which were arranged for the piano by A. Nagerj Onyqjiva; *Ethiopian Serenaders* (Philadelphia, 1845), containing nine songs and a set of cotillons; two works by the then popular musicologist Elias Howe, reportedly containing "new melodies": *Ethiopian Accordion Instructor* (Boston, 1848), and *The Ethiopian Flute Instructor* (Boston, 1848); two works under the pseudonym "Gumbo Chaff": *The Ethiopian Glee Book* (Boston, 1848) and *The Ethiopian Violin Instructor* (Boston, 1848); and an anonymous publication *The Ethiopian Serenader's Own Book* (New York, 1854, reprinted: Philadelphia, 1857).

The growing popularity of travel literature in this period also led, as noted in the previous article, to the production of several imaginary travelogues to Ethiopia. One of the best known, William Dalton's *Tiger Prince or Adventures in the Wilds of Abyssinia* (London, 1863), cited in the earlier article, was subsequently translated into German by Elisabeth Hobirt, and appeared as *Der Tigerfürst. Erlebnisse und Abenteuer. Natur - und Sittenschilderungen aus den Wildnissen Abessimiens* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1881).

The naming of a Scottish ship *Ethiopia* in 1874 led to the publication of a volume of poems and humorous anecdotes, entitled *Ethiopian Memorabilia July 8-20, 1874* (Glasgow, 1874). This slim volume, which has of course nothing to do with Ethiopia as such, was dedicated to the British India Company as well as to the vessel's builders.

American interest in the name "Ethiopia" also resulted in the appearance shortly afterwards, by Robert M. De Witt, of *Ethiopian Plays* (New York, 1875). This volume contained creative pieces by several different, and today unknown, authors.

The Twentieth Century to 1940

Beside the novels related to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba mentioned in the earlier article reference should be made of a novel entitled *Makeda, reine vierge. Roman de la reine de Saba* (Paris, 1940). This work, which was written, the title page claims, by a certain "Prince Yacoub", described, probably erroneously, as an "ancien conseiller de l'empire d'Ethiopie". The French text was by Gabriel d'Aubrède.

The Queen of Sheba, and a Prince called Menilek, also appear in a work of twentieth century fantasy, François de Courel's *La fille sauvage. Pièce en six actes* (Paris, 1902) which was first performed at the Theatre Antoine in February of that year. Three acts are set in at "barbarous country", which is

in one place referred to as “the country of Menilek”. It is described by one of the characters (on p. 113) as inhabited by “a barbarous people”; who had “centuries earlier submitted to a Christian culture”, and would one day “astonish the universe” by “the rapidity of its progress”. (This idea that Ethiopia was about to emerge as a major African power was very prevalent in France in the aftermath of Menilek’s unexpected victory at the battle of Adwa in 1896). Two other acts take place in Paris, and a sixth in Beirut. The principal characters include Abelia, “king of the Amaras”; and his son Kigérik.

The play later inspired the creation of a very fanciful American film, similarly entitled *The Savage Woman*. The film was, however, entirely different in scope and character. Written by Clara Kimball, and directed by E. Mortimer and R.G. Vignola, it was shot in the Lasky Studio in Hollywood, and released in 1918. In this story actress Renée Benoît, after her father’s death, ran about the Abyssinian wilderness clad only in beads and animal skins. While exploring a ruined temple she is seen by a Prince Menilek, who, strangely thinking her to be the Queen of Sheba, resolves to make her his bride. She effects her escape, however, and meets a French explorer, Jean Lerier, who, having been jilted by his girlfriend in Paris, decides to take Renée there to make the old girlfriend jealous. In this he is successful, but Renée, realising that Jean does not really love her, violently smashes his priceless Abyssinian relics. She then boards a ship to return to Africa. Jean, at this point, realises that he is truly in love with the wild girl, and follows her. He is captured by Menilek. Renée bows before the latter, and explains her love for Jean, whereupon the good Menilek releases him. The two lovers are united, and, we may assume, live together happily ever after⁽²⁾.

Reference may also be made at this point to several Russian creative writings, which were not covered in the previous article. Prominent among these are those of B.N. Krasnov, who made his debut as an imaginative writer early in the 20th century. Already the author of a travel book, *Kazaki v Afrike: dnevnik nachal’nika konvoia Rossiiskoi imperatorskoi missii v Abissinu v 1897-98 godu*, i.e. “The Cossacks in Africa: The Diary of the Commander of the Escort to the Russian Imperial Mission to Abyssinia in 1897-98” (St. Petersburg, 1899), he soon afterwards wrote an imaginative work *Liubov’ Abissinski (Terunesh)*, i.e. “The Love of an Abyssinian Woman (Terunesh)” (St. Petersburg, 1903).

Several of Krasnov’s short stories set in Ethiopia were later published, after World War I, in Germany, in his *Terunesh’, Aska [sic] Mariam: poveresti*, i.e. “Terunesh, Askale Mariam: Short Novels” (Berlin, 1921).

(2) I am grateful to Chris Prouty Rosenfeld for details on this film, as well as on three cited later: *Una stagione all’inferno*, *Shaft in Africa* and *Exorcist II*, and to Louis Haber for finding one of the more inaccessible French novels here referred to.

