



EDWARD ULLENDORFF

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1920–2011

EDWARD ULLENDORFF, who died in Oxford on 6 March 2011 at the age of 91, was one of the most distinguished scholars in the field of Semitic studies in the second half of the twentieth century. He held a number of academic positions in the UK, culminating in that of Professor of Semitic Languages at the School of Oriental and African Studies (London), a post which he occupied from 1979 until his retirement in 1982. He was elected Fellow of the British Academy in 1965. He is particularly associated with the languages and cultures of Ethiopia, yet his Ethiopian studies were but part of a much broader picture, for he had an exceptionally wide first-hand familiarity with Semitic civilisations, ancient and modern, and his researches into Semitic languages and cultures of Ethiopia were not separate from but integral to his Semitic studies as a whole. Indeed, he stressed repeatedly that the most fruitful approach to Ethiopia was via the study of general Semitics.

Edward Ullendorff was born in Berlin, on 25 January 1920, in the Jewish hospital located on Exerzierstraße. His parents were Berliners, although his mother Cilli (née Pulvermann, 1895) had been brought up partly in Liechtenstein. Both parents had hoped that Edward would be born in Zurich and have Swiss citizenship, since they perceived Germany to be still an unstable place with an uncertain future in the aftermath of the First World War. The plan was for his mother to travel to Zurich in the later stages of her pregnancy, but Edward was born two or three weeks earlier than expected, before she left Berlin.

Edward was the only child of his parents. His father, Friedrich (Fritz, born in 1887), was a wholesale merchant in salt and supplied large

amounts to the German railways. The business was on Danziger Strasse. As a young child Edward would enjoy visiting the saltworks and having rides on the horses in the yard, which were used at that time for making deliveries. His father developed multiple sclerosis shortly after Edward's birth and as a result was confined to a wheelchair. After 1925 the office of his business was moved into the family home. Edward remembered him as a gentle, loving father, with whom he had a close relationship. He liked to push his wheelchair when the family went for walks. His father was a sickly, largely housebound, man throughout Edward's childhood. The upbringing of the young Edward was largely carried out by his mother, Cilli. His mother was strict and enforced discipline, but of his two parents it was to his mother that Edward felt closest. Two weeks before Edward's fifteenth birthday in 1935, his father died of pneumonia. He was buried in the Weissensee Jewish cemetery of Berlin.

The family home was a large flat in Greifswalderstrasse on the eastern side of Berlin. The study (*Herrenzimmer*) became Edward's work room after the death of his father. There were two servants, a cleaner (Lina) and a cook (Thea), who lived with the family. Edward remarked that he preferred the cooking of his mother to that of Thea. The family owned a small car and used to have a chauffeur, who addressed the young Edward as 'Junior-Chef', whereas the servants called him 'Eddie'. The servants were not Jewish and they had to leave the Ullendorff household when Edward was fifteen due to Nazi legislation.

Edward's maternal grandparents and paternal grandmother were alive during his childhood. He felt particularly close to his maternal grandparents, who lived in Berlin. His paternal grandfather died in 1911 and his paternal grandmother died when Edward was 5 years old. His maternal grandfather, Adolf Pulvermann, was observant of Jewish tradition, unlike Edward's parents, who were far less engaged with Judaism. Whereas his parents would observe only the Jewish New Year (*Rosh ha-Shana*) and the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), his grandfather held all the festivals. Edward enjoyed listening to him read the traditional Hebrew liturgy at Passover (the *Haggada*). Edward felt very much in tune also with his grandmother, Emma, who had learned Latin from her brother and asked Edward to teach her Greek, when he was learning this at school. His maternal grandfather died in 1932 and Edward, aged 12, was not allowed to attend the funeral. Emma was taken to Theresienstadt during the war. Edward remained in contact with her there by correspondence until 1943, after which all trace of her was lost; she was murdered in Poland.

Edward's father Friedrich had two older brothers, Paul (born 1876) and Arthur (born 1877), and two sisters. The younger sister, Martha, was the school friend of Cilli, and it was through this connection that Friedrich had met Cilli. The elder brother of Friedrich, Paul, went to the USA in the 1890s and became a wealthy financier. His uncle Paul took a close interest in Edward during his childhood and was an important presence in Edward's life at that time. Edward remembered with pleasure the occasions when his uncle Paul would come to Berlin and take him in his Rolls Royce to have breakfast in the sumptuous Adlon hotel. (In later life Edward continued to have a particular penchant for luxury hotels—Inverlochy Castle in Scotland was a particular favourite.) He also used to take him riding in the Tiergarten. Edward and his mother occasionally stayed with Paul in his Swiss holiday home in St Moritz. As a young boy Edward enjoyed reading books about American Indians, especially those of Karl May. He remembered with delight the occasion on which his uncle Paul arranged for a real American Indian to write a letter to him from the USA. The decipherment and interpretation of this English letter was one of the first philological challenges for the young Edward, who was eight or nine at the time. His uncle Arthur owned a business that manufactured cleaning materials. He lived outside Berlin in Karlshorst, where he had a large property with kitchen gardens. Edward acquired his lifelong predilection for asparagus on his visits to his uncle Arthur's home, where he was served fresh vegetables from the garden. Edward's mother had a younger sister, Rosa ('Rosie'). One of Edward's earliest memories was of the celebrations at the wedding of his much-loved aunt Rosa to her husband Martin Kempner on 1 January, 1923. Martin worked for Edward's father as his secretary and, after his death, became joint owner of the business together with Edward's mother. The son of Rosa and Martin, Thomas Kempner, was to settle in the UK and become principal of Henley Management College.

Edward's father's family were more assimilated Jews than the family of his mother. His paternal grandmother used to give the young Edward Easter eggs and at Christmas his uncle Arthur used to have a Christmas tree, neither of which customs was approved of by Edward's mother.

When Edward was a young boy, his mother used to take him at *Rosh ha-Shana* and *Yom Kippur* to the Oranienburger Strasse Synagogue, which was an imposing building with 3,000 seats. The singing of the Hebrew liturgy by the cantors at these services made a deep impression on Edward. By the age of nine or ten he had become more observant of Jewish tradition than the rest of his family. He would fast on *Yom Kippur* and

regularly attend services at the Oranienburger Strasse Synagogue on the Sabbath. He owned a seat in the synagogue, which he had inherited from his father. Edward's uncle Martin Kempner would carry Edward's father to his seat in the synagogue on a few rare occasions when he attended services during the last few years of his life. According to Edward it was in particular the Hebrew language and the music of the liturgy that attracted him to Judaism and he was, as he used to put it, 'more interested in cantors than rabbis'. When Edward took over the *Herrenzimmer* in the flat as his work room, he replaced a landscape picture given to the family by his uncle Arthur by a large photograph of Theodor Herzl, which greatly annoyed his uncle. This demonstrated that he also had sympathies for Zionist ideals at that time.

When he was six, after a year at kindergarten, Edward started attending a local primary school in Pasteurstrasse. He showed particular flair in the writing of essays, one of which, 'The Adventures of a Raindrop', he felt particularly proud of and preserved together with his school records. A Jewish physical education teacher at the school called Rosenblatt offered extracurricular classes in Hebrew to Jewish pupils. Edward immensely enjoyed attending these classes and by the time he left the school at the age of ten he was able to read and understand Hebrew well.

