**Wilbur Addison Smith 1933 –**

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilbur_Smith>



**Wilbur Addison Smith** (born [January 9](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January_9), [1933](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1933) in [Broken Hill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabwe), [Northern Rhodesia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Rhodesia) (now [Zambia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zambia)) is a best-selling [novelist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novelist). His books often fall into one of three [series](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_series).

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## [] Biography

As a baby, he was sick with [cerebral malaria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cerebral_malaria) for ten days, but made a full recovery. He grew up on a cattle ranch and spent his childhood hunting and hiking. His mother gave him novels of escape and excitement, which piqued his interest in fiction; however, his father dissuaded him from pursuing writing.

After education at [Cordwalles Preparatory School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cordwalles_Preparatory_School), [Michaelhouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michaelhouse) in Natal and [Rhodes University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhodes_University), in the [Eastern Cape](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Cape) of [South Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Africa), he became a journalist, writing about social conditions in South Africa, but his father’s advice to “Get a real job” prompted him to resentfully become a tax accountant.

He published his first novel, *When the Lion Feeds*, in 1964, written while he worked for [Salisbury](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harare) [Inland Revenue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inland_Revenue). The book gained a film deal and its success encouraged him to become a full-time writer. His publisher and later agent, [Charles Pick](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Charles_Pick&action=edit&redlink=1), gave him advice he never forgot: "Write for yourself, and write about what you know best."

He married at the age of twenty-four, though it ended in divorce. He was then married to Danielle Thomas for 28 years, and dedicated all his books to her. After her death in 1999, he married again, to Mokhiniso Rakhimova, from [Tadjikistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tadjikistan).

He states that Africa is his major inspiration, and currently he has over 30 novels published. Smith now lives in [London](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London), but avows an abiding concern for the peoples and wildlife of his native [continent](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Continent).

In 2002, [Wilbur Smith](http://www.wfsa.net/Image_Docs/Wilbur_Smith.htm) was granted the Inaugural Sport Shooting Ambassador Award by the [World Forum on the Future of Sport Shooting Activities](http://www.wfsa.net).

## [] The Courtney Series

The Courtney series can be split into three parts, each part following a particular era of the Courtney family.

In chronological order it goes the Third Sequence, First Sequence, then the Second Sequence.

### [] The First Sequence

The first sequence beginning with **When the Lion Feeds** follows the life of Sean Courtney. Sean and Garrick Courtney are twins who couldn't be more different. The jealous schemes of a woman draw them apart as the nation prepares for war against the [Zulu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zulu). Sean, believed dead, returns home to find that Garrick has married his pregnant girlfriend. She wants to be with Sean but when he refuses her she tricks Garrick into thinking Sean raped her, causing Garrick to hate his twin.

Sean places himself in self-exile and wanders the African plains searching for fame. He meets and befriends Duff and they start a gold-mining business together in Johannesburg which makes them rich. They lose their money to a shady deal and travel the wilderness together where Duff dies after an attack by a rabid jackal. Sean eventually meets a Boer family and marries the daughter. She becomes ill and commits suicide at the end of the book but not before giving birth to a boy, Dirk.

**The Sound of Thunder** is set several years after the first book. Sean and his son Dirk finally leave the wilderness and discover that a war is brewing between the English and the Boers. He meets and falls in love with a woman called Ruth and they conceive a daughter during a thunderstorm. Ruth runs away to return to her husband who is a soldier in the [Boer War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Boer_War). Later, Sean wins many victories in the war and befriends Saul, Ruth’s husband. The commander of the Boers is none other than Sean’s old brother-in-law, Jan Paulus Leroux. They fight but decide to leave each other alone. Saul is killed in battle and Sean, although feeling unnecessarily guilty, finds Ruth and marries her. Sean’s daughter, named Storm, grows to be pretty and bright but Sean’s first-born, Dirk has become evil with jealousy for his father’s attention. The book ends with Sean’s brother Garrick forgiving him and Dirk running away, promising to ruin the Courtneys.

**A Sparrow Falls** is the concluding part of Sean Courtney's life story. It begins with a young soldier named Mark Anders being sent out to destroy a German sniper in the [First World War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_World_War). Sean admires him and offers him a job. Mark returns home to find his land taken and his grandfather murdered. He makes an investigation and discovers that Dirk Courtney is trying to build a dam which would destroy all life over a massive area including his stolen land. Father and son clash and Dirk swears to kill Sean. Mark falls in love with Sean’s daughter, Storm, and South Africa moves towards a tumultuous civil war. In the climax of the book, Dirk brutally kills Sean and Ruth but is then killed by Mark. Mark regains his land and becomes the warden and lives with Storm in relative happiness.