Krasnov, it may be noted, acquired fame as a commander of the Don Cossacks, after the Russian Revolution of 1917, when he fought against the Bolsheviks. He was subsequently executed in the Soviet Union in 1947. For his life see Colin Darch, "P.N. Krasnov's Journey to Ethiopia", *Africa* (1975), XXX, 600-1.

The period after World War I also witnessed the appearance of at least two English novels on Ethiopia not listed in the previous article. The first, Gilbert Frankau's *Masterson: A Story of an English Gentleman* (London, n.d.), was written in 1924-5, and tells the somewhat tedious tale of an Englishman who lived in Addis Ababa during Emperor Menilek's reign. The second work, by Air-Commodore L.E.O. Charlton C.B. C.M.G. D.S.O., was entitled *The Secret of Lake Tana* (Oxford, 1936), and describes itself as an "Oxford Book for Boys". A young English boy, Archie Glen, accidentally discovers an historical secret while on a holiday in Portugal. Propelled by this he goes with a friend on a mission to fly medical stores to Addis Ababa at the time of the Italian fascist invasion. On their return flight the two youngsters crash near Lake Tana. They thus discover the secret, and are instrumental in preventing it from falling into enemy hands.

British interest in Ethiopia aroused by the 1867-8 expedition to Magdala may just conceivably have caused the popular British detective writer Agatha Christie to give one of her characters that name, in her novel *Peril at the End House* (London, 1932).

Two American novels about Ethiopia by Black authors meanwhile also appeared in this period. The first, by Charles Henry Holmes, who used the pseudonym Clayton Adams, was *Ethiopia, the Land of Promise. A Book with a Purpose* (New York, 1917). The other, by an unspecified author, was *The Ethiopian Murder Mystery* (New York, 1935). It tells the story of a beautiful Harlem socialite, Christina van Dyke, who on the say-so of a Negro detective, Jim Willison, is charged with the murder of an Ethiopian prince called Hailu Desta. She is, however, fortunately saved by a newsman, Roger Bates, who is convinced of her innocence. Another American work of this time was Clarence L. Blakely's *The Ethiopian* (New York, 1931), which the present author has thus far unfortunately been unable to consult.

Reference may also be made to a fictionalised German account of pre-invasion diplomacy, Othmar Kraiz's *Ol um Rickett, Spiel mit Abessinien* (Berlin, 1935).

Meanwhile in the field of the cinema the first three years of the fascist occupation of Ethiopia witnessed the production of five Italian feature films dealing with the war. They were Mario Camerini's *Il grande popolo* 1936, Romolo Marcellini's *Sentinella di bronzo*, 1937, Goffredo Alessandrini's *Luciano Serra pilota*, 1938, Guido Brignone's *Sotto la Croce del Sud*, 1938, and Flavio Calzavara's *Piccoli naufraghi*, 1939. Also produced in these years were Jean-Paul Paulin's *Jungla Nera*, 1937, which was set in Somalia, and Goffredo

Alessandrini's *Abuna Messias*, 1939, which dramatised the life of the great Cardinal Massaia. For a detailed account of the above films see G.P. Brunetta and J.A. Gili, *L'ora d'Africa del cinema italiano* (Rovereto and Trento, 1989-90), pp. 50-91.

The Early Post-World War II Decades

Most of the English literary output of this period was covered in the previous article. Mention may, however, be made of a little known publication from British Guiana in South America: Norman E. Cameron's *Three Immortals (A Collection of Three Plays)* (Georgetown, 1953). Written by a nationalist or pan-Africanist Guianan author this volume contains three 3-act plays, two of which deal with ancient Ethiopia. The first, "Adoniya", which was performed at Queen's College, Georgetown, in 1943-4, tells the pseudo-Biblical story of an Ethiopian princess who was beloved by Moses. The latter thereby incurs the jealousy of the Egyptian lords. He is arrested, tried and condemned, but, with the help of Adoniya, escapes from prison and makes his way with her to Ethiopia where they are married. The second play, "Sabacco", which was performed at the same college in 1949, tells of the conquest of Pharaonic Egypt by the "Ethiopians", whose commander named Sabacco makes his sister Amenartas high princess. On the death of Piankhi, "King of Ethiopia", Sabacco is named as the latter's successor.

Another work not referred to earlier was R. Forbes-Watson's children's book *Shifta!* (London, 1954). Written by an English author, and published in the "Oxford Children's Library" it is actually set in Kenya, but tells the story of a fourteen-year-old Somali boy and his sister Miriam, who lived in the northern district of the colony. They and their relatives and friends encounter many adventures as they resist an attack by *shifta*, or camel raiders, operating in the so-called "bad lands" on the Kenya-Ethiopia border.

Interest in Ethiopia on the part of Evelyn Waugh, whose creative writings on the country were earlier discussed, also found brief expression in one of his later novels *Put Out More Flags* (London, 1942). Several characters refer to, but do not visit, places in East Africa earlier well known to the author, among them Djibouti and the Ogaden.

Also published in this period was French novel André Armandy's *Quartier des légations. Roman* (Paris, 1951). Written by a notable French traveller to Ethiopia, the author of an earlier travelogue *La désagréable partie de campagne. Incursion en Abyssinie* (Paris, 1930), which passed through many editions, this novel tells of amusing diplomatic intrigues in an imaginary town called Atbara, the capital of the imaginary empire of Arafanie.