In 1930, at the insistence of his uncle Paul, he applied successfully for admission to the famous Gymnasium Zum Grauen Kloster in Berlin and was educated there until 1938. In the section of the application form for the school that asked applicants to describe their career aspirations Edward wrote that he wanted to study Oriental languages. He knew already at that age what path he wished to follow in life. The Gymnasium Zum Grauen Kloster was a school for boys and put emphasis on the humanities, especially Latin and Greek, rather than on the sciences. Although a non-denominational school, its premises were built around a thirteenth-century Gothic abbey, which particularly impressed Edward when his mother took him there on his first day. There was a plaque on the wall stating that Otto von Bismarck had been a pupil at the school. In later life Edward was prouder of the fact that the school had earlier been attended by the great F. Praetorius, the author of *Die amharische Sprache* (Halle 1879), a masterpiece of nineteenth-century Semitic scholarship.

Edward had happy memories of the eight years that he spent at the Gymnasium. His form teacher took particular care of him and invited him to travel with his family to the mountains and to the coast. Although many of the boys were in the Hitler Youth movement, Edward felt at ease with all except a few. He was particularly close to one boy called

Wolf(dietrich) Heyn, whom he met in his first year at the school. Although in the Hitler Youth, Heyn was anti-Nazi. Edward and Heyn remained in touch by correspondence throughout their lives. There were about half a dozen Jewish pupils at the Gymnasium. A rabbi used to come once a week to teach them about Judaism when the other pupils had their class on Christian religious education. One of the Jewish pupils was Shalhevet Freier, who was later to become chairman of the Israeli Atomic Energy Committee.

While Edward was at school Hitler and the Nazi party came to power. On the day that Hitler gained control of the country, 30 January 1933, Edward had suffered an attack of appendicitis. As he was taken to hospital in the ambulance he heard people around him shouting that Hitler had become Reichskanzler. He overheard the surgeon who operated on him say to his mother 'Do you think that on account of today's events we would treat him any differently?' While vicious anti-Semitism was rife and officially encouraged in Germany at large, this was not so within the walls of Zum Grauen Kloster. Edward himself would say that he never really suffered from anti-Semitism at school in Berlin. There were, however, a few unpleasant incidents. Thus he told how, on the occasion of his thirteenth birthday in 1933, an older pupil in the school told one of Edward's friends not to come to Edward's 'Jewish birthday'. When this became known to the school authorities, the boy and his parents were summoned to appear before the headmaster and the offender was required to make a public apology. The sad fact was, however, that none of the Christian children came to Edward's birthday parties in future years. Only one of the teachers belonged to the Nazi party. This was the music teacher, who would even appear at school wearing Nazi uniform. Once this teacher told the other boys not to stand with Edward in the playground, but they ignored his instructions. In 1932 Edward heard Hitler speak at a rally held in a Baltic sea resort, where his form teacher had taken him for a holiday. He recalled how hundreds of people waited for Hitler for several hours after he had been delayed by a thunderstorm. On 21 March 1933, after Hitler had come to power, Edward together with the other boys in the school were instructed to stand in the street and wave at Hitler's motorcade as it passed slowly by. Outside school, Edward recalled a few distasteful cases of anti-Semitism. When he was 13 years old, somebody put up a sign 'Juden raus' ('Jews out') in his neighbourhood. His mother phoned the police and they took the sign down.

At the Gymnasium Edward's talent for languages became clear. He was regularly awarded the title of 'primus' in Greek and Latin at the end

of the school year and excelled also in other languages that he studied at school, such as French and Italian. He enjoyed the study of German literature and had a particular love for the works of Goethe and Thomas Mann. Once when he was on holiday in Switzerland he was excited to find that Thomas Mann was staying at the same hotel as his family and often saw him sitting alone in the corner of the dining room. Edward was a confident public speaker and was often asked by his teachers to give presentations to the school on various subjects, which he could perform without notes. He did not feel as comfortable with mathematics as he did with the study of languages. One of his school friends, called Jakobson, used to help him with mathematics and in exchange Edward helped him with Latin and Greek. The Gymnasium also had an exacting regime of athletics and physical education, to which Edward devoted himself with the same intensity as he did to his intellectual studies. He especially enjoyed running in particular and was particularly good at middle-distance races such as 5,000 metres. He was also a good swimmer. At the age of 16, however, he suffered a heart attack, seemingly due to a congenital weakness of the heart, and was afterwards forbidden to participate in any sports. The heart attack occurred at the end of *Yom Kippur* in 1936, after he had fasted all day. He was taken home and examined by a heart specialist called Professor Dresdel (he had, in fact, been recently deprived of his title of 'professor' by Nazi legislation and used headed notepaper with the title crossed out). Edward was required to be absent from school for six months.

Basic Hebrew was taught to pupils of the Gymnasium who wished to prepare for the Christian ministry. Edward's knowledge of Hebrew was far more advanced than that of these pupils. In his first year at school, when he was ten, Edward was asked to read Hebrew to show the class how the language should be pronounced. While at the Gymnasium he continued to improve his knowledge of Hebrew through self-instruction and also by attending various extracurricular classes in Jewish institutions. In the evenings he learnt spoken Hebrew at the Hebräische Lehranstalt (the Hebrew School) of the Berlin Jewish community. He continued to immerse himself in the Hebrew of the liturgy and in the music of the services at the Oranienburger Strasse synagogue. He had (and retained) a fine singing voice and served for a time as a cantor. In this capacity he taught the cantillation of the Hebrew Bible to bar-mitsvah candidates at the synagogue and trained them to read their allotted portions of the Hebrew Bible. One of the candidates he prepared for bar-mitsvah was M. H. (Goshen) Gottstein, later to become well known as a scholar of Semitic languages. He also taught in a small synagogue in the town of Lehnitz, which was

located close to the concentration camp at Oranienburg, from where he often heard gunshots. Between the ages of 15 and 18 he would regularly travel at weekends to Lehnitz and teach Hebrew to girls who were being prepared by the Youth *'Aliyya* movement to travel to Palestine. On some occasions he would hold the service in this synagogue.¹ Edward was very strict with his trainees and on one occasion a girl who was finding Hebrew difficult complained to the head of the institution that he was pressing her too hard. One of his fellow pupils at the Gymnasium recalled how as a schoolboy Edward was exacting of the highest standards and would correct even his teachers, in the form of short notes, if he felt that something they had said was inaccurate. This desire for exactitude and precision was characteristic of Edward throughout his life.

