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LITERATURE AS AN ADAPTABLE SOURCE: THE CASE OF ETV

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Literature as an adaptable source: The case of ETV

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, adaptation or dramatization of prose fictions or poems into the medium of film/TV is a major screen practice around the world. One of the advantages of adaptations, apart from recreating fresh experience for those who have read the original literary works, is also to give a chance for those illiterate sections of the society to experience the literary works of notable writers. Ethiopia seems not to have benefited much from these reciprocal convergence among the arts which is found to be valuable for the enrichment of the literary practice in the society. There seems also little awareness among the concerned bodies about laying the ground for such a practice to grow.

The purpose of the study clearly stated in this thesis, therefore, was to examine closely the theory and practice of screen adaptation and to render a vivid picture of the role it has so far played and may yet have to play in ETV Amharic drama productions. Keeping in mind the unique nature of each medium, the study specifically looked into (a) how the texts in focus enunciated their story within the conventions of their genres and (b) determines as to the type of adaptation rendered based on the fundamental theories and approaches to the screening of prose narratives.

In order to find the outcome of the television adaptations from prose fictions, thestudy first analyzed the two prose narratives, *Agatami* and *Amist Sidist Sebat* based on their from and narrative techniques. During the viewing of the screen adaptation every alterations, deletions, and additions of characters, events, and dialogue were noted. Then, based on the critical analysis of the texts and the detailed observation of the adapted TV drama, a close comparative examination was made. The two directors involved in the process of the production were approached to find their views and opinions as well as their experiences.

The result of the study indicate that the two screen adaptations lack, though in varying degrees, clear understanding of their source text as well as proper manipulations of the resources of the screen. The problem partly points to the absence of proper training in the area of literature vis-a-vis screen on the part of the adapters, and partly relates to the disorganized and inefficient working conditions of the ETV, a complaint made by the directors.

The study also forwarded some suggestions on the basis of the results of the research. It was proposed that those departments concerned with the teaching of literature and theatre arts should design a more appropriate course in literature versus screen adaptation. It was also noted that the recent attempt to open up extra TV channels would also pave the way for more efficient screen adaptations to come.

1.0 Introduction

Literature has become an inspiring source and a major influence on other art forms. It has now become a major practice among various artists to draw upon their working materials from novels, short stories and poems and rework them within the possibilities and limitations of their respective media. Thus, it has been customary to adapt literature to art (painting and sculpture), dance, film, music, opera, radio and television drama. Audience who are unable, due to illiteracy and economic reasons, to enjoy the original literature have the chance to experience it in another medium.

If we use the term *adaptation* in its broad sense, it encompasses any literary work which influences or inspires a work in another art form. But in its narrow sense, it could mean an imaginative transmutation of the source text into another art form so that the elements of literature can have counterparts in the *adaptation*. Therefore, instrumental music, dance, painting and sculpture can be categorized under the first definition, whereas radio, film, video, television and opera can come under the second.

Adaptationss, as a new literary trend, can be practised for various reasons. Some artists, when inspired by an original work take the challenge and try to use their creative power in order to give a satisfying aesthetic experience to their audience. Others resort to *adaptation* for pure commercial reasons inspired by the respectability or popularity of the original literary work among readers.

Whatever reasons attached to the making of *adaptations*, it has become a major literary practice. But we have to realize that the adapter's work is a bit more demanding than

that of any other writer/artist who is engaged particularly in one art form. His work requires not only deep knowledge of the limitations and possibilities of both media (more elaborated in the second chapter), but creative imagination and, to some extent understanding of the conventions, values, and literary taste of his heterogeneous audience. For instance, if the adapter wants to adapt a novel into a television drama, it is not enough that he likes the story (raw material), but he should also be able to understand how the story has been articulated or given form by the writer. Mostly, it is through the form and stylistic devices that the meaning of the text comes to the reader. The adapter is, therefore, expected to work as a critic to really absorb the intention of the chosen text. This would help him know what he wants to say and how to say it in the screen medium. His familiarity with the rules and techniques of the visual media would, then, help him come up with visual equivalents to those stylistic elements he wants to retain from the original. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to look into the relationships between verbal narrative vis-a-vis screen narratives and examine ETV (Ethiopian Television) adapted dramas in the context of the representational elements of both media.

In the context of the present study, *adaptation* is taken to mean, as defined by J.A Cuddon, "the recasting of novels and plays as film and television scripts... short stories and poems are often equally suitable" (1991:9). The type of *adaptation* indicated here, therefore, refers to making a literary work fit into the conditions of presentation in another. When such recasting is made to fit another medium, the levels of *adaptation* varies in order to retain the action, characters, language and tone of the original.

This is in direct contrast with the other kind of *adaptation* which concerns itself with a "...rewriting of a work either to improve it or to make it more suitable for a different or alien audience", as has been stated by Getu Mulatu (1990). His work mainly focuses on four plays in English adapted to dramas in Amharic. The plays in focus are *Romeo and Juliet* , *Faust* (Kebede Michael), *The Inspector Calls* (Mengistu Lemma), and *Macbeth* (Tsegaye Gebre Medhin). Getu argues that in such contexts *adaptation* is more "preferable" and "advisable" and more fruitful than translation. He states his reason by referring not only to the wide cultural and linguistic gap but also to "... the changing times, varying circumstances, intended messages, the audiences in mind and other factors" (p. 6). His study is important because he clears the confusion that existed between translation and *adaptation*. According to him, the former strictly adheres to the language and messages of the original text as closely as possible, while the latter allows deviation, alteration, addition or subtraction of characters and some other elements to make it agreeable to the cultural and literary conventions of the targeted audience.

As mentioned above, then, the concern and direction of this study is a bit different from Getu's. The focus of the research lies on the inter-textuality of literature and cinematic art.

1.1 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is threefold: first and foremost, it attempts to bring to the forefront the hitherto unexploited area of literature and encourage literary writers and

artists alike to consider novels, plays, short stories, poems, folk tales and fables as potential sources for adapting to TV/film. This has, in fact, been a major practise from 1930 onwards in America and Europe. When film-makers and writers started to realize the potential of cinema as a vehicle of narrative entertainment, they immediately turned towards classical novels and short stories as their source material. This process continued not only in the film industry but also got its way into television. The immediate and intimate nature of TV brought the public to stay at home rather than go to the cinema. However, the potentials of these two artistic media, which have been developed almost completely within the twentieth century, unparalleled in their scope and power, lies in presenting a spectacle of human action in the fictional world. These magic screens have got the public intrigued and transfixed more than ever. The viewers have been forced to spend more time consuming creative and adapted works of writers and directors. It is for this reason that almost every novel has been ransacked by screen writers and film-makers to whet the appetite of their audience. Therefore, this could be one potential area for Ethiopian writers to focus on side by side with producing original television dramas.

The second and equally important aim of the study is also to create an awareness on the part of the concerned bodies in ETV with regard to the advantages that such a practice could have to their audience. Television, unlike literature, is characterized by effective use of pictures, images and sound-effects for encoding and decoding its messages. It can be consumed and understood by every individual despite barriers of language, education, culture and ideology. Therefore, in a country like Ethiopia, where the majority of the people are illiterate, where the number of theatre houses is just enough

for less than 1% of the total population, then, the contribution of ETV people would be a great help if they could encourage a constant practice of screen *adaptation*. In a country like ours where the need for economic development is so crucial, and such a development is impossible without first lifting the spiritual and cultural awareness of the people, what is reasonable is to make a maximum and responsible use of television for such kind of spiritual uplifting. Instead of presenting the public with foreign soap-operas, which are far from the public's frame of experience (British soap operas, for instance, are described as "... the most-lamented programmes... criticised as the staple diet of the unintelligent, and dangerously sapping the literacy of British Youth" (Coward, 1986: 171),) it would be worth the effort to concentrate on local literatures and present the public with screen versions of the former. Moreover, children could grow learning the many aspects of adult life and behaviours of grown-ups if they are exposed to dramas that have a variety of themes and ideas which, otherwise, they could not experience until matured. There is another advantage to the television transmission of screen *adaptations* of novels or shorts stories. It has an effect on the republication of a given novel or short story. As Giddings (1990) stated, citing a researcher called J.M. Wober (1985), among 3000 respondents who completed a questionnaire pertaining to the influence of television *adaptation* upon their reading habits, "... 46% indicated that they had bought or borrowed a book directly as a result of seeing a television programme" (P: 22). Not only this, but it can even tempt writers to produce more literature due to such a practice.