Another, but very different French offering was Marc de Gouverain's *Retour en Ethiopie présenté par Hugo Pratt* (Paris, 1970) in which a French volunteer teacher to Ethiopia returns after many years and presents us with much fantasy interspersed with an authentic journal. Huguette Perol's book of

short stories *Contes et legendes d'Ethiopie*: mentioned in the earlier article, was also published in an Italian translation: *Racconti e leggende d'Etiozia* (Catania, 1968).

Ennio Flaiano's gripping Italian novel *Tempo di uccidere* (Milano, 1947), noticed in the previous article, subsequently gained further circulation, when it was published in French and German translations, respectively entitled *Le chemin de travers* (Paris, 1951) and *Frevel in Athiopien* (Hamburg, 1953).

German writings of the time included short magazine story, Helmut Wuzanig's "Schifta" in *Merian* (1966), XIX, No. 10, a children's book, Otto Strada's *Karawane in verboten* (Berlin, 1957), and a collection of poems, Ernst Otto Gläser's *Die Zeit - as is noch weit. Ausgewählte Gedichte* (Addis Ababa, 1967).

Four Russian novels about Ethiopia also appeared in this period. One of the most original, Volodymyr Ivanovych Synenko's *Strana Ofir: istoricheskii roman*, i.e. "The Land of Ofir: An Historical Novel" (Moscow, 1960), deals with the journey of the early Russian traveller E.P. Kovalevskii, author *inter alia* of *Puteshestvie vo vnutrenniiu Akriku*, i.e. "A Journey into the Interior of Africa" (St. Petersburg, 1949).

Two other Russian novels were concerned with the Adwa war of 1895-6 and Russian support for the Ethiopians. One was N.N. Kit'ian's *Zemecha*, i.e. *zemecha*, the Amharic term for an "expedition" (Rostov-on-Don, 1966). The other was a children's book: Iu Davydov's *O druziakh tvoikh, Afrika*, i.e. "About Your Friends, Africa" (Moscow, 1962) which contained three stories: 1) "The White Horseman", about the above-mentioned Russian traveller Kovalevskii; 2) "Adhalib", about the late 19th Russian traveller A.V. Eliseev, author of "L'vinya nochi: etiid iz puteshestvia po severo-vostochnoi Afrika", i.e. The Nights of the Lions: Notes from a Journey through Northeast Africa", *Russkie vesti* (1895) pp. 100-160; and 3) "The Earthly Atlantica", about the Russian Red Cross Mission to Ethiopia of 1896-7.

The last of these Russian novels was E. Golubev's *Uale Alemu nakbodit druzei: prinkiuchencheskai povest'*, i.e. "Wale Alemu finds Some Friends" (Kostroma, 1963), which deals *inter alia* with the fascist invasion of 1935-6.

This period also witnessed the publication of a little-known Ethiopian Utopian novelette about Ethiopia, which was written by a young Ethiopian writer: Wolde Haile's *Defend the Name* (Addis Ababa, 1968). Its author, with Fikre Mariam Tsehai, subsequently coauthored an article entitled "An International Language", in *Addis Reporter* (1969), I, No. 30, p. 7.

Somalia meanwhile was the subject of Omar Eby's *The Sons of Adam. Stories of Somalia* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, 1970). This work contains eight amusing, and culturally very interesting short stories, several of which tell of the activities of Christian missionaries.

Poetry appearing in this period included Giuseppe Marchese's *La gioia*

(Asmara, 1965), a volume of romantic and other poems. One describes the Red Sea, and another the Ethiopian desert.

Three films of the period may also be mentioned. The first, an Italo-French production, *Una stagione all'inferno* or *Une saison à l'enfer*, also known as "A Season in Hell", directed by Nello Risi, and released in 1973, provides a fictionalised account of the life of the poet Rimbaud, the subject, as we saw in the earlier article, of earlier fictional writing. It was partially filmed in Ethiopia. The part of the poet was played by Terence Stamp; Empress Taytu by an amateur Ethiopian actress, Mullu Mesfin, the daughter of Ras Mesfin; and Emperor Menilek and Ras Makonnen by two Ethiopian professional actors of the post-war Addis Ababa stage, Debebe and Wegayu.

The Rimbaud theme was later taken up in an abstract French production of 1990: *Ferendji*, which was produced by Tim Roth and Sabine Prenczina, with the cooperation of UNESCO and the Ethiopian Film Centre.

The third film, Stirling Siliphant's *Shaft in Africa*, was one of an exciting American series featuring a Black detective called Shaft, played by Richard Rowntree. Partly shot in Ethiopia, and using some Ethiopian actors, it featured the hero helping an unidentified African state stop slave-traders.

Post-Ethiopian Revolution Writings

Since the publication of the earlier article many further novels and short stories set in whole or in part in the area after the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 have appeared. Several of them deserve detailed review.