He made the acquaintance of Ismar Elbogen, an outstanding scholar in the field of Hebrew liturgy and literature, who in the 1930s was a senior member of staff at the Berlin Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums. Normally students of this institution had to have passed the final school examination (Abitur), but Elbogen offered to allow Edward to attend the Hochschule as a special junior auditor if he passed a special examination in Hebrew, Bible and Talmud. After Edward had taken these examinations, Elbogen announced that he had passed the first two, but not the third. Nevertheless, Elbogen permitted him to attend lectures in the Hochschule. There were between fifty and sixty students at the Hochschule at that time, including some who were to go on to distinguished careers after the war outside Germany, for example the philosopher Walter Kaufmann. Many of the teachers at the Hochschule at that time were eminent in their field. They included, for example, the philosopher of religion Leo Baeck, who after the war was to become a prominent leader of Progressive Judaism. Edward remembers Leo Baeck as a man of imposing gravitas who commanded the respect of all around him. He told of one occasion when he witnessed Gestapo officers visiting the Hochschule and bowing courteously before Leo Baeck. It was, however, the classes of Elbogen on Hebrew texts that attracted Edward in particular. By the time Edward was eighteen, he had a good knowledge not only of the classical Hebrew of the traditional sources, but also of the vernacular variety then being revived in mandatory Palestine. He had read Hebrew

¹A photograph of him and his trainees in the Lehnitz synagogue has been preserved in the archives of the Jewish Museum in Berlin <<http://www.jmberlin.de/main/DE/03-Sammlung-und-Forschung/00-LPdetails/synagoge-lehnitz-content.php>>.

texts of all varieties (Biblical, Mishnaic, Talmudic, medieval) and at the same time had acquired Hebrew speech.

By the age of sixteen Edward had decided that he wanted to go to Palestine to study at the Hebrew University when he finished school. This ambition was one of the reasons why Elbogen was persuaded to allow him to attend the Hochschule before the Abitur. From the time of his primary school Edward's mother never approved of his extracurricular activities relating to Hebrew, since she felt they distracted him from his core studies at school. She was also concerned that these may overtax him physically. This was because at primary school he did not have much appetite for food and was very thin. After his heart attack at the age of sixteen her concerns about his health were greatly increased. She was unhappy about Edward's ambition to go to Palestine. She herself did not want to emigrate to Palestine. Through a family friend she had, in fact, secured an offer of a scholarship to the University of Cambridge for Edward, and had hoped that they could both travel to England together. Edward, however, was determined to go to the Hebrew University. The primary motivation was his love of Hebrew but, as a teenager, he had a sympathy for Zionist ideals, as demonstrated by the prominent place he gave to the photograph of Herzl in his room at home. Once in Palestine, however, he favoured the Brit Shalom movement, which wanted peaceful coexistence between Arabs and Jews in a binational state. Edward was and ever remained a man of liberal political views.

Edward took his final school examination (in German, Latin, Greek, Mathematics and History) in the week that ended 12 March 1938, the day that Hitler annexed Austria. He first travelled to Zurich, where he took a summer course on graphology, and then, after briefly returning to Berlin, departed in September 1938 for Palestine, a few months before Kristallnacht (9–10 November 1938). He travelled in charge of a group of about a dozen children who were being sent to Palestine by the Youth *'Aliyya* movement, an organisation founded by Recha Freier (the mother of the aforementioned Shalhevet Freier) to rescue children from Nazi Germany. Amid the emotional scene of the parents' separation from their children at Berlin railway station, Edward said a poignant farewell to his mother, whom he was never to see again. The Ullendorff family business was compulsorily liquidated by Nazi legislation in 1938. Edward's mother managed to leave Germany two or three days before the war broke out in 1939, together with his uncle Arthur. They travelled to Brussels, where there were family friends. She died in Brussels of a heart attack in 1940.

Edward travelled by train to Trieste and thereafter sailed for Haifa in Palestine. He left his life in Germany behind and was not to return until many years after the war when he visited the country as an Englishman. It is a curious fact that in conversations with friends he was less than clear about the place of his birth, which is noted in many biographical sources as Zurich. As already remarked, his mother had apparently expected to be in Zurich at the time of delivery, but the journey did not take place, with the result that Edward was born in Berlin. Nevertheless, he did sometimes give people the impression that he was born in Zurich, or at least never corrected the error. This ambiguity about his actual place of birth may have been an expression of his struggle with his German origin, but he was perhaps also influenced by a wish to model himself on his teacher H. J. Polotsky, who was born in Zurich.

Once Edward had set sail, he discovered that Ismar Elbogen was on the same boat. When they arrived at Haifa, Elbogen wrote him introductions to H. Torczyner and J. N. Epstein, who taught Semitic languages at the Hebrew University. The introductions stated that Edward had passed all three examinations set by Elbogen as a condition for his attendance of the Hochschule—Elbogen explained to Edward that he had told him that he failed the Talmud examination since ‘he thought it would be good for his character’.

Edward enrolled for a course for an MA degree in Semitic languages at the recently founded Hebrew University of Jerusalem on Mount Scopus (BA degrees had not yet been introduced). Following the principles of the university, classes were taught and examinations (written and oral) were conducted entirely in Hebrew. On account of his earlier studies in Hebrew in Germany, he was already able to speak Hebrew fluently before he started his studies in Jerusalem. He recounts an amusing story on this subject. In 1938 in Zurich Edward and a fellow student were conversing in Hebrew. A Frenchman sitting behind overheard their conversation and asked what language was being spoken. ‘Hebrew’, replied Edward, whereupon the Frenchman rejoined ‘Ah, oui, c’est de l’hébreu pour moi, mais qu’est-ce que c’est pour vous?’ This French use of ‘l’hébreu’ in the sense of ‘gibberish’ was the trigger thirty years later for an article on the ways in which different languages refer to unintelligible speech (1968).²

The Hebrew University had on its staff some of the finest scholars of Europe. These are described in a series of vignettes in his autobiographical

²All of Ullendorff’s publications referred to in the text, along with all other items cited, are listed at the end of this memoir in date order.

work about his young adult life *The Two Zions. Reminiscences of Jerusalem and Ethiopia* (1988). Edward attended the lectures of many of the great scholars in the field of Semitic philology, including D. H. Baneth, M. H. Segal, H. Torczyner (Tur-Sinai) and H. J. Polotsky, as well as the leading scholars in Jewish studies such as M. Buber, G. Scholem and L. Roth. Although he always spoke with great respect about all his teachers, there is no doubt that the teacher whom he admired the most was Polotsky, who was one of the greatest Semitists and linguists of the twentieth century. Edward always regarded Polotsky as the master to whom he owed his greatest debt. He continued to revere him throughout his life, often referring to him simply as ‘maestro’. He corresponded with his teacher regularly until Polotsky’s death in 1991 and shortly afterwards, in 1992, Edward published the letters that Polotsky had written to him (almost all in German) during more than forty years of correspondence. On Polotsky’s sixtieth birthday, Edward presented him with *An Amharic Chrestomathy* (1965) ‘as a small instalment towards the repayment of a large debt’. Polotsky appears in many ways to have assumed the figure of a father for him, filling the gap of the father whom he had lost. It is clear that Polotsky inspired and influenced Edward deeply. Those who were acquainted with both scholars, indeed, sometimes remarked on similarities of mannerisms and turns of phrase. Edward donated a bench to the British Academy in commemoration of Polotsky.