The original Courtney trilogy has a power and historical content that few books can claim. Covering a period of South African history from before the [Zulu Wars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Zulu_War) to the establishment of the Union of South Africa makes the books a very interesting mirror of the period. Wilbur Smith drives his characters through this period of history with a multitude of side plots, effective characters both minor and major, brutal violence and the inclusion of the most human situations that every reader can relate to.

### [] The Second Sequence

The second sequence of Courtney novels begins with **The Burning Shore**. It follows Michael, the first-born, illegitimate son of Sean Courtney and his exploits as a pilot during World War I in Europe. Michael meets and falls in love with Centaine de Thiry, a Frenchwoman, and in a night of stolen passion they conceive a baby. Before Centaine discovers she is pregnant, Michael asks Centaine to marry him and takes her to meet his 'Uncle' Sean, who is biologically his father. Michael is killed on their wedding day, before the ceremony takes place, and Centaine goes to Sean for help. Consumed with grief for his unacknowledged first born son, Sean sends Centaine and her nurse, Anna, to his brother Garrick in South Africa. However the Hospital Ship they are traveling on is torpedoed by a German submarine and Centaine is shipwrecked, alone and pregnant, on the coast of South West Africa. Only through her incredible determination to live for the sake of Michael's unborn son does Centaine survive, and eventually she is adopted by an old San (Bushmen) couple who teach her the language and the ways of the Kalahari Desert. They also take her to 'The Place of All Life', a San Holy Place, Where Centaine discovers a beautiful stone. After the birth of her son, who she names Michael Shasa Courtney, Centaine is tracked down by a German South Afican, Lothar De La Rey, a renegade outlaw who has demanded Garrick trade the safe delivery of Centaine and her child for a Free Pardon. Lonely and deprived of contact with her own kind, Centaine falls for Lothar and conceives him a child in the desert. After she discovers that Lothar murdered H'ani and O'wa, her adopted San family, Centaine turns on Lothar and insists he take the baby from the child-bed and that she never wants to see Lothar or their bastard child again. While hiding in the desert awaiting the child's birth, Centaine pegs out and lays mining claims on the 'Place of all life', guided by the promise in the glittering stone she found years before upon returning to the colony, Centaine and Shasa are accepted into the Courtney family and the fact she and Michael Courtney never legally married remains as closely guarded a secret as the maternity of Lothar De La Rey's son, and the newly christened H'ani Diamond Mine makes Centaine Courtney one of the richest women in the world.

The second sequence continues through four more books following the exploits of the Courtneys:

**Power of the Sword** focuses on the lives of Centaine de Thiry Courtney's sons — Shasa Courtney and Manfred De La Rey — caught up in South Africa's tumultuous history through almost two decades. The two are unaware that they are half-brothers and are on opposite sides of South Africa's white community. The story opens in the days of the depression, with Centaine Courtney fighting to keep her mine and her company afloat under the crippling yoke of the De Beers diamond company and their set diamond selling quotas. In the process of saving her company Centaine ruins that of Lothar De La Ray and her unacknowledged son Manfred. From their first meeting, the two young boys, Manfred and Shasa, recognize in each other that they have intertwined destinies. From schoolboys days their lives are glaringly different. Shasa spends his early years in the affluent British South African world of private schools, polo ponies and a luxurious family estate, Weltevreden, while Lothar spends them in the squatter camps of the unemployed and impoverished. After the De La Reys execute a daring raid on Centaine's diamonds, which goes horribly wrong, Lothar is jailed and Manfred is sent to live with his Uncle Tromp Bierman, a well known and much respected Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. With the training of his uncle Tromp, Manfred becomes first a champion boxer, then a firm believer in the superiority and the Divine right of his people, the Afrikaner, to the Promised Land of South Africa. He joins the Ossewa Brandwag, a Nazi-Supporting Secret Society for elite pure-blooded Afrikaners and with one objective: to raise the interests of the Afrikaner people above all others. Both Shasa and Manfred are included in the South African team in the 1936 Olympics in Hitler's Berlin and there Manfred discovers his true calling. He marries Heidi, a German Intelligence Officer, and becomes a formidable secret agent dubbed 'White Sword.' His mission is to assassinate the Prime Minister of South Africa, and leave the country ripe for revolution but a simple mistake destroys the plan (he killed Garrick Courteney) and the pathways of destiny for Shasa and Manfred cross once again. Meanwhile, in the mines and native labour camps across South Africa, the black workers start to grow dissatisfied with the conditions of their lives and unions are forming. Led by the ruthless half brothers Moses Gama and Hendrik Tabaka, as well as other revolutionaries such as Nelson Mandela and Louis Botha The ANC (African National Congress) begins to grow in power and influence and spreads it's arms across the troubled nation.