One of the most sensational pieces of British creative literature of this period is Nicholas Luard's *Gondar* (London, 1988), a fantastic, and much advertised, melodramatic novel by a writer of thrillers, set in the eighteenth century Ethiopian capital of that name. This volume, which runs to over 600 pages, is based in part on the author's reading (or mis-reading) of James Bruce's *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* (Edinburgh, 1790). The characters, some of whom are derived from the latter work, include Rachel, a beautiful Ethiopian hereditary princess-queen, who was allegedly conceived at the source of the Nile; Acab Saat Salama, a greedy and unscrupulous high priest bent on seizing both power and the princess for himself; James Oran, a Scottish explorer from the Hebrides, (and possibly a re-incarnation of Bruce); Mamkinga, a prince from the neighbouring state of Malinda; the latter's twin sister Toomi; an Arab soldier of fortune called Hadji; an Austrian revolutionary, Ferdinand "Grey" Wolf; a Portuguese slaver Called de Souza; and Doho, an Ethiopian dwarf. The author also crowds in many other personalities, including, for good measure, Karl Marx.

The Italian colonial presence in Africa provides an historical back-drop for one of the latest novels of Marina Warner, a British woman writer of Italian descent. This novel *The Lost Father* (London, 1989) is a delicate and slow-paced work set largely in southern Italy at Dolmetta, Rupe and Ripe near

the Adriatic, but, spanning several decades, also moves to London, Naples, New York and Parnassus. The volume nevertheless has a considerable African interest, with young southern Italians considering whether to try to transform Italy as socialists or to enrol in their country's armies bound for the colonies.

In 1912 Rosalba Pittagora is in love with Tommaso Talvi, who may be off to the colonies. She "thought of Africa and its special ordeals with greedy excitement; she set herself against its vast and glorious horizons. She would be drinking coffee as if it cost less than water, wearing alligator shoes made to fit her pretty feet, and watching at Tommaso's side a parade of half-naked girls with bracelets round their legs, while a group of handsome, grinning soldiers stood by. These images came to her from the metal engravings of the conquest of Libya which had appeared in the illustrated journals; she did not remember the different countries of the Italian empire in question, for all of Africa — Libya, Somalia, Eritrea alike — beat out a rhythm of adventure and spoils and heroism. The pictures showed her overseers standing by ant-files of 'natives' doubled over as they hacked the roads of progress through mountainous desert; more grinning Italians cheered soundlessly under the joined twin arcs of a new bridge. A gang of black workers wearing white loincloths faced the camera gravely, looking as if it were something they might be given to eat. On other pages, she had seen a village of huts... where mothers — Italian mothers with babies on their laps — were sitting on chairs, just like at home. They would achieve great things together, Rosa swore to herself, she would help him bring about his vision of converting the army to the cause of justice and equality.

"I should like to go to Africa", said Rosalba drowsily. Caterina cried out, 'Don't go away, Rosa, please'. Rosa said, 'Perhaps he'll take me to Africa!'"

A generation, and many pages, later, in October 1935 the Italian magazines, the novelist tells us, were full of pictures of "smiling Abyssinians and others of war heroes; photographs of aeroplanes dropping fire out of the sky onto a landscape of mountains where tiny figures could be made out, running — the Leader proclaimed that Italy was his woman, and he would cajole and swear until she yielded to him in her entirety; there was direction and might and other strong meat in his wooing, as well as sweet flattery and heady enrapturement as the big round head thrust forward over the balcony in the Piazza Venezia, and roared, strong jaws jutting, spraying the crowds with bursts of his own gunfire, cramming them with promises of pleasure and power under his expert caresses".

Rosalba's brother, Franco Pittagora, is so inspired by such rhetoric that he decides to write an *opera buffa* about the Queen of Sheba, which would also celebrate the birth of Mussolini's "Glorious Empire". Humming the fascist soldiers' marching song *Faccetta nera, bell'Abissina*, he recalls that "the Leader was dreaming of changing every Abyssinian into an Italian. The big

strong hands of soldiers advancing into Ethiopia and claiming it as Abyssinia, part of the new empire of Rome, were encircling every little black face, thrusting the flag into the women's and children's hands; they were colonising by the spit of the guns and the kiss of the invader, the bullet and the bed; these were the arms of the new crusaders, taking possession".

Six months later, in May 1936, "it was", we are told, "the Feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross and, Italian troops were set for victory in the empire barely six months after the invasion from Eritrea. The news was out: Addis Ababa had fallen. King Victor Emmanuel was on his way to Abyssinia. The King in person was to greet the champions of the Fatherland, to heap in praise the aviators who dropped fire from the clouds as they pirouetted above the plains, to garland the warriors of the Fatherland. The native army was on the run under the divine and elemental fury of the conquerors. In their white nightshirts, waving matchstick spears, they would be yielding perforce before the might of the unconquered fasces. Soon the fruit of civilisation would be their". Franco Pittagora's *opera buffa* about Solomon and the Queen of Sheba nevertheless runs into perhaps predictable difficulties.

Wilbur Smith, the Zambian-born author of *Cry Wolf* (London, 1976), mentioned in the previous article, subsequently wrote two further popular thrillers which are set mainly in South Africa, but touch in part on Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa. In the *Power of the Sword* (London, 1986), the hero, Shasha Courtney, joins the South African Air Force, and in 1941 participates in the assault on the Italian East African empire. After many adventures he is wounded, and receives a D.F.C. and Africa Star.

The villain of Wilbur Smith's later volume, *Golden Fox* (London, 1990), is a ruthless Cuban security officer called Ramón Machado, who, amongst many other things, supposedly masterminds the deposition of Emperor Haile Sellassie. Another character in the novel, Elsa Pignatelli, is a member of the Italian South Africa Society, and daughter of an Italian officer supposedly on General De Bono's staff during the Ethiopian war of 1935-6.