The last but not the least, concern of this study is to instigate those departments of the institute, concerned with the teaching of literature and theatre, to think about this new

literary trend and incorporate it within their syllabi. Such a course could have multiple advantages. First, it can explore the scope and power of literature's influence on the other arts in the context of *adaptation*. One may consider past and present novels, plays, short stories and poems. For instance, not only all of Charles Dickenes's novels have been adapted into the medium of film/TV, but some of them have got two or three versions. *Great expectations* alone has been adapted and filmed in five different versions- "two silent, three sound"- by different people (McFarlane, 1996:105). Works of acclaimed writers such as Shakespeare, Shaw, Chekov, Austen, James, Faulkner, Conrad, etc. have been turned into cinema and television pictures. Therefore, the principal value of such a course would be to let students examine a given novel or play in relation to its *adaptations* available on video-cassette (the video-cassettes are available in the British Council as well as video-shops). The students could have a chance of exploring narrative techniques (plot, point-of-view, imagery ...etc.) in both verbal and screen media. The picture could enhance their awareness of the narrative forms of the original, which, otherwise, might remain incomprehensible to most of them. It might also be an interesting combination for the students to arouse their interests and stimulate them to a live and warm discussion while conducting the course. The course would also be advantageous for the would be graduates to continue as professional adapters filling in the hitherto existing gap.

1.2 Scope of the Study

As the main objective of this research is to make a critical study of dramas adapted for the ETV, it is limited to examining two screen *adaptations* of Amharic prose fictions.

With the new inclusion of Oromo and Tigrigna language ETV programmes in the last eight years, there may be a number of screen *adaptations* in these languages. However, the researcher is unable to deal with these productions due to language problems. But it would be quite useful an area for anyone who is interested in exploring these two drama programmes.

The first chapter, as shown, consists of the introduction, purpose and scope of the study, methodology, brief discussion on the differences and similarities of television and film. I stress this last point to avoid any misunderstanding during the subsequent discussions because the discourse on *adaptation* often considers both media as one.

The second chapter deals with review of related literature. It attempts to provide a general highlight on the views, debates and preferences of critics and writers concerning the transmutations of verbal narratives (novel/short story) into visual narratives (film/TV). This chapter maps out the general arguments and discussions which mostly focus on the issues of fidelity and on the need to classify and categorize each *adaptation*. The chapter finally introduces to the reader the two important challenging areas, point of view and time, which are considered as core elements requiring careful attention in the process of *adaptation*.

The last chapter then concentrates on a discussion of two recent *adaptations* in the light of the classification and type of *adaptations* discussed in previous chapter II. The texts under discussion are a detective novel by Yilma Habteyes, "*Agatami*", adapted by the author himself and Getnet Enyew and directed by Dagmawi Feyesa, and Sebhat Gebre

Egziabher's short story, "*Amist Sidist Sebat*", adapted by Feleke Abebe and directed by Zekarias Haile Mariam. The reason for choosing these *adaptations* is their availability as finished productions in the ETV film section. They also happen to be different genres, which infact helps the researcher to examine their yielding nature and potential for *adaptations* to the visual medium.

1.3 Methodology

The study depended on the following methods in order to meet its objectives.

The field research focused on locating directors who have been involved in the *adaptation* and production of the ETV dramas under discussion. The ETV film section was also the primary area of focus where the researcher spent more time in doing the analysis of the finished productions. In order to correlate the finished films with the original narratives on which they are based, a scene by scene notation of events, characters, dialogue and choice of perspective has been done. The absence of shooting scripts has also forced the researcher to assess and note down only key additions, alterations, and deletions that have been revealed in the film. This has been followed by an analytical reading of the original text in order to do an analogous examination between word and image as well as to find what artistic effects have been achieved by deviating from, or by being faithful to, the original.

The discussion, therefore, rests not only upon illuminating how the said adapters understood and interpreted the original text, but it also examines how far the directors

have been able to exploit the potential of the visual medium to make their productions artistically sound.

1.4 Comparative Discussion of Film and Television

As the focus of the study is based on the works of *adaptation* on Ethiopian television, rather than film, it would be important to note down not only their similarities but also their differences both as a process of production and consumption.

Longman (1986:209) lists three possible differences between television and film.

1. It is in the nature of the cinema to display a rich and varied play of imagery. On the other hand, television focuses more on the actor's action and reaction than dramatic objects.
2. For such effect, television tends to resort to a close-up more frequently than film, especially close-up of the face. Long shots (relatively speaking) are not impressive on television.
3. The television image, being less effective than the film image, tends to lean on dialogue.

The above-mentioned difference enumerated by Longman point to the size of the screens which have effect in their modes of presentation. Although television is an image medium like the cinema, the image on its little screen has relatively low appearance, making details less alive than it is on the cinema. Hence, in television the foreground becomes the essential element in the picture and general views (long shots)

must be avoided. Moreover, unlike the cinema, the number of actors appearing on the screen cannot be more than three to four as space is defined according to the movements and the actions of the actors. Additionally, "Television's mechanical and electronic devices permit a physical closeness and empathy between the characters and the audience, facilitating the presentation in depth of the intimate, inner beings of the characters" (Hillard: 1997:393). That is why television has a great capacity of penetrating the psychology of character which neither the cinema nor the theatre possesses. "TV is microscopic rather than Macroscopic" (Abbot : 1957: 245). On the other hand, film has the capacity to be both, being "Vista vision or cinema scope" (Ibid.). Because of TV's small rectangular screen writers and directors work towards emphasizing points on the shots of actors' (characters') actions and reactions rather than the use of "expansive panoramic scenes, the use of great mob scenes that adorn some of Hollywood's epics" (1957 : 245). In the cinema the latter's photographic effect can be achieved through the use of flexible camera mountings, booms, cranes, even helicopters and aeroplanes.

> **The language of the cinema speaks not only of the close up, but also of the medium shot and the long shot-degrees of distance which include more or less the primary subject and the surroundings.**

The adapter's knowledge of such differences between film and television, which manifest in the level of his productions, determines his choice of materials (novels, short stories, poems etc.) for *adaptation*.

On the other hand, the adapter's know-how on both media's indispensable relation with camera work and other related elements is crucial. As Longman (1986) points out, the term "flashing images" refers to both television and cinema, "for both rely on images flashed across the screen" (p: 169). The images flashed across the screen represent the actual reality and are employed to represent dramatic action. These perceptual images bring the two media closer to reality than any other medium.