In **Rage** It is 1952 and in the wake of World War two, South Africa enters a new political era. The seeds of apartheid have been sown and the restlessness of the Black tribes is growing. Shasa Courtney and Manfred De La Ray, unacknowledged half brothers who have grown up in different worlds in the same country, are both heavily involved in the political arena on opposite sides of the floor. Early in the book, Manfred De La Rey discovers the circumstances surrounding Shasa's illegitimate birth, and subsequently uncovers the truth of his own maternity. Politically, the National Party, of which Manfred De La Rey is a minister, is now in government in South Africa and in the interest of political gain, the party reaches out to Shasa Courtney and lures him to their side with the one bait the Shasa cannot resist... A Ministerial post and the promise and power the position will bring. However under the noses of the White administration of the country, the ANC has formed a military wing, 'Umkhonto we Sizwe'or 'The Spear of The Nation,' and guided by the ruthless half brothers Moses Gama and Hendrik Tabaka, begins to shake the very foundations of apartheid. Moses Gama, in his determination to seize control of the country by blood shed and revouloution, seduces Tara Courtney, Shasa's wife, and unbeknownst to Shasa, skillfully turns her into an instrument of the struggle, spying on her husband and her father, both powerful men. Tara even bears Moses a son, Benjamin Afrika, in secret. With Tara's assistance, Moses puts into play a plan to destroy the government, the Prime Minister and the policy of apartheid in the most brutal way possible. Only the cunning and insight of Shasa Courtney and his new ally Manfred De La Rey stops the plan with minimum blood shed, but the rage of the people is burning and Rage is a powerful thing. In the meanwhile Shasa discovers that Manfred killed Garrick Courtney and the plan to take the power of the party falls; in the end Manfred dies in his country house.

**Golden Fox** focuses on Isabella Courtney, the youngest child and only daughter of Shasa and Tara Courtney. Isabella and Shasa are living in London, where Shasa is the ambassador for South Africa. In what is, unknown to Isabella, a carefully planned operation, Bella is drawn into the trap of the handsome and dashing Ramon, the 'Golden Fox'. On the surface an exiled Spanish nobleman but in reality a close relative of Fidel Castro and a KGB operative. Just like her mother, Isabella is seduced and impregnated by Ramon, and shortly after the birth of her son Nicholas, Ramon and the baby disappear. Shortly afterwards, Isabella is shown a video of her son being tortured, and is told he will continue to be tortured, mutilated and eventually murdered, if she doesn't co-operate. Torn between love for her son and loyalty to her country, Isabella becomes a traitoress, drawn into the KGB plot against her will and forced to spy on her father, now heavily involved in Armscor, a government military operation that amongst other things, is developing a nuclear bomb and a deadly chemical gas for use in warfare. With the promise of access to her son, Isabella delivers all of the details of her country's most secret activities to their bitter enemies. Eventually her betrayal is discovered and the full resources of the Courtney empire including Isabella's now famous brother Sean, one of the top commanders in the Rhodesian army, are thrown into the rescue of young Nicolas and delivery of him safe into the arms of his great grandmother Centaine De Thiry Courtney.

**A Time To Die** (set in 1987) is focused on Sean Courtney Jnr, Eldest son of Shasa Courtney and a veteran of the Rhodesian anti-guerilla war who has turned into a professional hunter. The dying wish of an old friend and client draws him to follow a legendary elephant into Mozambique accompanied by his friend's beautiful and spirited daughter Claudia. However Claudia is captured by Renamo, the anti government forces, and Sean is forced to co-operate with them to save the life of the woman he has fallen in love with. The former Zimbabwean freedom fighter in charge of the regiment, General China, is a hard and ruthless man who is determined to win power of the shattered country. Only one thing stands in his way- the newly acquired Hind Helicopter fleet of the Frelimo government threatens to wipe out the Renamo rebels. One thing alone can penetrate the defenses of the titanium plated aircraft and Sean is sent into Zimbabwe to steal a shipment of Stinger Missiles to deliver to China. This leads to a violent conflict between the warring Renamo and Frelimo, with Sean and Claudia caught in the middle and desperately trying to escape to South Africa.

### [] The Third Sequence

The third sequence is set between the late-1600s and the mid-1700s, each book laying focus on succeeding generations of the Courtneys.

**Birds of Prey** begins with the [Anglo-Dutch naval war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Dutch_Wars) drawing to a close. Sir Francis Courtney, Master Navigator of the Order of St George and The Holy Grail and his son, Henry (Hal) sail off the coast of southern Africa waiting for a Dutch galleon which they soon take over. Francis is betrayed by a brother knight, and they are captured and imprisoned by the Dutch. Sir Francis is publicly executed in front of Hal. The rest of the crew escape after a year of hard labour and make Hal their captain and he sets off to avenge his father's death. Along the way he must deal with dangers such as war and women. By the end of the book, he becomes a Knight and a Privateer and assists the ruler of [Ethiopia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopia), [Prester John](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prester_John) in repelling Arab invaders.