One of the most interesting imaginative American creative writers to touch on the area in this period was an American ex-Peace Corps volunteer, Roberta Worrick (née Thomas), who lived in Ethiopia in 1971, and returned seventeen years later with her husband, who was involved in U.S. Government relief work. She was shortly afterwards killed while accompanying American Congressman Mickey Leland, whose plane crashed on August 7, 1989.

During her thus sadly curtailed literary career Roberta Worrick wrote under the pen-name Maria Thomas. Besides a number of short stories published in magazines she was the author of three semi-autobiographical literary volumes: *Come to Africa and Save Your Marriage* (New York, 1987), *Antonio Saw the Oryx First. A Novel* (New York, 1987), and a posthumous work *African Visas* (New York, 1991). One of the best stories in *Come to*

Africa and Save Your Marriage is "Second Rains", which is set in Ethiopia. It tells of an American woman, Charlotte Renoir, who is assigned to work in the country, and witnesses the Revolution two years later.

The bulk of *African Visas* consists of a novella, entitled "The Jiru Road", in which Sarah Easterday, a young American Peace Corps volunteer, is initiated into the Ethiopia of the 1970's. She plunges into a totally different culture, learns a new language that "popped with explosive letters", endures dysentery, and revels in her escape from the American way of life. The volume also contains a short story entitled "Ethiopia" which tells of two Ethiopian refugees in the United States, a woman called Tsehainesh (in real life Woyzero Semianesh, a sometime secretary at Haile Sellassie I University, see dedication in J. Markakis, *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, Oxford, 1974) who seeks, unsuccessfully, to sell Ethiopian popular paintings in America, and an employee of F.A.O. called Akalewerk who travels all over Africa. We hear of their problems in finding work in a strange new country, the difficulty of obtaining the much-sought-after "green card", without which legal employment in the United States is impossible, and, most revealingly, their reactions to the dramatic media coverage of the Ethiopian famine of the 1980's.

African Visas also contains the following autobiographical passage, which helps to explain the creation of much of the writing surveyed in this study: "If you ask people who have ever lived in Ethiopia, they tell you that you never put it behind you. During Peace Corps training there in 1971, the word was that Ethiopia had the highest dropout rate of any country in the world, but it also had the highest extension rate of any country in the world. Which meant that if you stayed, you never wanted to leave. And after you left, all you wanted to do was to go back, and when you couldn't get there, you found Ethiopians outside, or they found you, or you found each other across the world..., as if by magic".

Very different in style and theme is W.J. Tyler's *The Lion and the Jackal* (New York, 1988). Written by a former Foreign Service Officer of the U.S. Department of State who was in Mogadishu at the time of the Somali invasion of Ethiopia in 1977-8, it is an imaginary story set at the time of that war. The "blurb" sums up the plot as follows: "An ugly war is brewing between Ethiopia, and its small, Soviet-armed Moslem neighbor, a self-styled Marxist nation of nomads and camel porters with ancient claims to Ethiopia's *agaden*... Logan Talbot, a clever young American diplomat comes to seek his professional fortunes on the Third World Frontier. He finds only boredom at the supine little embassy on the sweltering Indian Ocean littoral, and a kindly but inept ambassador. Grown lazy, cynical, and lecherous in this diplomatic Wild West, he looks on disdainfully as the embassy is shrewdly outwitted by the host nation as it plays its Soviet patron against Washington's geopolitical strategists and their fear of Soviet domination of the region. Roused finally

from apathy following his affair with a beautiful Italian expatriate, Talbot can do nothing to prevent the crazy little war from happening, but in its aftermath reclaims something of himself and his own shattered ambitions”.

References to Ethiopia, and to various Ethiopians, including Emperor Haile Sellassie and his family, are to be found in Bryten Breytenbach's *Memory of Snow and Dust* (London, 1989). It is a very sophisticated novel of “exile, betrayal, love and creation” by one of South Africa's leading Africaner poets. The principal characters include Meheret, a part-time Ethiopian woman journalist, besides Mano, a “mixed blood” South African actor, and Bernum, an exiled white South African writer.

More biographical in tone is a recent work by an Italian writer, Dante Andreasi's *Addis Abeba addio* (Roma, 1991), which has a preface by the then Ethiopian ambassador to Italy, Dr Feleke Gadle Giorgis. Based on the real-life memories of the author, who had lived in Ethiopia from 1938 to 1957, and was the founder and president of the Rome-based Comitato Amici d'Etiopia, this work tells the story of an Italian called Massimo, who, like Andreasi himself, had gone to Ethiopia during the fascist occupation, and, like Maria Thomas a generation later, had come to love the country and its people. In the course of this work he describes visits to Dire Dawa, Harar, the sugar estate at Wonji and other parts of Ethiopia, as well as Kenya, Rhodesia, Mozambique and South Africa.

The Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 and its aftermath provide the setting of three French novels. The first, *Le trésor du négus* (Paris, 1977), is an exciting piece of fiction by the prolific and best-selling spy-novelist Gérard de Villiers. His hero, C.I.A. super agent Malko who also appears in many of the author's other writings, becomes involved in the search for Emperor Haile Sellassie's supposed wealth, and an imaginary princess called Chewayé gets killed by the then Ethiopian ruling clique, the Dergue. The second novel, which describes post-revolutionary life in Addis Ababa as the author imagines it, is by Jean Noël Pancrazi, and is entitled *Lalibela ou la mort nomade. Roman* (Paris, 1981). The third novel was P. Ngandu Nkashma's *Un jour de grand soleil sur les montagnes de l'Ethiopie* (Paris, 1992), which the present writer has thus far been unable to consult.