Studies at the Hebrew University were demanding, hours long, money scarce and books few. Edward, like many of his fellow students, managed to live off an allowance of £4 per month, in his case eked out by giving private Hebrew lessons. He studied an impressively wide range of Semitic languages in a syllabus that served as the model for the degrees in Semitic languages that he himself was later to introduce and teach at St Andrews, Manchester and London. The lessons he took with Polotsky inspired him with a particular interest in the Semitic languages of Ethiopia. Some of his fellow students at the Hebrew University also became distinguished scholars in the field of Semitic languages, for example J. Blau, S. M. Stern and E. Y. Kutscher. Many hours were spent in the library—a photograph of him at work with fellow students (among them S. M. Stern, G. Schocken and D. Ayalon) can be seen in the *Standard Jewish Encyclopaedia* (ed. C. Roth, p. 1206), where Edward appears as the fifth from the left. He also spent many hours copying various Semitic texts by hand from the single copies of key books in the field that were available to students—the xerox machine was still a long way in the future.

There were also serious problems of public security, and students were frequently required for guard duty for three hours per night, being sworn in as special constables and armed with antiquated rifles. Life at the Hebrew University was difficult, but in later life Edward often spoke about the time he spent there with nostalgia. In addition to his studies he was very active in helping and organising refugees from Germany and Austria who came to the university as students, and even while he was a student he was already well known to the university authorities. He remained ever grateful for the supreme privilege of studying at such an institution. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem retained a cherished place in his heart; he was among the very first to receive a university education entirely in Hebrew and ever remained uplifted by the fact.

As a student Edward's first home was on Abyssinians' Street, adjoining the Dabra Gannat Ethiopian church, which was a curious coincidence in view of his future interest in Ethiopian studies. He subsequently rented a room in the North Talpiot district of Jerusalem, where he spent most of his student career. This was close to the Allenby Barracks where the troops were predominantly Scottish regiments and he recalled often studying Semitic texts to the accompaniment of bagpipes. He made the acquaintance of many of the local residents, including the famous Hebrew writer S. Y. Agnon, with whom he often had conversations on the Number 7 bus between Talpiot and the centre of town. As a young man Edward always had an impressive facility to communicate with people more senior than himself and to form friendly relations with them. His fellow students recall how he had enjoyed links of friendship with his teachers, including those who seemed very unapproachable to others. They also recall his amusing talent for mimicking his teachers. In Talpiot he developed a particular friendship with the neighbouring Noack family and fell in love with one of the daughters, Dina. Both Edward and Dina are mentioned in Y. Ben-Arieh's book (2012 vol. 1, pp. 86–7) based upon the 1939 British census.³ Edward always described Dina as 'stunningly beautiful' and requested her hand in marriage. Dina's father, who was a medical doctor, was rather concerned about the health of Edward, since he already had had heart problems in his teens. Dina's father worried that his daughter would have a 'long widowhood'. Nevertheless they were able to marry in 1943 and Dina became Edward's loving wife, companion and support; on their diamond wedding anniversary they received a message from Her Majesty the Queen. Dina

³Y. Ben-Arieh, *The New Jewish Jerusalem in the Mandate Period (1917–1948): Neighborhoods, Houses, People* (Jerusalem, 2013).

was an inseparable part of Edward's life and it is impossible to think of him without at the same time thinking of her, to whom throughout his life he owed so much. It is no doubt due to her devoted affection and care for him that he lived to the age of 91 despite recurrent serious health problems. Dina's care and support began even before they were married as shown, for example, by the fact that when Edward was a student she copied out by hand many of the books that he needed for his studies. One of these was the aforementioned *Die amharische Sprache* of F. Praetorius. Edward enjoyed a fortuitous link with this great scholar, for both, as mentioned above, had been pupils at the Gymnasium Zum Grauen Kloster in Berlin. A similar fortuitous connection linked Edward and Dina. As chance would have it, Edward's parents and Dina's parents were married, unbeknown to both parties, by the same rabbi at the same synagogue in Berlin on the same day of the same year 15 March 1919.

The Second World War broke out while Edward was a student in Jerusalem. After completing his MA degree in 1942 (the first student at the university to have majored in Semitic Philology), he was appointed, following a brief spell as a university fundraiser, to various posts in the British Military Administration in Eritrea, which the British had recently wrested from the control of the Italians. He played a key role due to his knowledge of Ethiopian Semitic languages. It was in Asmara in 1943 that his wedding with Dina took place, delightfully described in *The Two Zions*. He served as the Chief Examiner in the British Censorship in Eritrea from 1942 to 1943, using his linguistic skills to read numerous, often obscure, documents in Amharic and Tigrinya, and as Assistant Political Secretary from 1945 to 1946. In Asmara he established the Tigrinya Language Council and founded the first Tigrinya-language newspaper, known as the *Eritrean Weekly News*. He recruited as the newspaper's editor Woldeab Woldemariam, later dubbed 'the father of Eritrean independence'. These activities played an important role in the establishment of Tigrinya as a literary language. Excerpts from the *Eritrean Weekly News* were later included in Edward's *A Tigrinya Chrestomathy* (1985). His immersion in Ethiopian culture at this period was to be formative for the direction of his future academic research. He grew to love the country, especially the 'stark and overpowering' beauty of the Ethiopian highlands, and the Ethiopian people. His only reservations about the country concerned the hot spices of Ethiopian cuisine which did not agree with him.

He was greatly impressed by Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie, 'whose slight figure was in marked contrast to the overpowering impact of his

personality'. Whenever he visited Ethiopia after the war, he always had an audience with the emperor, and the emperor entrusted him with the job of preparing an annotated translation of the royal autobiography from Amharic to English. In 1972, two years before he was deposed in the revolution, the emperor conferred on Edward the Haile Selassie International Prize for Ethiopian Studies. In 1988, in his autobiographical reminiscences, *The Two Zions*, Edward noted, sadly, that of the eleven people featured in the photograph of the presentation ceremony, at least six had been murdered. He ensured that a memorial service was held for the emperor at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle in 1975.

Edward returned to Jerusalem after the war, where he worked briefly as an administrator at the Hebrew University. There his duties as academic registrar in 1946–7 included looking after an influx of foreign students (mainly former American servicemen) and the drafting of letters to referees abroad regarding the promotion of members of staff. When one elderly lecturer in history was put forward for promotion, one of the referees was the Oxford Reader in Jewish Studies, Cecil Roth, who sent a cryptic note consisting of one line in Hebrew which, in translation, read: 'He is like a peg that is not to be removed from its place.' This cryptic rejoinder kept the committee in session for a whole hour. The members included some of the greatest Biblical and Talmudic exegetes of the day, concordances were consulted, and the discussion was animated as well as erudite, but they were firmly stymied. The debate over the precise provenance and meaning of this text, Edward felt, was excellent training for his later academic career.

The Jerusalem of the postwar years, however, was very different from the relatively peaceful city of the 1930s and was characterised by violent exchanges between the *Irgun* resistance movement and the British administration, followed by a renewal of Arab–Jewish hostilities, with barbed wire barriers, body-searches, bombs, machine-gun fire, etc. and, at the university, bitter confrontations between supporters and opponents of the fighting. In 1947 Edward accepted a junior position in the British Mandate administration and worked in an office in the King David Hotel dealing with financial compensation for the victims of terrorist attacks. Due to his position Edward himself became the target on one occasion and was kidnapped temporarily by the *Irgun*. As relationships between Arabs and Jews deteriorated further, at the end of the Mandate in 1948 Edward decided that he did not want to make his future life in the country and accepted an invitation to move to Britain and join the Oxford Institute of Colonial Studies. When he left Jerusalem he received a reference from

Polotsky which consisted of the words, 'Mr. E. Ullendorff was my pupil from ... to ... I have no complaints against him,' which was great praise indeed in Polotsky's terms.