As a medium of sound motion-pictures, both utilize, more or less, the same camera movement and changes of view point in relation to the positions and actions of actors (long, medium, close-up, panning, tilting, high and low angle etc, fades and dissolves, scenic composition, synchronized dialogue, music and natural sound). Unlike the individual novelist, to achieve these, both need the co-ordinated efforts of screen writer, director, cameraman, actors, sound and light engineers and editor. It is indeed the selection and arrangement of the different visual, aural and verbal factors that give both media the overall coherence and articulation of the dramatic presentation of human action in imagined lives. This insight which the adapter needs towards both media is, in addition to his knowledge of the rules of play writing, because as Hillard (1997) puts it:

> **The rules of play-writing are universal. They apply generally to the structure of the play written for the stage, film, television, or radio. The rules are modified in their specific applications by the particular medium's special requirements (p. 384).**

The understanding of the basic rules of dramaturgy (the discussion of these rules is outside the scope of this study), together with one's experience to the constituent elements of films structure, is what makes the final production spectacular. The constituent elements of film structure, as Martin Esslin states, are analogous to musical structure because it depends "... on the interaction, in sequence, and contrapuntally at any given moment, of melodic and rhythmic elements that are established, varied, juxtaposed, combined and recombined" (1987:119). It is this detailed production of images, well composed in each frame, and the proportions as well as contrasts in tempo, mood, rhythm in each sequence of scenes that keeps the interests and concentration of the viewer on both media.

Another important point that the adapter needs to understand is the production methods and consumption of both television and film. This would help him in his choice of the text to be adapted towards the right medium. Although film and television employ groups of people in creating a single dramatic production in order to be consumed by a heterogeneous mass audience, the length of time they allot for consumption of their product varies. According to Giddings (1990) "A novel will commonly be several hundred pages long, taking a reader several hours, whereas an average feature film may only last an hour or two" (p.4). This time imposition may lead the adapter towards cutting, omitting, deleting, simplifying the original novel sacrificing characters, scenes and incidents. On the other hand, television *adaptation* is quite free from time constraints. The adapter could present it in a mini-series form and hold the audience for many weeks. "...a television *adaptation* of a novel will often devote several hours to its material, often in weekly serial form..." (Ibid.). On this point, Beja explains thus:

> **When a three-hundred-page novel is made into two or three hour movie, a great deal will have to be sacrificed. Less will be lost in a television serial, to be sure, which may last from eight to ten or even twelve hours... In one respect the quality of the experience in watching a serial television version of a novel will undeniably be closer to reading most novels than a feature film can be: for it will be something we come back to periodically rather than something we complete in a single sitting (1976:84).**

Television also tends to differ in its social functions, especially in its sphere of influence in the personal life of the individual viewer. But the spectator in the cinema is part of a crowd gathered in darkened room, and like the crowd in a football stadium, his/her reaction is conditioned by the collective "mass" rather than by individual psychology. The act of film going is viewed as a deliberate act to get a sense of "mass" participation, and, in a way, this makes it easy to accept, even though momentarily, conventions of behaviour and illusions of reality as part of the anonymous group. On the other hand, in television drama, the individual viewer is not governed by a crowd response, but, rather becomes a detached viewer. The viewer, by force of habit, consumes the linear sequential order of television programme. It does not mean that the adapter should not be aware of a mass audience, but it is the individual that is taken for granted at the receiving end, relaxing in his home or feeling depressed as the result of routine daily life. Therefore, here the individual viewer unprejudiced by membership of the group, remains critical. His experience is intimate and personal and he is likely to be sceptical. If he is bored, it is likely that his hand would reach the remote control to switch it off or switch to another channel.

> **The movie audience, after all, has paid an admission price and is highly unlikely to walk out on the opening scenes of the film whereas the television presentation is "free", and the audience is subject to the inherent distractions of the home environment. So the successful television writer quickly learns to "start with a bang" often by showing an enigmatic high point of the total action, then using a flashback to complete his exposition. (Roberts, 1971: 464)**

The director of TV drama who feels to work on *adaptation* should bear in mind that s/he has an audience who "...can instantaneously reject a performance..." and, therefore, make an attempt to present, "...an intriguing segment of action at the outset..." (Ibid., p: 463). Moreover, s/he needs to work out and establish emotional empathy, strive to create suspense-provoking incidents to stimulate and excite the viewer and gradually to make him/her part of the action-packed drama. In this way television can prove its worth as "...the newest way of bringing the performing arts to the widest possible audience" (Roberts, 1971: 473), sitting and watching at their home. The writer who opts adapting for television could stand a better chance in the choice of his/her materials than cinema. Apart from novel, short story and poem, an adapter can turn to history books, folktales and fables. S/he can take her or his materials from factual and recent happenings which draw the public's interest and excitement. This latter practice has been labelled as "docudrama". We can cite as an example, such productions as *Raid on Entebbe, Malcolm, Diana: Her True Story*, etc. The television *adaptation* of Alex Hailey's novel, Roots is also another good example of the mini-series form as

well as a representation of historical facts based on research. It is these varieties and combination of dramas that make the TV medium popular among its audience.

One crucial factor that the adapter needs to be aware of, in his/her choice of material to both media, is to avoid controversial materials and be alert to the questions of censorship. According to Hillard (1997: 11), "The media's great impact and ...[their]... ability to affect people's minds and emotions so strongly are clearly recognized by the media's controllers..." Because of this, "Television", [More than film], "as a whole is much more subject to regulation and censorship..." (Roberts, 1971: 462): He further claims that in the United States the writer of TV drama "...works within restrictions much more stringent than those in other forms" (Ibid.). Therefore, as these media are working towards communicating a heterogeneous mass audience the adapter should be aware of such issues as racial and religious problems as well as overt sex materials.

II. LITERATURE AS AN ADAPTABLE SOURCE: VIEWS AND PREFERENCES

Basically, both written and filmed stories are two sides of the same coin, the art of narrative literature. In their own way both strive to narrate a sequence of events, a story. The writer-critic, Orr (1992), who prefers to address "*adaptation*" as a "picture-book", notes how this inherent nature of both media tempts adapters to involve themselves in the 'picture-book' project. He explains, "They are both narrative forms, and both are referential. Both produce stories which work through temporal succession. Both refer to, or connote, pre-existent materials" (1992: 2). Hence, the reader/viewer is able also to interact with these media because of their referential capacity; fiction communicates through "a pre-existent language", while film works "through the raw data of the physical world which its camera records" (Ibid.). The reader/viewer attempts to absorb the story through a process of mental linkage and recollection both in the cinema and the novel. For instance, the written sign 'chair' might require an extra mental effort toward perception, compared to the film image of a 'chair'. On the other hand, the sign for a 'throne', whether written or visual sign, might not be perceived as a simple 'chair'. It triggers different connotations and associations from the reader/viewer. Narrativity, according to Cohen (1979),

> **...is the most solid median link between novel and cinema, the most pervasive tendency of both verbal and visual language. In both novel and cinema, groups of signs, be they literary or visual signs, are apprehended consecutively through time; and this consecutiveness gives rise to an**

> **unfolding structure, the diegetic whole, that is never fully present in any one group yet always implied in each such group. (1979: 92).**

According to the explanation given by Cohen, the reader/viewer is able to apprehend the story (diegetic), in accordance with his/her imaginative construction of the verbal/visual narratives through space and time. In both cinema and novel, the imaginary events and the fictional characters are recalled as having happened due to the accomplishment of the narrative in spatial temporal terms. It is, therefore, due to this common foundation and similarity of "...diegetic production that the perennial temptation to adapt novels to the cinema arises" (1979: 92). In fact, as Manvell (1979) explains, "The narrative arts have long proved in practice to be interdependent–what is originated for one can frequently be adapted satisfactorily for another" (p. 45). In his view, because of their basic narrative form, be it a novel, short story, stage play or screen play for film and television, they are able to feed each other. Ellis (1992) also agrees with this. While stressing the long-standing relation between novel and film/TV through *adaptation*, further he notes, "...before either television or cinema were invented, novels were often adapted for the stage" (p: 66).

It is somewhat interesting to note that among the earlier plays that were transmitted in silent versions were, according to Giddings (1990: ix), Shakespear's Hamlet (1913) and Macbeth (1916), despite the fact that the taste and attraction of these plays lie mostly in their poetic language rather than in their visual representation. As time went by, especially after the First World War, the great public demand for better movies dictated profound changes in the conduct of motion-pictures.