**Monsoon** follows the adventures of Hal’s sons, William, Tom, Guy and Dorian. An Arab Corsair is ambushing merchant and war ships in the Indian Ocean and the English send Hal to contest him. The twin brothers, Tom and Guy, fall out over a woman and Guy leaves for India while William remains home in England. Dorian is captured by slavers and sold to the Prince of [Oman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oman), al-Malik who adopts him as his son. There he meets Yasmini, one of the many daughters of the Prince. They fall in love and Dorian saves her from Zayn al-Din, another of the Prince's sons. Eventually Dorian (known as al-Salil, The Drawn Sword) and Yasmini run away, damned for committing incest. Many years of searching leave Tom tired of battle but by chance he faces Dorian in battle and almost kills him. Recognizing each other, they reunite and escape to Africa.

**Blue Horizon** follows the adventures of Tom’s son Jim, and Dorian’s son, Mansur. Living in the [Cape of Good Hope](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_of_Good_Hope), Jim rescues Louisa, a prisoner from the Dutch who he falls in love with and together they escape across Africa while being pursued by the [Dutch East India Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_East_India_Company). Meanwhile, Tom, Dorian and their entourage escape Good Hope to avoid retribution from the Dutch for Jim’s escape. Once escaped they settle, where Dorian's wife Yasmini is assassinated and this leads to him reclaiming his place as Caliph of Oman with Mansur by his side. They fight in a civil war against Zayn al-Din, who took the throne after al-Malik's death and ruled with an iron fist.

**Triumph of the Sun** is the fourth book of this sequence. 'It is 1884, and in the Sudan, decades of brutal misgovernment by the ruling Egyptian Khedive in Cairo precipitates a bloody rebellion and Holy War. The charismatic new religious leader, the [Mahdi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_Ahmad) or "Expected One," has gathered his forces of Arab warlords in preparation for a siege on the city of [Khartoum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khartoum). The British are forced to intervene to protect their national interests and to attempt to rescue the hundreds of British subjects stranded in the city. British trader and businessman Ryder Courtney is trapped in the capital city of Khartoum under the orders of the infamously iron-willed General [Charles George Gordon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_George_Gordon). It is here that he meets skilled soldier and swordsman Captain Penrod Ballantyne of the [10th Hussars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/10th_Royal_Hussars_%28Prince_of_Wales%27s_Own%29) and the British Consul, David Benbrook, as well as Benbrook’s three beautiful daughters. Against the vivid and bloody backdrop of the Arabs’ fierce and merciless siege these three powerful men must fight to survive. It is in this book that Smith establishes the link between the earlier and later Courtney novels, by revealing that Ryder Courtney is the brother of Waite Courtney, father of twins Sean and Garrick. At one point Ryder considers investing in his nephew Sean's Gold Mine.

**Assegai** is the fifth book of this sequence. In 1913 Leon Courtney, an ex-soldier turned professional hunter in British East Africa, guides rich and powerful men from America and Europe on big game safaris in the territories of the Masai tribe. Leon has developed a special relationship with the Masai. One of Leon's clients is Count Otto Von Meerbach, a German industrialist whose company builds aircraft and vehicles for the Kaiser's burgeoning army. Leon is recruited by his uncle Penrod Ballantyne (from The Triumph of the Sun) who is commander of the British forces in East Africa to gather information from Von Meerbach. Instead Leon falls desperately in love with Von Meerbach's beautiful and enigmatic mistress, Eva Von Wellberg. Just prior to the outbreak of World War I Leon stumbles on a plot by Count Von Meerbach to raise a rebellion against Britain on the side of Germany amongst the disenchanted survivors of the Boer War in South Africa. He finds himself left alone to frustrate Von Meerbach's design. Then Eva Von Wellberg returns to Africa with her master and Leon finds out who and what she really is behind the mask...

## [] The Ballantyne Series

### [] A Falcon Flies

In 1860 the slave trade is still flourishing in southern Africa.Fuller Ballantyne, a famous missionary and explorer, has disappeared in the wild areas of the sub-continent. His two children, Robyn (a daughter) and Zouga (a son) set out on an expion to find their father. She is determined to bring Christianity, medicine and commerce to the Africans, but he wants to seek his fortune. They get passage on a clipper from England, only to discover that the captain, Mungo St John, is a slaver. She falls in love with him but is determined to fight his trade in human flesh. She gets the support of a naval captain, Clinton Codrington, who is himself a fanatical anti-slave trader. He falls in love with her.