His duties in his new job in Oxford involved teaching Arabic to colonial service cadets. Thanks to the award of a Scarborough Senior Research Studentship, he had sufficient spare time, however, to resume his studies and undertook research for a doctoral degree under the supervision of the Semitist G. R. Driver. Within two years he was awarded a D.Phil. for a thesis entitled 'The relationship of modern Ethiopian languages to Gə'əz', Gə'əz being the classical literary language of Ethiopia. This was concerned in particular with the comparative phonology of the Ethiopian Semitic languages, published in 1955 as *The Semitic Languages of Ethiopia*. One of his fellow students at Oxford with whom he became acquainted was Endalkachew Makonnen, later the last imperial prime minister of Ethiopia.

After completing his D.Phil. Edward began a distinguished academic career in various British universities. In 1950 he was appointed lecturer in Semitic Languages at St Andrews University, and was subsequently advanced to Reader in 1956. During this period he developed a love of the Scottish Highlands that remained with him all his life. While still in his thirties he was appointed as Professor of Semitic Languages and Literatures at Manchester (1959–64). Thereafter he moved to the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, where a foundation chair of Ethiopian Studies was created specially for him. This was the first Chair in Ethiopian Studies anywhere in the world. Under his leadership Amharic began to be taught as part of a regular degree programme, initially in combination with Linguistics or Social Anthropology with the first intake of students in 1967. From 1972–9 he served as Head of the Africa Department, and in 1979 he took over the Chair of Semitic Languages from J. B. Segal. His aim in taking the latter was, he said, to preserve such an important position from extinction but, regrettably, neither chair survived his retirement. He decided to take early retirement from SOAS in 1982 in order to devote himself full time to his numerous research projects. On his retirement, the University of London conferred upon him Emeritus status in the fields of 'Semitic Languages and Ethiopian Studies', thus giving recognition to both of the chairs that he had held there. In the various academic posts that he held he made major contributions to the development of the teaching of Semitic studies in Britain. Not only did he add Ethiopian languages and post-Biblical Hebrew to the curriculum, but he also brought with him the great tradition

of German philology. This was the tradition which he had first known in Berlin and which he came to know more closely at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, whose Semitic scholars were among the finest that European learning had produced. The breadth of scholarship that Edward brought to Britain and the philological tradition which he embodied were together a hugely enriching influence, in the classroom, in the pages of learned journals and in the more public domain.

During his academic career, he played a leading role in the academic bodies of his field, serving as Chairman of the Association of British Orientalists (1963–4), President of the Society for Old Testament Study (1971) and Vice-President of the Royal Asiatic Society (1975–9, 1981–5). From 1975 to 1983 he sat on the Advisory Board of the British Library, as well as playing significant roles on such bodies as the *Fontes Historiae Africanae*, the Oriental Documents Committee, the Anglo-Ethiopian Society and the Council of the British Institute in Eastern Africa. Throughout his career he felt strongly that a vital part of an academic's task was to further his chosen field not merely through his own research and publications, but just as importantly through actively nurturing the means of making others' research available, especially through the medium of academic journals. He accordingly devoted himself for many years to the development of two of the most important British journals in his field. During his time in Manchester he was joint editor of the *Journal of Semitic Studies* and in London he was Chairman of the Editorial Board of the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* between 1968 and 1978. The *Journal of Semitic Studies* has played a pivotal role in the development of Semitic studies in Britain. To the very first issue (1956) Edward contributed one of his most notable essays, on Hebraic-Jewish elements in Abyssinian Christianity, and for years afterwards his articles and reviews enriched its pages. As joint editor he succeeded in attracting leading scholars from abroad to write for the journal. Volume 34/2 (Autumn 1989) was published in celebration of Edward's seventieth birthday. In his capacity as Chairman of the Editorial Board of the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* he worked hard to maintain and advance the already high scholarly standards of the *Bulletin*. He encouraged the publication of articles by young scholars at the beginning of their careers. He had a genuine desire to help others publish in the fields he specialised in. This was not only out of a desire to promote the scholarly subjects that were close to his heart but also due to the importance he attached to friendships and the support of others. His support of the Ethiopian royal family has already been mentioned. Edward was instrumental in bringing

to England and finding work for S. Strelcyn, a noted scholar of Gə'ez and Amharic, who had fallen foul of the communist authorities in Poland. To give another example, he helped a wartime friend Anthony d'Avray find a publisher for his book on the history of the Red Sea (1996).

Edward received numerous honours and awards for his distinguished service and his important contributions to scholarship. These include the Imperial Ethiopian Gold Medallion (1960) and, as already mentioned, the Haile Selassie International Prize for Ethiopian Studies (1972). He was elected Fellow of the British Academy in 1965 and served as its Vice-President from 1980 to 1982. One honour of which he was immensely proud was to be one of the few British scholars to be elected, in 1998, a Foreign Fellow of the prestigious Accademia dei Lincei, founded in 1603 and which counts as former members such illustrious names as Galileo Galilei, Louis Pasteur and Albert Einstein. It was, however, not only the honour of election to the Lincei that accorded Edward such joy. When in Rome to receive the gold insignia, he stayed at the Hotel Hassler; he had been in this hotel with his mother in 1931.

Edward Ullendorff was a prolific writer. His bibliography contains some 600 items, including around a dozen books (not counting revised editions or collections of republished pieces) and about seventy articles, as well as numerous book reviews, and many shorter pieces, notes, marginalia, newspaper pieces and letters to the editor.⁴ He was able to achieve this large output partly because of his ability to concentrate absolutely on the matter in hand, partly because of the invaluable secretarial support he constantly received from Dina, and partly because he continued throughout his life the habit he developed as a student of rising early and completing several hours work long before most people were up and about.

His publications made many important contributions to research on Semitic languages and on the associated cultures. A large proportion of his scholarly oeuvre was devoted to the languages and culture of Ethiopia. His first publication was an article entitled in Hebrew *'Ḥabašit'* ('Abyssinian'), which appeared in the Hebrew language newspaper *Ha'aretz*, in February 1943. The author of that article was one Eliezer ha-Yanshufi. *Yanshuf* in Hebrew is 'owl' and Edward occasionally used the Hebraised surname Yanshufi, based upon the etymology of Ullendorff as Eulendorff — 'Owl Village'. This was followed by a number of short newspaper articles and studies on Eritrean and Ethiopian matters written in English,

⁴ Full listings of his publications can be found in Hopkins (1989) and Dina Ullendorff (2000).

Hebrew and Tigrinya. At this period he published his first book, *Exploration and Study of Abyssinia* (1945), a short independent work which later became part of *The Ethiopians* (1960).