According to Manvell (1979), there came a close intertextuality of both novel and stage play with the sound film as well as with television since the 1930's. Accordingly, film-makers, now realizing the newly found potential of the cinema to tell a story with a combination of sound and images, frequented bookshops to get hold of classical novels and popular fictions for *adaptation*. The demand for more literature continued from then on.

This uninterrupted practice of adapting prose fictions into the screen medium inevitably called forth critics who insisted, as we shall see hereafter, that adapters need to be faithful to the original work. This insistence, as Mcfarlane indicates, has been based on the notion of their deep attachment to the original novel and a "...sense of literature's greater respectability in traditional literary circles" (1996: 8). Let us have a look at the cons-and-pros concerning fidelity issues.

2.1 Fidelity Issues

When *adaptation* became active there emerged various debates, views and preferences among critics, reviewers and writers with regard to the right way of *adaptation*. Those who have deep attachment and high esteem for the original work expressed their dissatisfaction the transformation of the novel and insisted that, "what is in the book or in the play is hallowed and must be in the film" (Rosenthal, 1995:66). They approached the film production with a frame of mind already set by the novels they have read and expected to see the events and characters reproduced as they visualize them. Later on, they aired their disappointment on newspapers and magazines and their

focus solely rested on pointing out what has been changed or omitted instead of the artistic wholeness recreated from the novel.

McFarlane (1996:8) points out the major criteria for most of the journals, newspapers, critical anthologies and longer essays as being foregrounded with such phrases: "Is it really 'Jamesian'? Is it true to 'Lawrence'?" and so on. He, then, puts across his view on the re-examination and devaluation of this critical line. He has been quoted by Giddings, in his earlier book, *Words and Images* (1987: 2), as saying:

> **It is a sheer improbability that an illusion of reality created in one form (i.e. in the novel) could be re-created in another (i.e. film or television) (1990: 9)**

In his new book (1996), he takes the argument further and criticizes those critics because of their wrong expectation to find a single correct reading of an original novel. He further notes that fidelity of criticism tends to disregard three essential points: (i) the idea of *adaptation*, which the critics ignore, could be viewed as an example of intertextuality among the narrative arts important for their development; (ii) an understanding towards making a distinction between what may be transferred and what must be adapted; and (iii) an awareness of those additional elements that go into the film production despite the novel's dependence on verbal language. McFarlane, in pointing to these, wants to emphasize the responsiveness of the critic towards the inevitable inter-relationship and convergence of the various arts and the critic's knowledge of the and limitations and possibilities of each medium. (1996: 10).

Earlier critics like Bluestone (1957) and C.Sheridan (1965) held similar views, questioning the assumption of those critics who expect a detachable content in literary works which could be reproduced in the visual media. Such speculation emanates, they argue, from those critics inability to recognize the inherent and significant differences among the media. Each has its own conventions and styles.

The absence of any universally accepted principles which may be applied when examining such transfers led others to ponder over the problem. Morris Beja addresses the issue strongly. In asking whether there are 'guiding principles' for film-makers adapting literature, he questions "what relationship should a film have to the original source? Should it be faithful? Can it be? To what [extent]?" (1976: 80).

Those film-makers who, from the very beginning, have made every effort to be true to the spirit of the time and the place, to the characters behaviour and manner of speaking, to the costumes and props of the period which the original novel signifies, have confessed to the impossibility of such attempt. For example, James Andrew Hall (1984), who adapted several of Dickens's novels for the BBC television service, wrote how adapters are restrained by the notion of respect for the text, cultural conventions which in turn are formed by market considerations. He then makes this remark quoted by Giddings:

> **It would... be helpful to an adapter to be blessed with a sense of humility... The danger of an adapter being overawed by his subject matter is the same as that of a .**

surgeon operating on a member of his own family: he may shrink from applying the knife deep through (1990: 92)

In fact, to talk of 'fidelity' and insist that all adapters have to adhere to it seems to be difficult to accept and is misleading, for it may lead one to pursue false analogies to that of 'translation' which has been mentioned earlier (see 1.0 above) while acknowledging Getu Mulatu's thesis, *Amharic Adaptations of English Drama*. The *adaptation* of prose fiction into the screen medium is not comparable to the translation of a play or a poem into another language. It involves, rather, the transposition of a primarily linguistic medium (fiction) into a primary visual one, (TV/film). One needs to bear in mind the different capacities of each medium, and need not insist on the retention of all that have been put in the original literary work. One needs to realize the impracticality of such notion when one takes into consideration the full resources and paradigmatic choices of signifying systems the film maker could employ, unlike the writer of fiction who is restricted to one signifying system, i.e., language.

Jean Paul Sartre considers the art of *adaptation*, leaving aside the notion of fidelity, "...as a more or less faithful commentary on the book" (1949: 245). Likewise Luhr and Lehman (1977: 233) suggest the need for the new artistic trend, i.e., *adaptation*, to have its own integrity. They insist that one should not approach the film version in terms of its resemblance to the original work but, on the contrary, on its artistic realization of the absorbed materials.

2.2 Proposed Strategies

The various views and preferences, addressed so far, led others to propose and lay out classification of the choices an adapter makes and thereby suggested to the supposed critic to frame her/his evaluation in line with the type of *adaptation*.

Geoffrey Wagner, in his book, *The Novel and the Cinema* (1975: 225-226) points out three possible styles of *adaptation*

a) transposition: refers to the direct transference of the materials of the novel on to the screen with less visible interference. This, he considers, to be the most dominant and pervasive, though the least satisfactory.

b) Commentary: concerns the view that, "...an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect..." and he views this as a kind of "re-emphasis or re-structuring", where the adapter attempts to come up with a different experience by trespassing upon the source material.

c) Analogy: relates to a departure from the original with the intention of creating a self-contained artistic production. Accordingly, the evaluation will rest on finding analogous attitudes and stylistic devices. And, since this is not an attempt to reproduce the original, it is not often taken as a violation of the source book.

Another critic, Andrew Dudley, too indicates his experience with three other types of *adaptation* which roughly tally with Wagner's classification. These are:

a) Borrowing: it implies an attempt not to make a copy of the original but rather a creative effort to enrich the materials taken by using the resources of the new medium.

b) Intersection: this is far from adapting the original text, rather it is a re-creation of the literary work to give it a life of its own on the visual medium; with an attempt to keep the distinguishing marks of the original material.

c) Fidelity of transformation: this is seen as an attempt to measure up with the original text and entails a retaining of important aspects or skeleton of the original literary work (1980: 10).

Michael Klein and Gillain Parker (1981), who have been quoted by Giddings (1991: 11) as well as by McFarlane (1996:11), have come up with a more or less comparable classification of *adaptation*. The first one is "fidelity to the main thrust of the narrative", while the second is the need to "retain the core of the structure of the narrative while significantly re-constructing or re-interpreting, or in some cases, de-constructing the source text." The last one considers "the source merely as raw material, simply as the occasion for an original work". They cite examples for each kind of *adaptation* realized by film-makers. The film *Tom Jones* is cited as *adaptation* for category one, while *Barry Lyndon* goes for category two; consequently, *Apocalypse Now* is an example of the third kind of *adaptation*, which has been broadly dramatized from Joseph Conrad's novella, *Heart of Darkness*.

Morris Beja, on the other hand, delimits the whole question of *adaptation* into two categories. He argues that the writer should adhere to the original narrative text and

remain close to all its elements or consider the work in question as a departure and set his mind to produce a work of artistic integrity. His preference inclines towards the second kind of *adaptation* (1976: 82).

What we could understand from these more or less similar classifications is that the practice of adapting literature to film displays a flexible and fluid nature rather than being governed by established guidelines and set of rules.