Zouga goes hunting for ivory and gold. In his travels he comes across a secret cavern of an African oracle and steals a soapstone falcon figure from the ruins of an ancient city. Unwittingly, he is fulfilling a prophecy which states that loss of the stone falcons shall bring desolation to the people and the land.

As Robyn locates the slave traders' route, she almost becomes a victim of the slavers herself; she's saved in the nick of time by Mungo St John and has to accompany him on his ship. She makes a successful attempt to contact Clinton and eventually causes the sea battle between the two men who love her. St John is then tried for his crimes.

### [] Men of Men

This is the second of the Ballantyne sequence of books, which gives a fictionalized account of the origins of [Rhodesia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhodesia) and its later violent transformation into [Zimbabwe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zimbabwe). In this novel, the Ballantyne saga continues with the interaction between Zouga Ballantyne, [Cecil Rhodes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cecil_John_Rhodes) and the other whites who took over southern Africa. Zouga has now got a frail wife and two sons, Ralph and Jordan. He hopes to raise enough resources from the new diamond working in Kimberley. His wife dies but his sons thrive and grow into young men with differing personalities: Ralph becomes impetuous, determined and very loyal to his father; Jordan becomes as delicate as his mother and rises in the ranks of diamond sorters. Cecil Rhodes enters the tale and becomes Zouga's ally for some years, until Zouga makes a daring gamble and loses everything - his claim, his money and his sons.

A grown-up Ralph sets out to retrieve his father's stash of ivory, while Jordan becomes Rhodes' personal secretary. The labourers at the [Kimberley diamond workings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kimberley%2C_Northern_Cape) scatter and one of them, named Bazo, returns to his homeland in Matabeleland with illegally obtained diamonds. Rhodes uses his wealth obtained from Kimberley to open up the land north of the [Limpopo River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limpopo_River): he sponsors a "Pioneer" expion and gives Zouga the task of negotiating with Lobengula, king of the [Matabele people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ndebele_people_%28Zimbabwe%29). Through machinations and betrayal, Rhodes annexes the land of the Matabele people and lays the foundation for the land that became Rhodesia. All the principal protagonists - Zouga, Ralph, Jordan, Robyn, Codrington, Mungo St John and Bazo - become inextricably bound up in the birth of the new country.

### [] The Angels Weep

This is the third in the Ballantyne sequence of novels. It tells about how the Black Africans of Rhodesia tried to fight for their land but were defeated by the White settlers who were determined to carve out a homeland for themselves.

The Black Africans, after having been defeated in "Men of Men", now plan to rebel against the unwelcome White settlers. The Matabele rise and avenge their last defeat. They kill Mungo St John and Ralph's pregnant wife, Cathy. This breeds hatred in Ralph and he ruthlessly suppresses the Matabele uprising, killing his childhood friend Bazo in the process.

In the second part, the action moves fast forward to the 1970s as Rhodesia is caught up in a violent freedom struggle. The tactics of terror are employed by the freedom fighters, carrying firearms and operating in highly organised commando groups. Opposing them are the Rhodesian "Ballantyne Scouts", one of whose members is Roland Ballantyne, great-grandson of Ralph. His gentler cousin, Craig Mellow, is forced into a war where he has to clash with a childhood friend, Tungata, who is a descendant of Bazo. A trap is laid by Tungata for Roland, who is killed when he falls for it. Craig is crippled when he loses a leg. It takes a long time for Craig and his lover to find happiness.

### [] The Leopard Hunts in Darkness

Following Rhodesia's independence (and its renaming as Zimbabwe), some white people left the country. One of those exiles is Craig Mellow, who now lives in New York. However, he misses his homeland, so he decides to return and buys back his family's farm. Within the country there is a re-emergence of ancient tribal rivalries, African pitted against African. The Matabele man named Tungata is now a government minister. Inadvertently Craig gets caught up in tribal politics. Fungabera, a Shona man, dupes Craig into framing Tungata for an ivory-poaching racket. Then Fungabera turns on Craig by accusing him of being a [CIA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Intelligence_Agency) agent and confiscating the farm he had bought.

When he realises that he has been used, Craig plots with Tungata's fiancee to free his erstwhile friend from a maximum security camp. They carry out the rescue and are chased by Shona soldiers. At last Fungabera is shown to be the head of the ivory-poaching ring. He is also discovered to be plotting an overthrow of the Zimbabwean government.

## [] The Egyptian Series

A historical fiction series based in a large part on Pharaoh Thutmose III's time along with his story and that of his stepmother Hatshepsut through the eyes of his mother's vizier Senemut mixing in elements of the Hyskos' domination and eventual overthrow.