While studying for his D.Phil. in Oxford he made numerous contributions to newspapers and journals, especially book reviews on Ethiopian topics. His second book appeared when he was at St Andrews, *The Semitic Languages of Ethiopia. A Comparative Phonology* (1955), which was a revised version of his Oxford D.Phil. thesis. This was the first systematic attempt to untangle the complicated web of linguistic relationships among Ethiopian Semitic languages. Ethiopia has a great diversity of Semitic languages and their genetic relationships have been controversial, especially as regards the relationship of the modern spoken languages with classical Ethiopic (Gəʿəz). The situation is complicated by migrations of peoples and extensive contact over many generations with non-Semitic languages. Edward's work was based largely on the copious linguistic material he had gathered in Eritrea and Ethiopia. The conclusion he arrived at in this research was that all modern Semitic languages of Ethiopia have a common genetic origin in a single ancestor language, which was to be identified with Gəʿəz. This ancestral language had been transferred from South Arabia into Africa at some point in history. He argued against the view that the differences between the various modern Ethiopian languages have to be explained by the theory that they were derived from different South Arabian languages imported into Africa. Although nowadays (as Edward was later himself to observe) scholars are cautious of relying on phonological features for the reconstruction of genetic relations, and more recent work based on morphological criteria suggests that the situation is perhaps not that straightforward, his work was of foundational importance for the future study of Ethiopian Semitic.

At this period he also wrote numerous articles in the field of Ethiopian studies, including a substantial study on 'Hebraic-Jewish elements in Abyssinian (Monophysite) Christianity' (1956). One may mention also his articles on 'An Aramaic *Vorlage* of the Ethiopic text of Enoch?' (1960*b*), or 'The Biblical sources of the Ethiopian national saga' (in Hebrew) (1960*c*). It is indicative of his wide ranging scholarship that he never confined himself to 'languages and literatures' in the strictest sense. Thus, not long after he moved to Manchester there appeared the first edition of his book *The Ethiopians. An Introduction to Country and People* (1960*a*). This is a highly readable and informative book giving a description of the geography, population, religion, history, languages and culture of the country. It has seen several reprints and four editions. He stated that he wrote the

book in a few weeks, but it shows no sign of being written in haste and is both lucid and instructive, even though in the past fifty years Ethiopia has changed vastly from the land with which Edward was familiar and is now understood in terms of more than its Amhara-Christian heritage.

In 1967, shortly after moving to SOAS and his election to the British Academy, he gave that year's series of Schweich Lectures on Biblical Archaeology on the subject of Ethiopia and the Bible, a series which was later published under the same title (1968*a*, reprinted many times). This was a philological and historical tour de force, which was an eloquent testimony to the range of his scholarship, covering a broad canvas of textual sources in Semitic languages. In these lectures he took up three topics on each of which he wrote on more than one occasion: (i) Ethiopic Bible translations, particularly the translation of the Bible into Gəʿəz; (ii) the impact of the Old Testament on Ethiopian life; and (iii) the legend of the Queen of Sheba. For the second lecture he took up in a revised and expanded form various points that he had already made in 'Hebraic-Jewish elements in Abyssinian (Monophysite) Christianity' (1956), and for the third he substantially reproduced a previously published paper entitled 'The Queen of Sheba' (1962–3). The first lecture was of a more philological character. Here, following a masterly survey of previous work on the subject, he developed a theory concerning the origins and history of the Ethiopic Bible. He rejected the widely held view that the original translation of the Bible into Gəʿəz based on the Greek was subjected later to revision on the basis of the Syriac (mediated by the Arabic) and subsequently of the Hebrew and argued that there was nothing to prevent the assumption that all three—Greek, Syriac and Hebrew—were used, directly or indirectly, for the original translation by a team of translators. He believed that direct Syriac or Hebrew influences could readily be accounted for in the period from the fourth to perhaps the seventh century, though not in the fourteenth or fifteenth century, but he did accept that there was influence from Arabic sources at that time. He also accepted that in purely statistical terms Greek was the source *par excellence* used for the original translation. Edward reverted to these arguments in two later papers, 'Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek: the versions underlying Ethiopic Translations of Bible and intertestamental literature' (1980*a*) and 'Hebrew elements in the Ethiopic Old Testament' (1987). He had earlier argued in similar terms that the Ethiopic version of Enoch was in large part made directly from Aramaic in an article entitled 'An Aramaic *Vorlage* of the Ethiopic text of Enoch?' (1960). It is perhaps the case that his views concerning the use of Syriac and Hebrew in addition to Greek

for the original translation of the Bible into Gə'əz, and concerning the history of the translation, have not found wide acceptance, but there is no question but that all three of his Schweich Lectures reflect great erudition and learning, and that the volume remains indispensable for all those concerned with any aspect of the Ethiopic Bible and the impact of the translation within Ethiopia.

During Edward's time in London, the study and teaching of Ethiopian languages, though sporadically available there already from the mid-1930s, acquired a regular basis, in the case of Amharic greatly aided by his *An Amharic Chrestomathy* (1965), which was followed twenty years later by a similar volume, *A Tigrinya Chrestomathy* (1985). These contain collections of texts drawn from a wide range of printed and other written sources with accompanying glossaries and notes. The lengthy introductions, full of detail and interest, are especially noteworthy, providing much information not easily available elsewhere. Both books remain valuable resources, sparing the student the task of long searches amongst obscure and now near-unobtainable sources.

Of his more than 250 publications that appeared whilst he was at SOAS many are short notes and articles, but some are longer works. The latter include his superb English translation from Amharic of the first volume of Emperor Haile Selassie I's autobiography (1976), which is of immense importance for historians and students of Amharic attempting to come to grips with this most complex language. The original Amharic version was published in Addis Ababa in 1965 and Edward's English rendering, entitled *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress 1892–1937*, is probably the longest translation from Amharic in existence. The book describes the emperor's life between 1892, the year of his birth, and 1936. This falls broadly into three main periods: his youth and the assumption of functions of state; the regency and foreign travel as well as relations with the West; the assumption of the crown in 1930 and the growing danger of war leading to the conflicts with the Italians in 1935–6 and the invasion of Ethiopia. The book culminates with the emperor's emotional speech to the League of Nations in Geneva on 30 June 1936 to seek redress for the injustices perpetrated against his country. Edward in fact as a teenager heard the emperor's speech on the radio in Germany. Edward's translation was in many respects a labour of love, having, as he did, abiding admiration for the emperor and espousing the cause of members of the imperial family when they first sought refuge in Britain after the events of 1974.

As already remarked in the description of his Schweich lectures, Edward took a great interest in the Ethiopic version of Enoch and

supervised a doctoral thesis by M. A. Knibb, which included a new critical edition. This was subsequently published as *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch* (1978).