I would like to argue that it is difficult to exactly pindown the intentions of those who are involved in novel-to-film *adaptations*. The film-maker might want to measure up with the challenges of reproducing a novel created in purely verbal terms to the medium of audio-visual images by remaining faithful to the original which has aroused his personal response. Another might feel to create a new work that could measure up to the demands and styles of his period by making the source text his point of departure. Whatever reasons one may attach to the initial creative temperament of the film-maker, the critic may not have to limit himself to finding out the infidelity of the screen production to its precursor. It seems to be far from being advantageous to focus solely on the film version, assigning to it an autonomous entity, since the whole process and the dominant atmosphere of the film's intertextuality is distinctly imprinted on the screen production.

I maintain, following Meja, that in evaluating the film version of a novel, it would be rather illuminating to consider, and try to fix the kind of *adaptation* that has been made,

"...to distinguish what the film-maker has sought to retain from the original and the kinds of use to which he has put it." (1996: 23).

Brian Mefarlane, whose theoretical position rests on Barthes' structural analysis of narratives when he made five case-studies of *adaptations*, suggests a few guidelines for the critic, one of which is to "...arrive at more rigorous, objective statements" in examining the original and re-created text in the two different mediums. He points out that the most important function of such a study would be to distinguish between:

i. those elements of the original novel which are transferable and are not tied to one or other semiotic system–that is, essentially, narrative; and
ii. those which involve intricate processes of *adaptation* because their effects are closely tied to the semiotic system in which they are manifested-that is, enunciation. (1996: 20).

According to him, therefore, the most important and susceptible novelistic element which can be transferred from novel to film is the narrative, or functions proper (given by Barthes) which refer to the actions and events or happenings strung together in successive progression throughout the text. Narrative as a concept signifies a chain of events in cause-and-effect relationship occurring in time and space, and it entails a continuing set of characters who shape the course of events or are affected by them. Therefore, when we talk about narratives in the literary text as well as in the film's text, the description equally applies to both. This is the area in which transfer from one medium to another is possible. But when it comes to the level of articulation or

enunciation of the same narrative, it needs proper *adaptation* because of the difference in their systems of signification.

Hence, when it comes to narration, the prose fiction communicates with the verbal sign system, whereas the screen draws on variously, and at times simultaneously, on visual, aural, and verbal signifiers. In the former, it is through the symbolic nature of the verbal signs that the reader is made to conceptualize the story. In the screen the sign systems employed are a combination of pictures (images) and sounds, which have high iconicity, and directly communicates to the viewer sensously and perceptually. Accordingly, in the course of *adaptation* and its evaluation the focus lies on the power and limitation of the screen medium in finding the film's equivalent to what have already been articulated through verbal sign systems.

The adapter, therefore, needs a thorough knowledge of the power and limitations of both media in order to handle effectively their raw material, i.e., the story. For this reason, the next section attempts to throw light on some of the formal aspects of prose fiction and cinema.

2.3 The Possibilities of Both Media

Most artistic and creative involvement in a work of art can be thought as a push from within to fight against the chaotic, disparate and seemingly meaningless reality. It may also be thought as the need to grasp and understand life in all its forms. It is also an

imaginative attempt to impose one's will and create order in an intelligent and sensible way that may arise from the need to reflect common human experience. The creative artist is, therefore, throughout engaged in perceiving connections and relationships among things, and s/he then creates his/her own reality in accordance with his/her vision towards life.

However, modern writers, unlike earlier authors, seem to have realized the futile exercise mirroring the external reality that is perpetually out of reach. Reality, for them, is not only incomprehensible but too elusive to be captured with certainty. Language, the only medium of the writer for transmitting human experience, has been found inadequate and its severe limitations have become the central preoccupations of writers.

Mendilow, in his book *Time and the Novel*, observes thus:

> **Language cannot convey non-verbal experience, being successive and linear. It cannot express simultaneous experience, being composed of separate and divisible units, it cannot reveal the unbroken flow of the process of living. Reality cannot be expressed or conveyed, only the illusion of it. (1952: 81).**

This realization of the incapability of language to express the subjective experience of the individual as well as the inclination of the writers towards studying the psychological motives of their characters forced a shift from the hitherto maintained practice of writing prose fictions. When the modernist narrative fiction appeared, its

immediate concern was to focus more and more on consciousness and on the memory and reflection of the subject. Bluestone notes:

> **It [must be] common place by now that the novel has tended to retreat more and more from external action to internal thought, from plot to character, from social to psychological realities (1957: 46).**

We are told that the attempt to express the flux of time and human experience in language, which are linear by nature and contrary to the workings of human consciousness which consists of discrete fragments, is the landmark of the modernist narrative fiction. Although such is the case.

> **The relentless linearity associated with the reading of a novel favours the gradual accretion of information about action, characters, atmosphere, ideas, and this mode of presentation, of itself, contributes to the impression received. (McFarlane, 1996: 24).**

The gradual sequential presentation of the narrative with verbal signs would enable the reader to sift the information at his own pace. This contrasts with "...frame-following-frame presentation i.e., of the cinematic narrative, within the controlled viewing time." (Ibid.: 25)

The prose narrative, although, it is restricted to a single channel of information, that is, writing, it can surpass its limitations by being, in the words of David Lodge, "...the most versatile of narrative forms" (1996: 225). According to him, unlike the film-

maker who worries about production cost and other practical considerations, the novelist is free to travel effortlessly "...into space, into people's heads, into their bodies, into palaces or prisons..." (Ibid.).

However, McFarlane (1996: 27) notes two limitations of prose narratives which the adapter needs to know, in contrast to their potentiality for the screen;

i. the frame, instantly, and at any given moment, provides information of at least visual complexity (sometimes increased by the input of aural and verbal signifiers) beyond that of any given word because of the spatial impact of the frame; and
ii. the frame is never registered as a discrete entity in the way that a word is. We do not ordinarily view a film frame by frame as we read a novel word by word.

In like manner, the language of the screen is enhanced by a complex system of visual and auditory codes and, therefore, meaning often moves beyond the spoken word as it comes together with all the technical resources of the screen.

The film at its initial stage was engaged in reproducing nature with a direct, documentary attitude toward the object. Everything was shown. In the words of Cohen, "signifier and signified were simultaneously present and indivisible" (1979: 80). In other words, the "fictional" world was not different from the real world. It was only later that it moved to depict its own reality by selecting and ordering the images, emphasizing their relationships temporally, spatially and causally. These were

juxtaposed to create meaning. Additionally, the screen created its own vocabulary and codes which have become conventions to filmgoers by which to 'read' and understand its narrative presentation. As the screen adapter is transforming the source text to a "visually read" texts he needs to know them better. These non-iconic conventional signs, or, as Martin Esslin labels them, the "grammar" of the screen, are made up of camera angles and editing techniques. Various shots obtained from the camera include, close-up, medium & long shots, panning, tilting, dolling etc.(Essin, 1987: 104-5).

Brian McFarlane points out four "extra-cinematic"" codes which, he claims, have been often overlooked by adapters, viewers and critics. These are the language codes linked with specific accents or tones of voice signifying the social or emotional and moral disposition of the character(s). The visual codes are associated with those elements that demand not only 'seeing' but also selecting and interpreting from the viewer. Non-linguistic codes are those which are made up of "musical and other aural" codes; and finally, we have cultural codes which contain extra information relating to how "people live, or lived at particular time and place" (1996: 29). The uses and integration of the above codes enables the cinema to stand as a unique art form. The recognition of all the codes which have been mentioned also play crucial role for assessing the *adaptation* made from prose text that relies on written representation of language codes.