A further French work of the period is Bernard Faye's *Eleveurs d'Ethiopie* (Paris, 1990). Written by a sometime French cattle-breeder in Ethiopia, it contains a number of fictionalised short stories in addition to much factual material on cattle-breeding.

Other French creative writing of the time includes a piece of creative literature about Somalia, Frederic Mitterand's *Lettres d'amour en Somalie* (Paris, 1983).

Creative literature in German owes much to a notable Ethiopian poet and playwright, Dr. Fikre Tolossa, now attached to the Columbia Pacific University in the United States. His writings include two plays *The*

Coffin-dealer (Bremen, 1982) and *A Foot of Land* (Bremen, 1982), and three volumes of poetry *Kursbuch* (Bremen, 1984), *Der Flieder Tötet Die Rose?* (Bremen, 1987), and *Und Nannten Mich Bruder* (Göttingen, 1987), as well as contributions to *Und Was Ist Für Ein Ort?* (Bremen, 1984), and to an international anthology *Plesse-Lesungen* (Göttingen, 1986, 1987 and 1988). For the work of the author see Ephrem Aklilu, "Profile. Dr Fikre Tolossa, Playwright, TV Producer", *Ethiopian Review* (September, 1991, pp. 20-1, as well as the poet's own articles in the March and May 1992 issues of that publication.

Mention may perhaps here be made of a "fictionalised" life of Emperor Haile Sellassie by a Polish author, Ryszard Kapuchinski's *The Emperor* which was written in 1978. It went through many editions, for example London 1983, and was translated into numerous of languages. A stage version, adapted by Michael Hastings and Jonathan Miller, was produced in London at the Royal Court Theatre in 1987. For a discussion on the authenticity of this production, and of the book, see a letter by R. Pankhurst, headed "The Emperor", in *The Times Literary Supplement*, April 17, 1987.

Much more realistic in character are a number of short stories from the pen of a fine Ethiopian author, Getachew Zicke, who had earlier written two poems, "A Proposal to Beneatha" and "The Locked Mind", in the American publication *Black American Literature Forum* (1981), Vol 15, no. 2. Getachew's short stories, many of which are semi-autobiographical, and are usually very witty, deal with a variety of modern Ethiopian situations. They appeared in the Addis Ababa magazine *Quarterly Yekatit*. These contributions include "Savory Salt of the Earth" (1983), VI, No. 4, "Linda's Choice" (1983), VII, No. 2, "The Broken Heart" (1984), VII, No. 3, "The Confirmed Bachelor" (1984), VII, No. 4, "The Lecturer in English" (1985), VIII, No. 3, "Then there was Light" (1985), VIII, No. 4, "The Homecoming" (1985), IX, No. 1, "Some Kill when Jilted" (1985), IX, No. 2, "The Swaggerer's Widow" (1989), XII, No. 3, "Love's Hurdles" (1990), XIV, No. 2, "Wingless Flight" (1991), XIV, No. 4, and "Of Mosquitoes and Men" (1991), XV, No. 2. Another short story featured in the same publication was Tesfaye Gessesse's work "The Black Cat" (1988), XII, n. 2.

Life in the Ethiopian countryside is by contrast depicted in a short story entitled "Famine" by an Ethiopian journalist Mulugeta Gudeta which appeared in *Addis Reporter* (1992), I, 1, a new Ethiopian journal called after a long deceased journal of the same name. The tale tells what happened when Kebede, a father, decides to kill his remaining oxen to celebrate the wedding of his son Kassu before famished hyenas break into the stable to drag them away.

Also of particular interest is a further fascinating instalment of W.A.J. Semerjibashian's nostalgic memories of Addis Ababa's old-time Armenian community, earlie noticed in the previous article. His story "Intrigues in

Addis Ababa”, *Ararat* (Spring, 1990), pp. 50-6, tells of the rivalry for Madame Fifi’s favours of two well-respected Armenian residents of the city: Professor Sarkis of the Kevorkoff School and Deren, an accountant at the Kevorkoff firm.

Indian life in Ethiopia is reflected in two little-known Gujarati novels by an Indian writer, Gunvantrai Acharya’s *Harari* (Ahmedabad, 1981) and *Sakkarbar* (Ahmedabad, 1981).

Also of interest is a play by an Ethiopian author in England, Gebru Asfaw’s *Dung’ Hill. An Abstract Ethiopian Play* (London, 1992). The story centres on the interplay of three doctors, Dr Albert, a German, Dr Wagner, an American, and Dr Le Breton, a Frenchman. They discuss their respective philosophies, in Shavian vein, as they travel from England to an underdeveloped country called Topuland (Ethiopia?).

Passing reference to the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935 is found in an Irish play of this time: Brian Frel’s *Dancing at Lugnasa*, which was first shown in the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, and later, in 1992, at the Garrick Theatre in London. The play, which is set in Ireland contains English songs alluding to Mussolini’s invasion.