Throughout his career he maintained a close interest in collections of Ethiopian manuscripts in Britain and produced several authoritative catalogues. These included catalogues of major collections, such as a *Catalogue of Ethiopic Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library* (1951) and a *Catalogue of Ethiopic Manuscripts in Cambridge University Library* (together with Stephen Wright, 1961), as well as descriptions of little-known collections such as 'The Ethiopic Manuscripts in the Royal Library, Windsor Castle' (1953–4). The Royal Library of Windsor Castle contains not only written Ethiopian manuscripts. Edward was instrumental in the publication by A. Demoz of 'Emperor Menelik's phonograph message to Queen Victoria' (1969), following the rediscovery there of the original cylinder. This cylinder contained the text of a recording made in 1899 by Emperor Menelik and Empress Taitu and their royal Amharic messages are among the earliest examples of the mechanical recording of any Semitic language. Edward also published important collections of pre-modern Amharic documents, in numerous articles and also in the volume *The Amharic Letters of Emperor Theodore of Ethiopia to Queen Victoria and Her Special Envoy* (with D. Appleyard and A. Girma-Selassie, 1993).

While Edward's published researches were directed largely towards the Semitic languages of Ethiopia (especially Amharic, Gəʿəz and Tigrinya), as a teacher of Semitic languages in general much of his university instruction was devoted to Hebrew. He also gave classes in Arabic and Syriac when the need arose. Among the languages closely related to Hebrew and belonging to the Biblical milieu, he had a particular fondness for Ugaritic, about which he wrote and often taught. Edward's love for the Hebrew language began, as we have seen, in early youth as a schoolboy in Berlin, and throughout the years increased rather than diminished. For him Hebrew was not merely a book language learned for the purpose of Biblical study. Rather it was the vehicle of a huge post-Biblical literature and a living tool of written and spoken communication. Hebrew was the language in which all his studies at the Hebrew University had been conducted; in Hebrew he wrote his seminar papers and undertook his final written and oral examinations. He corresponded in Hebrew with scholars of Jewish studies (including G. Scholem); he enjoyed reading modern Hebrew literature (the rich idiom of Nobel laureate S. Y. Agnon was always a particular favourite) and he followed with interest (but not always with approval) recent developments in written and spoken modes of

expression. The transformation of an ancient written language to a fully functioning, natural modern vernacular never ceased to fascinate him and to arouse his wonderment. He regarded the revival of spoken Hebrew in Palestine as 'one of the most genuinely creative accomplishments of our time'. Edward's spoken Hebrew, which had begun in Europe in the 1930s and was developed in Palestine in the 1940s, retained a charmingly quaint archaic flavour.

Throughout his career Edward wrote original studies on many different aspects and phases of Hebrew, especially the Hebrew Bible and its Near Eastern background. His collection entitled *Is Biblical Hebrew a Language? Studies in Semitic Languages and Civilizations* (1977) contains no fewer than ten essays in the section devoted to 'Hebrew and Old Testament', and his three subsequent volumes of collected studies (1987*b*, 1990, 1995) contain many more. The lecture 'Is Biblical Hebrew a language?', whose provocative title gave its name to the aforementioned volume of studies, was Edward's presidential address (1971) to the Society for Old Testament Study. His concern was to determine whether the words, forms and constructions that happened to be preserved in the corpus of the Hebrew Bible would be adequate to serve as the basis for the ordinary day-to-day requirements of a normal speech community.

His skills in Hebrew of all periods were demonstrated in his admirable decipherment and interpretation of medieval Hebrew documents attributed to Prester John, which he published in collaboration with C. F. Beckingham in the volume *The Hebrew Letters of Prester John* (1982). This work deals with a fascinating episode of medieval legend. In the commentary comparisons are made to the extant Prester John letters written in various Romance languages and it is shown that the Hebrew documents cannot be direct translations of any of these.

In addition to Hebrew and Ethiopian studies Edward made many contributions to general Semitic philology, including publications on Arabic, Aramaic, Ugaritic and South Arabian. He wrote several studies in the field of comparative Semitics, which include his often quoted article 'What is a Semitic language?' (1958), which is a masterly summary of the features that distinguish Semitic languages from languages of other genetic groups. Noteworthy too is his study of the definite article in Arabic and other Semitic languages (1965), based upon his Jerusalem MA thesis (in Hebrew) of 1940. He co-authored the book *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (with S. Moscati *et al.*, 1964), which is still one of the most widely used introductions to the subject.

This summary cannot conclude without mention of a few pieces that illustrate Edward's fascination with perhaps the more arcane corners of his fields of study: for example, mention may be made of his articles 'The Bawdy Bible' (1979), which examines the sexually suggestive or explicit passages in the Bible, and 'Ethiopian Good Food Guides' (1980*b*), which discusses Amharic cookery books. Equally fascinating is his short piece entitled 'An Ethiopic inscription in Westminster Abbey' (1992), which describes a curious late seventeenth-century monument with an inscription in Gə'əz and admirably recounts the detective work involved in discovering the circumstances of its unexpected presence. Edward relished this kind of painstaking research.

Some of Edward's writings have been reissued in four volumes of collected studies (1977, 1987*b*, 1990 and 1995), and a catalogue of his publications appeared in the *Journal of Semitic Studies*, first in 1989 in the volume dedicated to him, and then in a later issue brought up to 1999. In 2005 a Festschrift edited by Geoffrey Khan was published in his honour (*Semitic Studies in Honour of Edward Ullendorff*). The wide range of the contributions in this volume from former colleagues and students is eloquent testimony of the breadth of Edward's scholarship and the legacy he has left for future generations.

Reviewing academic books was always one of the most active areas of Edward's writing, and one that he considered an important part of a scholar's duties. Indeed, his bibliography contains over 300 reviews, which numerically constitute roughly half the full tally of his publications. Some of these reviews, e.g. those of W. Caskel, *Lihyan und Lihyanisch* (1955) and J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (1969), are substantial pieces and others, e.g. of G. W. B. Huntingford, *The Glorious Victories of 'Amda Seyon* (1966) and G. Steiner *After Babel* (1976), became fully fledged articles. The latter tour de force, indeed, was considered by Polotsky as one of Edward's most successful publications. Reviewing books was a duty that Edward clearly greatly enjoyed and he performed it with consummate skill. He also attached importance to communicating with the general public about his academic fields and scores of his 'letters to the editor' appeared in the British press, almost exclusively in *The Times*, which was his favourite newspaper. He would devotedly read *The Times* for an hour every day, sometimes wearing special gloves supplied by the newspaper to avoid ink marks on his fingers. He was also a regular reader of (and contributor to) *The Times Literary Supplement*, often correcting misprints and solecisms in the margin. Edward was always very sensitive to wrong spelling and sloppy grammar. It is very

typical of him that in *The Two Zions* he insisted (against the wishes of Oxford University Press) upon the spelling ‘mandatary’ with *a*, not ‘mandatory’ with *o*, adding at the end of the preface the note: ‘N.B. The spelling “mandatary” is correct’.

An aspect of Edward’s personality reflected in much of his writing is his interest in biography. The vignettes appearing in *The Two Zions* have already been mentioned. Obituaries of various lengths occupy a large part of his output. Many were the short ‘In Memoriam’ notices of Semitic scholars and distinguished Ethiopians which he contributed to *The Times*, while in the pages of learned journals he published lengthy obituaries of scholars such as S. Strelcyn, C. F. Beckingham, H. J. Polotsky and A. F. L. Beeston. His approach to scholarship was also informed by an abiding interest in the great figures of Semitic studies, coupled with deep respect for the traditions of study which the scholars of the past established and those of the present continue. He was very conscious indeed of the debt owed by the modern scholar to the work of his predecessors. Names such as Ludolf, Bruce, Dillmann, Praetorius, Nöldeke, Cerulli and Polotsky are mentioned frequently in Edward’s works, and always with profound reverence.