Another point worth mentioning,which is related to the capabilities and limitations of both mediums within the frame-work of *adaptation* from one to the other, is that the novelist has two resources or basic modes of representations as distinct from that of the film-maker. These are "...the reflective comment in the (novelist's) own voice and the

interior consciousness of one or more of his characters" (Dawson, 1970: 80). In order to reveal the hidden life as well as the consciousness of his/her characters, s/he tends to employ distinctly a subtle and complex interweaving of the narrator's voice and the character's voice. "But the film, being a presentational medium (except for its use of dialogue) cannot have direct access to the power of discursive forms. Where the novel discourses, the film must picture" (Bluestone, 1957: 47).

It is often problematic and a challenge for the adapter to represent the mental states (dream, memory, imagination, thought etc) of the characters rendered through verbal signs in the narrative. The film's incapacity to render such states of mind and thoughts of the characters lies in its characteristics of presenting moving images in physical and spatial terms. As McFarlane puts it:

> **...film simply favours what can be shown (i.e., appearances, behaviour, actions) over what has to be told. It is therefore not surprising to find that the reflective elements of an author's style do not adapt well to the screen... (1996: 133).**

The adapter may attempt to incarnate the rendition of conceptual consciousness into pictorial representations by employing superimposition of images, or directly putting the visual equivalent into the frame. They might go as far as employing voice-over techniques and flash back, but none of the above could substitute the precursor's narrative power of such reflections and memories that exist in the consciousness of the individual character because the screen foregrounds space to narrate its story. According to Orr:

> **In fiction, narrative language is used to describe consciousness, but the camera has no analogous convention for rendering thought ...Although both use dialogue, the narrative language of feeling, attitude, and judgement in the novel becomes more ambiguous and problematic when rendered through the image. (1992: 2).**

The film, however, provides equivalent visual signs for the novel's discursive prose. The adapter's awareness of cinematic uses of mise-en-scene (such as setting, lighting, costume, actor's facial expression, body language, camera placement and movement, editing and sound-track) are crucial for such adequate representations of commentary offered by the implied narrator in the prose fiction.

Another important element the adapter needs to take into account while working out the limitations and possibilities of the prose and the screen medium is related to aspects of narrational mode and the given view-point in the fictional world of the narrative.

In all narrative the way a story is mediated is a key element for structuring the fiction. This mediation designates the angle of vision, the point or stance from which the events, people and other details are viewed. The importance of point-of-view in the narrative has been emphasized thus:

> **The whole intricate question of method, in the craft of fiction, I take to be governed by the question of the point of view - the question of the relation in which the narrator stands to the story. (Lubbock, 1964: 251).**

The writer, therefore, needs the utmost imaginative capacity to work out this "intricate question" of deciding an apt view-point for relating the chosen sequence of events to his readers. The appropriate view-point gives the literary product harmony, consistency and unity. The reader follows the story or is able to understand the outcome of events satisfactorily according to the writer's technical management of assigning the right angle of narration convenient to it. Fowler, for example, explains the nature of narration, as follows:

> **Narration is the recounting of a series or parts of events and the establishing of some connection between them. In imaginative literature the nature of the link between the reader and the text is crucial and here the narrator becomes important... The discussion of the nature of narration and the mode of narration can carry us to the heart of the meaning of a work of fiction. (1973: 122).**

The adapter needs to make finding out the relevance of the chosen view-point his job before he attempts to transmute the text.

Narratives as a work of art are manipulated by the novelist or the film maker to arouse and maintain the interest of their readers and spectators respectively. "Narration is the moment-by-moment process that guides us in building the story out of the plot" (Bordwell & Thompson, 1997: 102).

In order to achieve certain effects or to create expectation, and surprise and thereby increase suspense, the plot is worked out in such a way that the information gets to the reader bit-by-bit, in a supply-and-withold manner.

The narrational mode of prose narratives is classified into four view points. According to Bain (1987: 63), they are first-person, omniscient, limited omniscient (sometimes called third-person) and objective (or the dramatic) mode of narration. He further states that in narratives it is unavoidable to give one's attention fully to identifying who is telling the story or whose words are being projected, and to locating where the character stands in relation to what is going on in the story.

The first-person narrator is one of the principal characters in the story (although the narrator could be someone with a minor role in the story), sometimes called 'narrator-character'. The narrator describes or relates a story that belongs to his/her perceptions, in one way or the other, which s/he is able to have access to. In such kind of narration the reader could easily identify with the narrator. As Bain puts it,

> **First person stories, are always limited too and almost all the time are internal as well. While they cannot retract spatially from the narrator, they almost always are withdrawn temporarily: that is, the "I" telling of a story is older than the "I" experiencing the events of the story (1987: 63).**

In this regard we could cite *Great Expectations* as an example of such kind of first-person narration. It is the grown-up Pip who is also the central character of the story,

that we follow as he narrates his childhood and teenage experiences. We, as readers, are absorbed in the story not only by the encoded events and perceptions of his childhood experience but also by his mature understanding and perceptions of his earlier conduct. But in the *adaptation* of the novel there is a "...fundamental serious shift of emphasis...[as]... the result of the loss of first-person narrative" (Giddings, 1990: 84). Both Giddings and McFarlane (1996) have attempted each in his own way to evaluate the screen *adaptation* of *Great Expectations.* According to them, some of the means the adapter used to replace the first-person narration is the technique of voice-over, the omnipresence of the character (Pip) in every scene and subjective camera shots of Pip's point of view. Both have used the David Lean's 1946 version of the novel for their discussions.

The other narrative mode which was introduced in the 1920s as an element of the experimental fiction and closely linked with the first-person narrative, is the use of interior monologue or stream-of-consciousness technique. various critics mentioned writers such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf are mentioned as the initial practitioners of this technique. Actually this technique can at times be adequately framed by a third-person narrative. The stream-of-consciousness novel lays emphasis on showing the train of thought or the operation of the mind of the central character without any straightforward authorial report. This technique attempts to measure up with the workings of human consciousness that consists of mixed and discrete fragments of memory and desire. According to Kumar, what we call stream of conciousness is:

> **[these] transitional phases of our mental processes which mark the merging of the past into the present, and the fading of the present into the future, thus making experience a continuum (K. Kumar, 1963: 14).**

The stream of conciuosness novel, therefore, deviates from those earlier novels which rely upon the external world seen objectively and makes a jump into exploring the duration aspect of consciousness where the casual and temporal relationships between events are "...distorted by memory and desire, and truth and meaning are adumbrated through mythical allusion and poetic symbolism" (Lodge, 1996: 157).

In the limited omniscient narrative mode, the events and perceptions of the story are restricted to one character. We are allowed to see and hear what this character sees and hears. According to Sue Collins this indirect inside focus can impart "a double set" of information:

> **An event filtered through a character's mind is at the same time both itself and a reflection of the character who is interpreting it; we can see what really happened, and we can see how the character who is struggling to come to grips with the 'truth' may be deluded (1992: 77).**

This kind of limited third-person point of view is also called, "centered" or "central consciousness," which Bain defines as a vantage point "...in which things, peoples, and events are narrated as if they had been perceived through the filter of an individual character's consciousness" (1987: 63). He also states that this might be the most popular and realistic way of telling a story favoured by most writers.

The adapter might attempt to measure up with the novel's 'center-of-consciousness' approach with the central character's point-of-view shots alternating with shots of him/her looking. But it lacks the novel's potential to admit the viewer into the thought process of the character.

The omniscient point of view is often linked with the author's choice of unrestricted freedom into the minds (thought and motivation) of most of the characters occasionally throughout the story. In this 'all-knowing' or 'God-like' authorial voice the reader is able to have access to the thoughts and feelings of the characters as well as their external behaviours and actions as prescribed by the author of the fictional world of the narrative.