### River God

[*River God*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=River_God&action=edit&redlink=1) follows the fate of the [Egyptian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Egypt) Kingdom through the eyes of Taita, a multi-talented and highly skilled [eunuch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eunuch) [slave](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slave). Taita is owned by Lord Intef and primarily looks after his daughter, Lostris, but also plays a large role in the day to day running of Lord Intef's estate.

The [Pharaoh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharaoh) of Egypt is without a male heir, and Taita inadvertently causes Pharaoh to take an interest in Lostris. Lostris meanwhile is in love with the soldier Tanus, who unbeknownst to her is hated by her father. Eventually Pharaoh marries Lostris and Intef reluctantly gives Taita to her as a wedding gift.

Meanwhile, Tanus has angered Pharaoh by speaking bluntly about the troubles Egypt is in - most prominently the growing [bandit threat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highway_robbery) which terrorizes all who travel outside of the major cities. Pharaoh condemns him to death for his actions, but is convinced to allow Tanus to redeem himself by attempting to eliminate all the bandits from Egypt within two years. Since his sentence is revealed on the last day of the festival of Osiris, he is to return on that day of the next festival with his task complete or face death by hanging.

Tanus, with the help of Taita, hunts down and captures the leaders of the Shrike bandits. On presenting them to Pharaoh, it is revealed that their leader is Lord Intef. Tanus has his death sentence lifted, but Intef manages to escape before he can be punished for his crimes. After the sentence is announced a storm sweeps through allowing Lostris and Tanus time to be secretly alone together, with the exception of Taita. During this time Lostris conceives Tanus' first born, and before the secret can be discovered Taita arranges for her to resume her wifely duties to Pharaoh. When the child is born he is named Memnon and claimed by the Pharaoh as his own, and his true paternity is known only to Lostris, Taita, and Tanus.

A new threat to the kingdom emerges - the warlike [Hyksos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyksos). Equipped with the horse and [chariot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chariot), as well as a superior [recurved bow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bow_%28weapon%29#Perso-Parthian_bow), their technological superiority is far greater than the Egyptian army's. The Pharaoh is killed, forcing a majority of the Egyptian nobility (including Lostris, Tanus, and Taita) to flee Egypt by heading up the [Nile](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nile) with the remaining army.

During their exile Lostris gives birth to two more of Tanus' children, both daughters, but as their relationship has been a secret Taita creates a cover story where the ghost of Pharaoh sires the child. During their period in exile, they regain their technical superiority - Taita replicates and improves both the chariots and bows he has seen used to such great effect on the battlefield.

While searching for a suitable burying place for Pharaoh's body, Taita is taken captive by one of the Ethiopian chieftains of the area - the brutal Arkoun. While in captivity, Taita becomes close friends with Masara, a fellow captive and the daughter of one of the rival chieftains. Taita eventually escapes captivity due to a freak flooding, finds the father of Masara, and strikes a deal with him to rescue Masara. With the help of Tanus, Memnon, and the Egyptian army, Arkoun is defeated. Tanus is mortally wounded during the battle and dies. Masara and Memnon fall in love and become married, with a wedding gift of several thousand horses which further boost the Egyptian army. Led by their new Pharaoh Tamose (formerly Prince Memnon), they return to Egypt. With their new-found weaponry and tactics, they defeat the Hyksos invaders and regain the upper kingdom of Egypt from Elephantine to Thebes.

The novel contains a two-page afterword in which Smith claims the novel is based on a set of scrolls discovered in an Egyptian tomb which dates back to approximately 1780 BCE. The scrolls were discovered by an Egyptologist, Dr. Duraid al-Simma, who passed the translations onto Smith to transcribe into a novel. This is a false claim, as Smith later reveals in the afterword of the sequel, *The Seventh Scroll*.

### [] The Seventh Scroll

This book is set in the present day and follows the exploits of adventurer Nicholas Quenton-Harper and his love interest, the beautiful Dr. Royan Al Simma as they try and uncover the tomb of Tanus as described in *River God*. Wilbur Smith makes references to himself in the book, parodying the conventions of violence and sex often seen in his work.

Duraid Al Simma and his wife Royan decipher the seventh scroll, which Taita had placed in the tomb of Lostris. Unfortunately, before they could proceed further, they are attacked and their work is stolen. Duraid is brutally murdered, but Royan manages to escape into the night, for help. She narrowly escapes death for the second time, and took a sudden flit away from her beloved Egypt.

Royan heads to England and convinces an old friend of Duraid, Nicholas, of the existence of the fabulous treasure that is in the tomb of Pharaoh Mamose. During her stay in England she narrowly escapes death for the third time, while being attacked as she and her mother drove back home. Struck with confusion, fear and insecurity, she entrust herself into Nicholas's companionship and together they travel to Ethiopia following clues laid out by Taita.