Edward was educated with the values of a broad European humanistic civilisation, a civilisation to which Hebrew and Semitic scholarship also belonged. It is no coincidence that his publications include an item entitled ‘Goethe on Hebrew’ (2001)—Goethe was his most admired author. Classical music too was an integral part of his cultural world. He loved Italian and spoke it well. Edward was not only a man of technical academic learning, but also a gentleman of culture and letters. He wrote beautifully refined English prose, and cared passionately about such things. His devotion to serious research and his love for Semitic languages led him to deplore certain recent trends in academic life and university staffing policies, trends that to him seemed associated more with advertising and public relations than with learning and scholarship. He expressed his anxieties in a short piece entitled ‘The demise of the Hebraist (principally in Great Britain)’ (1996). To Edward, genuine Hebrew scholarship (and indeed genuine scholarship of any kind) was a matter of very deep concern. Accordingly, he did not welcome the emerging discipline of general ‘Jewish studies’, which did not always require a high level of Hebrew. His view of the current situation of the humanities and their future prospects was, in fact, very pessimistic.

After his retirement he published a volume, already mentioned, of reminiscences of the events and people that surrounded two important periods in his life, his early adult years in Palestine and his experience of

Eritrea from 1941 to 1946, followed by reflections on Ethiopia up to 1974. This book, *The Two Zions. Reminiscences of Jerusalem and Ethiopia* (1988), is clearly written from the heart—Jerusalem and Ethiopia he described as ‘the twin loyalties of my life’. Though not an autobiography as such, it includes portraits of numerous individuals, scholars as well as colonial officials and others, and provides an intriguing insight not only into the events of the times but also into Edward’s own view of those events.

His experience of Ethiopia between the two journeys of 1958 and 1974 reflects in no small part the circles in which he moved, which included the imperial family. In 1972 when the University of London awarded Emperor Haile Selassie an honorary doctorate, Edward proudly headed the delegation to Claridge’s hotel in London where the emperor was staying. He always maintained great admiration for the emperor and was deeply distressed by the events of the Ethiopian revolution and how they affected the people he had known. He endeavoured to help members of the imperial family who had sought refuge in London and started a fund to offer them support, to which he himself contributed. Consequently he felt unable to return to the country after 1974 even when personally invited as, for instance, to the 1984 International Conference of Ethiopian Studies.

His ever-present concern for the maintenance of scholarly rigour pervaded his relationship with all his students. Just as his mentor, Polotsky, had been very exacting, so did Edward expect high standards from his students. He would expect, for example, undergraduates studying Amharic with him to learn Italian ‘when [they] had a spare weekend’, a necessary skill for an ‘éthiopianist’, however young. Not only that, he would say that Italian, as a major vehicle of European civilisation, was a language any educated person should know. Those students who showed promise and responded with the same scholarly standards and discipline that he had always placed on himself were readily rewarded with unfailing encouragement and advice. He regarded it as his duty as a teacher to help new generations of scholars in his field become established in an academic career, and devoted himself to this mission with genuine care and emotion. It was Edward and Dina’s custom to invite students to their home, first in Wimbledon and later in Oxford. These would often be working visits, with lunch both preceded and followed by an ‘extra’ Saturday class, but the hospitality they both showed was always generous and warm. They unfailingly offered warm hospitality to all their friends. Although Edward and Dina did not have children of their own, they welcomed young families into their home. Edward’s skills of communication extended to the close rapport he had with several young children of friends and some of them remember him now as having had the figure of a kindly uncle. He was very

generous but, so one family member recalled, would not out of principle buy children a toy that had anything to do with warfare, such as model fighter plane or a tank.

Edward took particular pleasure in the supervision of research students. He said on more than one occasion that he felt that such a specialised institution as the School of Oriental and African Studies should be exclusively a research institution, and in the 1970s he tried to persuade the then Director, Sir Cyril Philips, of this. Amongst his former students are today a number of internationally renowned academics, both within the United Kingdom and abroad, who constitute his abiding legacy in such fields as Semitic linguistics, Biblical Studies and Ethiopian Studies, and who owe him a profound debt for the tradition of scholarship that he passed on to them.

After his retirement from SOAS, Edward often expressed concern at the bureaucratic direction in which universities were moving, including league tables, research assessment exercises, teaching quality evaluations, peer reviews, etc. For Edward, a university's primary (and perhaps only) duties were to pass on knowledge by classroom teaching, to practise scholarship at a high level and to foster unhurried and painstaking research of the highest quality. He often expressed admiration for his former teacher, H. J. Polotsky, that he had published so little for such a long academic career because after writing an article he would not submit it for publication for some considerable time, weighing over and rethinking each word and turn of phrase and letting the article mature like a fine wine. Edward's own publications are also skilfully written in a style and language that show the hand of a master. It was not uncommon that his command of English was better than that of some of his native English-speaking students, and he took delight in the more recondite and obscure nuances and subtleties of the language. It was his habit always to draft and correct his writing in longhand, whether books, articles or letters, and then to ask his wife, Dina, to type them as necessary. Dina's vital contributions (which Edward termed 'ancillary duties') were always mentioned with the deepest gratitude. She was to him a 'helpmeet sans-pareil'. He never ventured into the world of computers, which in later years necessitated the indulgence of some editors who expected submissions in electronic format.

When Edward Ullendorff entered academic life, British Semitic studies were dominated by Biblical philology, Classical Hebrew and Assyriology, or by the vast field of Arabic. Ethiopian Semitic languages and Medieval and Modern Hebrew were for the most part represented only very marginally. Yet these two, along with Ugaritic and Aramaic, were subjects that were central to his research and writing. In his introduction to the issue of

the *Journal of Semitic Studies* dedicated to him, C. E. Bosworth said, surely correctly, that Edward did more than any other scholar to change the face of Semitic studies in Britain. This is surely not unconnected with Edward being the first Hebrew University graduate to obtain a professorial chair outside Israel, bringing with him the great Semitic philological tradition obtained from his alma mater.

Edward Ullendorff will be remembered by those who knew him not only as an inspiring, conscientious and meticulous teacher and colleague, but also as a loyal and very generous friend. Wherever he taught, at St Andrews, at Manchester, and latterly at the School of Oriental and African Studies, he received the love and respect of students and colleagues alike and will be remembered for generations to come.

His widow, Dina, has given a generous donation to the British Academy to establish the annual award of the *Ullendorff Medal* in 'Semitic Philology and Ethiopian Studies', the academic fields closest to Edward's heart. Dina has also kindly endowed a lecture series in Semitic Philology in memory of Edward Ullendorff at the University of Cambridge.

GEOFFREY KHAN

Fellow of the Academy

SIMON HOPKINS

Fellow of the Academy

DAVID APPLEYARD

School of Oriental and African Studies

MICHAEL KNIBB

Fellow of the Academy

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