The dramatic or objective point of view is a mode of narration in which the reader, without any authorial guidance or comment, is able to perceive and evaluate for herself/himself the given dramatic events enacted by the concerned characters. The responsibility and judgement of the enacted event has now shifted to the reader/audience. Since the authorial voice is embedded in the voice of the inside narrator, nothing is brought into the narrative from without; once the narrator is exposed to the reader/audience the story proceeds with a strictly scenic form without anybody explaining or expounding. According to Percy Lubbock (1964: 256):

> **The mind of the narrator becomes the stage, his voice is no longer heard. His voice is heard so long as there is narrative of any sort, whether he is speaking in person or is**

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> **The mind of the narrator becomes the stage, his voice is no longer heard. His voice is heard so long as there is narrative of any sort, whether he is speaking in person or is**

> **reported obliquely; his voice is heard, because in either case the language and the intonation are his, the direct expression of his experience.**

He further states that in this drama of the author's mind, in so far as there is no narration, there is also no question of personal voice. The point-of-view belongs to the reader/audience and any thought formed in the narrator's mind tell its own story.

The reason for making a somewhat broad discussion of the above mode of narration is two fold. Identifying the view-point makes one aware of the attitude, the tone, the set of morals conveyed in the narratives. It is, in fact, the chosen point-of-view that colours, illuminates and gives strength to the story. Second, this is the crucial area where the adapter faces the challenge of finding an appropriate view point in order to capture the attitudes and subjective tones attributed to the story. Occasionally the adapter may find the prose text narratiove mode inappropriate for his present audience because of lapse of time, and this might lead him to a shift in emphasis and narratiove modes. In order to do this, it is equally unavoidable to have some knowledge about the possibilities and limitations of the screen in terms of its narratiove view-points.

In film and television, point-of-view has two distinct implications according to Sheridan (1965); the first one is associated with the physical location of the camera, and the second has to do with the "way in which the position of the camera helps to reveal the attitude of the observer or director and hence to influence our own" (p. 31). He is telling us that the camera placed at a vantage point by the director as stationary and/or, constantly changing location functions as the third person narrator in the prose fiction.

On the other hand, Longman (1986: 191) considers the visual medium (Film/TV) as having four basic points-of-view analogous to prose fiction: omniscient, objective, limited third person and first person view-points. The cmniscienct camera is "considered as capable of moving in and out of the character's minds, of moving readily through time and place, and of being generally ubiquitous" whereas the objective is a detached viewer. It almost approaches our normal way of looking at things. It controls time and space. The limited third person camera is mostly concerned with a particular character. The camera more frequently moves with this character making him dominant and visible in the subsequent scenes. When this changes into the first person camera it attempts to reveal the character's inner thought and fear. The camera makes it a point of framing the shot in relation with the vision and attitude of the protagonist, both internally and externally, towards the events recounted. Therefore, in general, the camera is the narrator working interchangeably within those view points.

The adapter needs to be familiar with the subtle use of alternative vocalization and with the constant shift of points-of-view in both media. The art of film making lies in one's capacity to frame each image with an awareness to the subsequent and previous images so that it will be capable of producing "...varying degrees of identification with the human subjects and varying attitudes towards them" (Longman, 1986: 190). Apart from using appropriate points of view through the use of the camera, cutting and editing is also another device for change of perspective which is suitable to and consistent with the narrative. The camera is able to specify and emphasise particular characters or

objects through the conscious use of depth of field, focus, and zooms that belong to its apparatus.

The attempt to approximate the novel's first person narration while making the *adaptation* to the screen has been found mostly to be a difficult task. As Brian McFarlane has noted, this could be tried in two ways, though, less equivalent to that of the novel. According to him the "subjective perception" of the first person narrator has been usually adapted into a "preponderance point-of-view shots" and by the use of "voice-over" or oral narration. (1996: 16). However, both techniques lack to render the consistent psychological view point and subjective impressions of the first person narrator in the novel.

When it comes to those prose narratives that employ the omniscient or the limited third-person narrative modes, the adapter (film-maker) would be in a better position if he/she really attempts to dig into the total discourse of the narrative prose. It mostly comprises the direct and free indirect speech of the characters, the writer's (narrator's) tone and attitude in evaluating the actions and speeches of the character, the description of the setting and physical appearance of the characters, the tropes used to lay emphasis or render additional meaning. He can adapt these functional prose elements into the screen by effective use of those cinematic narrative codes such as montage (action and reaction shots of the actors), mise-en-scene (positioning of actors through space in relation to the angle of the camera), sound-track, and through skilful use of editing.

It is a well-known fact, which has been affirmed by writers and critics that the screen works and derives its functional advantages through a constant shift of restricted and unrestricted mode of narration. Bordwell (1997: 103) states that these two forms of narration "are not watertight categories but rather two ends of a continuum". He further notes:

> **The plot shifts constantly from character to character to change our source of information. Similarly, a completely restricted narration is not common. Even if the plot is built around a single character, the narration usually includes a few scenes that the character is not present to witness. (Ibib.: 103).**

Although the film-maker may shift between objective and subjective view points in order to create a hierarchy of knowledge between the viewers and the characters in the story, he must be careful not to meddle much on those shifting points. Geoffrey Wagner affirms this as follows:

> **We cannot in cinema play with too many points of view; the imagistic associations aroused would begin to be meaningless, would cease to contribute to structural unity and general sense (1975: 199).**

Time is another area to be reckoned with in the two narrative media. Bluestone points out that , "...the novel has three tenses; the film has only one" (1957: 45). The characteristic of film narration is its presentness while prose narrative is able to make a shift from past events towards the present, and where necessary points into the future.

Lodge (1996: 210) and Bordwell and Thompson (1997: 96-98) indicate the use of time in film or prose narrative in constructing the story. Lodge acknowledges Gerard Genette (1971) as his source. The three sub-categories of time in narrative discourse are order, duration and frequency. Order points to the relations between the chronological sequence of events in the story and their deviations or order of presentations in the text. Duration concerns the relation between the assumed length of time occupied by an action in the story and the time it occupies in the constructed narrative event. It may be longer or shorter or may be roughly the same. Frequency denotes the relation between the number of times something happens in the actual story and the number of times it is narrated in the text.

In temporal order, according to Bordwell, the scenes are shuffled out of their story order moving from present to an earlier event or from present to the future by using flashback or foreshadowing techniques. On the other hand, we have temporal duration when the plot "selects certain stretches of story duration... highlights significant stretches of time from a period of many years..." (1997: 97). The screen duration is also different from the plot duration. For instance, the story duration of Roots stretches through many generations and its overall plot duration concentrates within a limited short period of time span, whereas in terms of its screen duration it takes about fifteen to twenty hours.

Temporal frequency occurs when an event in the story happens twice or more through flashback or through the use of different narrators for the purpose of giving emphasis,

or to add more information by presenting it in several way. For instance, a murder might have taken place at the beginning of a story where a little girl witnesses the crime in hiding. This incident, then, may be repeated several times if the girl happens to be haunted by it; or if she is forced by the police to reveal this horrible crime as a witness.

The author of prose narrative or screen media would make use of story order, duration and frequency in different ways so as to arouse the expectation of his/her respective audience.

Lodge (1996) states that the problem the adapter encounters mostly concerns temporal duration. He observes that because of the different status of duration in each medium, adapting novels for film or TV almost always involves a process of reduction, condensation and deletion rather than expansion. According to his experience (he made an *adaptation* of two novels, *Nice work* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* for TV serial-the first novel belongs to him and the latter to Dickens), a novel like *Martin Chuzzlewit*, which runs to 900 pages and which would take about 48 hours to read aloud without interruption it was a hard task, to turn it into a screen *adaptation* of five episodes that run to a total of five and a half hours. He further points out:

> **A general rule of thumb is to include only what is essential to the articulation of the plot, or the motivation of the character ...the medium is very intolerant of verbal redundancy; and the television audience (unlike a movie audience) is free to switch to another programme, or to switch off entirely, if its interest is not continuously engaged (Ibid.: 234).**

In general what makes a successful *adaptation* is not the artistic quality or greatness of the original text but that of deep understanding and knowledge of the narrative mode and codes of the screen medium.