As the pair journey along together, they grow fond of each other's company, with heart-felt love and romance.

They find the location of the tomb, but are then attacked by the Pegasus group, which was also behind earlier attempts on Royan's life. Once again Royan, and Nicholas's work are stolen. They barely manage to make it out alive.

It is revealed that the Pegasus group is owned by Her von Schiller, a ruthless German collector who wll stop at nothing to get what he wants. With the help of his right hand man Jake Helm, Colonel Nogo, and Duraid's former assistants under his command, he acquires a strong force that are willing to go to extreme lengths for his sake.

Colonel Nogo was put in charge of keeping Royan and Nicholas out of their way and Duraid's assistant was in charge of exploiting the works Nicholas and Royan discovered, while Jake Helm provided them with Pegasus's facilities.

Meanwhile, with the help of an old friend of Nicholas, Mek Nimmur (leader of a notorious force of Christian gangs, 'Shuftas'), Nicholas and Royan sneak back into Ethiopia for the second time, but this time illegally and with equipment to search for the treasure. Accompanying them is an old fisherman who has knowledge of building dams. He is employed under Nicholas's demand, to help in their quest.

With spies of Herr Von Schiller's gloating around Nicholas and Royans's premises, the question of how Nicholas and Royan manage to find the tomb and escape from von Schiller forms the rest of the novel.

### [] Warlock

[*Warlock*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Warlock_%28novel%29&action=edit&redlink=1) is a sequel to *River God* that details the later life of Taita 60 years on from the death of Lostris. Taita is no longer a slave but a powerful warlock with great fame throughout Egypt and the surrounding nations, and has become the most influential man in Egypt through his close connection to the Pharaoh Tamose. The story begins with Pharoah Tamose, accompanied by his most trusted companion, Lord Naja, marching towards the Hyksos main camp and planning a surprise attack from the rear. Lord Naja, however, has deviously tricked Pharoah, for he is of Hyksos blood, and kills Pharoah Tamose. However no one sees this tragedy, and Naja convinces the army of Pharoah that he has been slain by the Hyksos and orders the army to retreat back to Thebes. When Naja arrives at Thebes, he cunningly sways the council members to appoint him as Regent, successfully obtaining power of the Upper Kingdom. Meanwhile, Taita has been visited in a dream by the former Queen Lostris, and he returns to Thebes and is appointed as Nefer Seti's tutor, who is next in line for the throne.

As the story develops, Taita's talents are spotted by Naja and he is appointed as his personal advisor. Naja then reveals to Taita that he is no longer to be Nefer's tutor and is separated from him indefinitely. Taita is aware of Naja's cruel intentions and the truth behind Pharoah's death, however he does not reveal this to Naja, and instead uses his influence of him to gain some small control. Nefer's two sisters, Heseret and Merykara are force-wedded to Naja and become his wives, placing him next in line, after Nefer, through marriage. After complications arise, Naja confides in Taita for advice on how to restore peace between the two kingdoms. Taits suggests a treaty, and is sent to King Apepi, the Hyksos leader, to require that he attends a meeting between the two leaders. After a long debate which lasts many days, a treaty is agreed and both leaders sign it, restoring peace throughout the land. However, Apepi is killed not long after, and Trok, who was Apepi's general, and is also related to Naja, takes the role of Regent of the Lower Kingdom. All of Apepi's kin die, except Princess Mintaka, who later becomes Nefer Seti's wife.

The two False Pharoahs join forces and begin an expion to conquer more land and extend their kingdom. Taita, using his vast knowledge and cunning, rescues Mintaka from Trok and reunites her with Nefer Seti, with whom she has fallen in love. The three, with loyal followers such as Meren Cambyses, begin to build up their own army over the next years. Nefer rescues his youngest sister, Merykara, who immediately falls in love with Meren. However Heseret has fallen in love with Naja, whom she was forced to marry, and is convinced he is the one true ruler of Egypt. When Naja and Trok are both slain by the combined efforts of Nefer, Taita and Meren, Heseret becomes dillusional and kills her sister when she is captured along with Mintaka. She escapes into the desert, determinedly searching for her long-dead husband, but is caught by Nefer and punished for killing his sister. Nefer hands her over to Meren and he kills her as revenge for killing Merykara, to whom he was betrothed.

The story ends with Nefer taking his rightful place at the throne of Egypt, with Queen Mintaka at his side, and with Taita and Meren leaving Egypt on a journey which leads them to the next book, "The Quest".

### [] The Quest

Egypt is struck by a series of terrible plagues that cripple the kingdom, and then the ultimate disaster follows. The Nile fails. The waters that nourish and sustain the land dry up.

Something catastrophic is taking place in the distant and totally unexplored depths of Africa, from where the mighty river springs. In desperation the Pharoah sends for Taita, the only man who might be able to win through to the source of the Nile and discover the cause of all their woes.