Turning to poetry mention should be made of Professor Claude Sumner, a prolific Canadian Jesuit who has taught for many years at Addis Ababa University (previously Haile Sellassie I University), and is author of not a few works on Ethiopian philosophy. He produced a series of volumes of French poetry with an Ethiopian background. The series bears the general title *Poesies éthiopiennes*. The first volume *Tome I. Kebero* (Addis Ababa, 1976) is called after the Amharic word for “drum”, and contains four plays and fifty poems. One of the former, entitled “Makeda”, deals with the legendary story of the Queen of Sheba; another, “Hikar”, tells of Ethiopia in Biblical times. The second volume II, *Alem. Heptalogie éthiopienne* (Addis Ababa, 1977) is called after the Amharic word for “world”. It contains three plays, two set in Ethiopia. The first, “Montagne de lumière”, features King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, as well as Adam, Eve and Satan, and takes place at the beautiful church of Debra Berhan Sellasé near Gondar. The second play, “compagnons de la terre” is set in the high Ethiopian plateau, and features eight foreigners: two Africans, two Americans, an Indian, a Greek, a Russian and a Japanese. The third volume, *Tome III. Krar. Odes d’inspiration éthiopienne* (Addis Ababa, 1978), is called after a well-known Ethiopian musical instrument, and contains a “Suite éthiopienne: La flûte du berger” and a “Symphonie éthiopienne en trois mouvements”, as well as poetry inspired by the writers Gerald Manly Hopkins and John Milton. A further, unnumbered volume, entitled *Poesies Ethiopiennes. Zema* (Paris, 1981), called after the Ethiopian word for “music”, contains a further twenty poems, with English translations. One of them tells of the Ethiopian lake Babogaya, near Bishoftu or Debra Zayt, in which Professor Sumner loves to swim.

The professor also authored *La couleur de mon chant* (Yaounde, 1977) which contains his French rendering of four English plays by the well-known Ethiopian playwright Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin: "Petros", based on Tsegaye's "Petros at the Hour", "Le rêve du roi" on "Tewodros", "Le silence des cordes" on "Azmar", and "Oda", on "The Oda-Oak Oracle". For a literary analysis of the first of these plays see *Ethiopia Observer* (1973), XVI, 118-24.

In the field of the cinema the Ethiopian Revolution provides the background to an Ethiopian film, Haile Gerima's *Harvest: 3000 Years*, which was shot in Ethiopia and produced in the United States in 1975. A fictional work of social criticism it dramatises a peasant family's struggle for survival on the farm of a wealthy landlord. For interviews with the producer see C. McMullin, "Un regard africain sur la sombre Amérique", *Afrique-Asie* (1980), No. 212, pp. 53-4, and F. Ayari, "Entretien avec Haile Gerima, réalisateur éthiopien"; *Carrefour Africain* (1985), No. 87, pp. 28-9.

Another film of this period was an American work *Exorcist II: The Heretic*, which was released in 1977. Though shot in the United States part of the story takes place in Ethiopia, with simulated scenes of the religious centres of Debra Damo and Lalibela. The story features a young Ethiopian doctor, played by James Earl Jones, and a young Ethiopian monk, played by an Ethiopia actor, Fisseha Demetros, who was also listed as "African technical consultant".

Mention may also be made of a thus-far unpublished film-script, the late Jasper Lynch's melodramatic *Journey to Judgement Rock*, which dealt with the British expedition to Maqdala in 1867-8. This work was considerably re-written over the years, by Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin and the present author, in part to make it more historically accurate, in part to make it more acceptable to an Ethiopian audience⁽³⁾.

The Ethiopian Civil War, and Stories of Refugees

The Ethiopian civil war of the late 1980's, and its antecedents, was the subject of four novels. The first, by an Australian supporter of the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF), Thomas Keneally, is *Towards Asmara* (London, 1989). It tells story of a group of journalists and supporters of the Front, who, braving bombing by Mengistu Haile Mariam's Ethiopian Air Force, enter Eritrea from the Sudan. The characters include Darcy, an Australian lawyer turned journalist; Henry, an American aid-worker seeking the release of his Somali fiancée; Christine, a young French woman searching for her photographer father; Lady Julia, an English woman crusading against

(3) A copy is in the present author's possession.

the local mutilation of women; and an Ethiopian prisoner-of-war called Major Fida.

The second book, by an American writer, James Webb, is *Something to Die For* (New York, 1991). In some ways reminiscent of W.J. Tyler's *The Lion and the Jackal*, discussed above, it tells the exciting twin story of a war in the Ogaden desert and of two American politicians, a cunning young bureaucrat and a savvy political operator, who are rivals for the favours of a beautiful woman.

The third, and by far the most culturally interesting novel of the civil war, by an Irish Catholic missionary and scholar, is Kevin O'Mahoney's "*Meaza*" of *Ethiopia. An Historical Novel of the Ethiopian Revolution* (Addigrat, 1991). Written by the author of an earlier important work of scholarship *The Ebullient Phoenix. A History of the Vicariate of Abyssinia* (Asmara, 1982, 1987, Addis Ababa, 1993) "*Meaza*" is a sensitive, and remarkably readable, story about the Ethiopian Revolution and its aftermath as it affected two Ethiopian officers, Lieutenant-Colonel Beyene and his namesake Captain Beyene, the latter's beautiful daughter Meaza, who is the heroine of the book, and several other well-drawn characters.

The work begins with the plotting which accompanied the last years of Emperor Haile Sellassie's reign and ends with the defeat, and collapse, of President Mengistu Haile Mariam's regime. The story, which has an epic quality, illustrates many aspects of Ethiopian life in this period, both in Addis Ababa and the northern province of Tegré, where the author himself resided for most of the time, and where he collected a number of Amharic and Tigrinya sayings which he quotes in their original as well as in English translation. The heroine's name "*Meaza*", as he explains, "means 'fragrance', hence, the title of the book contains a second meaning: 'the fragrance of Ethiopia'".

The fourth, and most recent war novel, is by a prominent official of Emperor Haile Sellassie's government who subsequently defected to the United States, where he taught as a professor in Howard University, becoming a leading supporter of the EPLF. He is the author of several studies on Ethiopian constitutional law and recent Eritrean and Horn of African politics. This novel is Dr Bereketab Habte Selassie's *Riding the Whirlwind. An Ethiopian Story of Love and Revolution* (Trenton, New Jersey, 1993), but has appeared too recently for detailed mention in these pages.

A new creative literature on Ethiopian refugees, also touched upon, as we have seen by Maria Thomas, came into existence in this period. One of the earliest works in this category was a semi-autobiography by a former Ethiopian woman senator Marta Gabre-Tsadick: *A Refugee's Story* (London, 1983).

Somewhat more dramatic was a novel by an American missionary who had spent thirteen years in Ethiopia: Jodie Collins's *Code Word Catherine*

(Wheaton, Illinois, 1985), which told of the imaginary escape from Ethiopia after Revolution of no less than ten royal princesses.

Yet another work of this *genre* is Adane M. Asres's *Cry* (Toronto, Ontario, Illinois, 1987). It tells the "colourful and fast-moving story", as the blurb says, of two Ethiopian refugees, Kaleb and Menelik, who, escape from their native country, travel to Melekal in the Sudan, and thence through some ten other countries, before finally arriving at their destination in North America safe and sound.

"Operation Moses", the emigration of Felashas, or Judaic Ethiopians, to Israel in 1984-5, served as the inspiration for a melodramatic novel by an American woman author, Sonia Levitin's *The Return* (New York, 1987). It tells the story of a group of Felashas, born and bred in Ethiopian, who, escaping Mengistu Haile Mariam's regime, as the author puts it, "returned" to Israel (which they had of course had never previously seen).

Refugees from Somalia also figure prominently in a remarkably perceptive novel of the period: Marion Molteno's *A Shield of Coolest Air* (London, 1992). The author, who grew up in South Africa and also lived in Zambia, gives an autobiographical touch to her account of the Somali refugee scene as she is organiser of a refugee education project in South London. The title of the book comes from a Somali poem by Sayyid Mohamed Abdille Hassan. Largely set in London the book features two Somali refugees, Anab and Haleem, "cut off from their past, anxious about the future, battling their way through an anonymous bureaucracy", and Hassan, half Somali, half British, who works, like the author herself, in a refugee organisation. The book is written with delicacy and feeling, and ranks far above most works on the refugee theme.

Two of the finest, and best illustrated, children's books of recent years also appeared in this period. They were written by a British woman author; and sometime teacher in Ethiopia, Elisabeth Laird, and illustrated in colour with Ethiopian manuscript illustrations from the British Library's Magdala Collection. The first, *The Miracle Child: A Story from Ethiopia* (London and New York, 1985), was written in collaboration with Abba Aregawi Wolde Gabriel, an Ethiopian prelate in Britain, and was translated into Finnish as *Ihmeitä Tekevä Lapsi* (Helsinki, 1985). *The Miracle Child* presents one of the miracles of the Ethiopian saint Takla Haymanot. A review of this book was published in *Quaderni di Studi Etiopici* (1985-6), 6-7, pp. 320-1.

The second book, *The Road to Bethlehem* (London and New York, 1987), deals with an Ethiopian version of the Biblical story, and carries a foreword by the Archbishop of Canterbury's long imprisoned assistant Terry Waite. This work was translated into Welsh, as *Tua Bethlehem* (Cardiff, 1987). Another story by Elisabeth Laird, entitled "The Stonecutter", translated from an unpublished collection of Ethiopian folk stories by Gessesse

Belay, appeared in an anthology: Julia Eccleshare's *Tobie and the Face Merchant and Other Stories for Six Year Olds* (London, 1991).

Though the present study, like its predecessor, is confined to writings in non-Ethiopian languages mention may be made in passing of two studies which appeared in this period, by the Ethiopian literary historian Dr Taye Assefa. Both deal with Ethiopian Emperor Tēwodros's position in Ethiopian fiction: "Tewodros in Ethiopian Historical Fiction", *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* (1983), XVI, 115-28, and, in Amharic, "YāTēwodros Enba ena YāTangut Mestir n'e'rawi gemgāma" in Taddese Beyene, R. Pankhurst and Shiferaw Bekele, *Kasa and Kasa. Papers on the Lives, Times and Images of Tēwodros II and Yohannes IV (1855-1889)* (Addis Ababa, 1990), pp. 173-83.

Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, it will be apparent from the above survey, continue to be the inspiration, or at least the setting, of an ever widening range of creative and imaginative writings. Their character reflects ever changing perceptions of the region.

RICHARD PANKHURST

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