In this final adventure of Taita, the beloved Magus is now 156 years old but through his powerful magic, has managed to live longer than most people (with the exception of a few other magicians). He is sent to investigate the blockage at the source of the Nile and defeat a seeminly immortal witch named Eos. During his journey, he gains new abilities as a Magus and can even detect the aura of living beings and discern their personalities. Travelling with a small army which includes his friend Meren, Taita finds a little girl living as a savage amongst a tribe of cannibals. He rescues her and over the months that follow, trains her to be decent and takes her under his wing. He names the girl Fenn and it is revealed that she is the reincarnation of Lostris, Taita's mistress who died at the end of River God. The group survives many hazards and eventually comes across a paradise-like city called Jarri. The original natives there are descended from a rebel group of Egyptians who are mentioned in River God. They rule the seemingly peaceful community by using fear, especially on the newcomers. It is discovered that they are under the spell of Eos who plans to ravage Egypt and then take it as her own Kingdom.

Local doctors eventually manage to regenerate Taita's castrated penis and he becomes a whole man once more. However, this was planned by Eos whose speciality is to absorb the power, youth and knowledge from her victims through sex. Taita knows this all along and uses his new "weapon" to defeat Eos. He then locates the Font (The Fountain of Youth) and becomes young again.

The rebel Jarrians ally themselves to Taita and they flee back to Egypt, but not before the Red Stones are cast down and the Nile flows again. On the journey home, Fenn begins to have recurring nightmares about Taita remaining forever young while she succumbs to old age and dies. Taita therefore decides to leave Egypt with Fenn and search for the Font (which can relocate itself) in order for Fenn to become immortal also.

In a heartfelt climax, Taita bids farewell to his companion Meren, and the Pharoah Nefer Seti and the word is spread that The Magus had fallen in battle. Egypt mourns his loss, and Taita uses the distraction to leave with Fenn.

## [] Criticisms

Critics of Wilbur Smith argue that his novels often contain [sexist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexist) and [racist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racist) assumptions [[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilbur_Smith#cite_note-0)[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilbur_Smith#cite_note-1) and that they may have a political agenda. Wilbur Smith has denied any such assumptions.[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] Fans of Smith[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)] argue that the assumptions or actions that these critics refer to simply reflect the values and culture of a society at the point in time the novels are set, and that the racist/sexist nature of some of Smith's characters add historical accuracy and are not a reflection of his personal beliefs and opinions.

## [] List of Novels

Below is a list of all of Wilbur Smith's novels.

**Courtney** (chronologically)

* *When the Lion Feeds* [1964](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1964)
* *The Sound of Thunder* [1966](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1966)
* *A Sparrow Falls* [1977](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1977)
* *The Burning Shore* [1985](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1985)
* *Power of the Sword* [1986](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1986)
* *Rage* [1987](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1987)
* *A Time to Die* [1989](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1989)
* *Golden Fox* [1990](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1990)
* *Birds of Prey* [1997](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1997)
* *Monsoon* [1999](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1999)
* *Blue Horizon* [2003](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2003)
* *The Triumph Of The Sun* [2005](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2005) (Courtney and Ballantyne)
* *Assegai* [2009](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009)

**Ancient Egyptian**

* *River God* [1993](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1993)
* *The Seventh Scroll* [1995](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1995)
* *Warlock* [2001](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2001)
* *The Quest* [2007](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007)

**Ballantyne**

* *A Falcon Flies* aka *Flight of the Falcon* [1980](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1980)
* *Men of Men* [1981](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1981)
* *The Angels Weep* [1982](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1982)
* *The Leopard Hunts in Darkness* [1984](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1984)
* *The Triumph Of The Sun* [2005](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2005) (Courtney and Ballantyne)

Wilbur Smith has also written many [standalone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Standalone) novels:

* *The Dark of the Sun* [1965](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1965)
* *Shout At the Devil* [1968](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1968)
* *Gold Mine* aka *Gold* [1970](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1970)
* *The Diamond Hunters* [1971](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1971)
* *The Sunbird* [1972](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1972)
* *Eagle in the Sky* [1974](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1974)
* *The Eye of the Tiger* [1975](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1975)
* *Cry Wolf* [1976](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1976)
* *Hungry As the Sea* [1978](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1978)
* *Wild Justice* [1979](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1979)
* *Elephant Song* [1991](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1991)

## [] Cultural references

## External links

* [Wilbur Smith official site](http://www.wilbursmithbooks.com/)
* [UK Wilbur Smith official site](http://www.panmacmillan.com/WilburSmith/)
* [The Wilbur Smith Forum](http://www.blurbal.com/wilbursmith/)