III. ETV's *ADAPTATIONS* IN FOCUS

3.1 Introduction

Ethiopian television, since its inception in 1957 E.C., has been able to produce quite a number of original television plays. Other than these, there has also been a record of stage plays which have been transmitted to the public. But these latter were an unadapted versions and were filmed directly from the stage. However, although it lacks the visual selection and multi-directional presentation of the television medium, it would be unwise to disregard its advantage both to the public and the art. The majority of the people who were not able to afford paying entrance fee to the theatres have benefited from the television transmissions of those stage productions. The recording and preservation of those productions could also serve as a springboard for the subsequent generations. Apart from these filmed stage productions, there were also some stage plays presented to the public with a slight modification made for the television screen.

On the other hand, when we come to proper *adaptation*, especially from prose fictions, we do not see much of it being practised. In all those years of Ethiopian Television's history there have been only seven *adaptations* made from prose narratives. This is a small number not only in relation to its history but in relation to *adaptation* in other countries.

Among these seven screen *adaptations*, only three of them are in a good condition for proper viewing and examination. The other four were photographed with a 16 mm black and white film. But they are partly erased for other uses. The other one is an adapted foreign play and needs separate study. This chapter, then, focuses on critically analyzing the rest both as original texts and as an *adaptations*. This might help to illuminate and establish what kind of *adaptation* has been produced in relation to the intention and overall effect of the original text.

3.1.1 '*Agatami*' (*Coincidence*)

Yilma Habteyes, known among Ethiopian readers as the only prolific writer of detective fiction, is the author of the detective novel, *Agatami*. In an interview he made with Molvaire (1997: 381), he admits to be directly influenced by the works of Agatha Christie and Earl Stanley Gardner.

Agatami, according to the author, was first written as an article for , *Tsedey* in 1966 E.C. He then dramatized it for the television screen in 1968 E.C., and in the same year presented it to the Television audience. Moreover, he had entitled his story *Dem Yenekaw Ije* (Blood-stained Hand). The subsequent elaborated version of the same story was published in 1979 E.C. In his introduction to the book, he indicates that he restructured the whole story and has been able to endow it with new narrative forms while keeping the spirit of the original story and its resolution intact. The author has been able, for a second time, to realize a screen *adaptation* of the new version of his text a decade later, in 1990 E.C. This time, he made the *adaptation* together with a

theatre arts graduate from Addis Ababa University. After the dramatization of the text, Mega Creative Arts Centre took hold of the production of the script. The latter assigned a director who is also a theatre arts graduate, to direct the play.

In order to discern the transformation of the original verbal text into the visual, aural and verbal components of television drama, it is necessary first of all to point the conventions of the genre, to lay bare the plot, and discuss its structural elements so as to appreciate the artistic quality of the narrative text.

Detective fiction is regarded as the most conventionalized and as the most tightly formula-bound of all popular genres. The reader, especially the experienced one, will have no doubt that the mystery (murder, missing person, etc) would be solved by the assigned detective or special police force who undertake the investigation. According to Collier's Encyclopaedia, this kind of narrative fiction differs from other forms of fiction by the fact that:

> **...It is primarily a puzzle, usually a crime has been committed, but the readers' attention is generally directed to puzzling circumstances surrounding the crime rather the events themselves. The tale climax is the solution of the puzzle, and the bulk of the narrative is concerned with the logical process by which the investigator follows a series of clues to this solution (1970: 149).**

Therefore, its attraction lies not in its literary values but in its ability to arouse the expectation of the reader towards the discovery of the criminal. It makes the reader

participate in the logical reasoning and rationalistic analysis of clues and bits of information carried on by the detectives in the progression of the whole story. Past and present critics consider the detective story, according to George N. Dove, as having been bestowed with four qualities which makes it different from other popular fiction:

> **The detective story is transitory, without long range of purposes; it is fundamentally an intellectual undertaking; it is recreational intended primarily to relax; and it is a disciplined, delimited literary form. (1997: 2).**

Its transitorniness lies, especially the "classical formal-problem story", in the pleasure of reading. Such stories do not exceed upon the solution of the mystery. They lack literary power to incite the reader to re-read again due to their temporary sensational nature. With regard to its intellectual stimuli, it is in the nature of the detective novel to provoke the reader to do an intellectual exercise in the "complicated and extended puzzle cast in fictional form" (Wright, 1976: 35) both as a work of "imagination and ratiocination" (1997: 2). As to its recreational value, Dove acknowledges writers such as John Cowelti, who have described the genre as a "transformation of a crime into game or puzzle," or as the "aestheticizing of crime" (1997: 3). The game or play quality of the genre lies in the contest or duel between the author and the reader, in which the latter is continously challenged to produce his own solutions from every clue and "legitimate dirty trick" the author sets before him (Ibid). Its structure is also delimited and disciplined so that the reader willingly accepts the limits of the game or the rules that have been conventionally laid. Dove elaborates this:

> **A writer writes (and a reader reads) with an understanding of what is acceptable within the limits of literary form, of what inventions and experiments are permissible, and what traditions must be observed. (1997: 4).**

Accordingly, a detective story might not dare, for instance, to arrive at the solution of the problem accidentally. It may undertake or introduce new themes but structurally it is conditioned by custom and convention.

Novels of crime and detection, which are sometimes also known as a 'whodunit' (a jargon for 'who done it?') "centre their story on characters representing social order and justice... The effort of the law to unmask the criminal/villain are the major source of suspense" (Lodge, 1996: 133). In such detective fictions, it is not unusual to make the character who occupies the position of the most-likely-suspect in the story completely innocent. In general, this literary form is characterized by its deep conventional and ideological manifestations, "...in which good triumphs over evil, law over anarchy, truth over lies" (1996: 154).



3.1.2 Text

The textual paradigm of the crime novel, which more or less has been discussed up to now, also underlies not only Yilma's detective novel in focus but also of his other novels. The crime in his fiction is usually murder. The most common motive for such a crime is explained as an excessive desire for someone's property, fear of being black-mailed, flirtation with somebody's wife/husband and revenge.

In *Agatami*, we learn that the basic motive of the criminal is nothing other than revenge. The text, as in most classic 'whodunit' novels, present the corpse as signifying an effect, without an apparent cause. Hence, the narrative entails the process of identifying that cause, recreating the chain of events that gradually brought the effect by interpreting and appraising various clues which have a relationship of contiguity.

The arrangement of the plot is worked out according to the more extensive regulative structure of detective story. This conventional way of structuring a plot, as we will be able to see from the text, is constructed in the form of "the standard seven-step". According to George N. Dove (1997: 78) they are (to make the structures clear examples are given from the text in focus),

1) The statement of the problem: Mulugeta discovers the dead body of Aster in his bedroom, and summons his family and police detectives to state his problem.
2) The first solution: The mystery of the crime gave no choice to the police but to arrest Mulugeta as the most likely suspect of the murder.
3) The complication: Captain Tamiru, head of the investigative unit, is able to point out flaws in their first solution and this opens up to further investigation and hypothetical work on potential and minor suspects.
4) The period of gloom: The circumstantial evidence they come across during their subsequent investigation fails to shed light on anyone of thepossible suspects. The search continues thrugh a series of blind alleys. This period

of confusion puts them in doubt as to the puzzling question, "who killed Aster?"

5) The dawning light: One of the police detectives, Lieut. Zeleke, is able to spot some fallacy regarding one of the suspect, Yimer. The latter works as a gatekeeper for Mulugeta. He, while admitting seeing a woman in Mulugeta's car every Saturday night, falters in describing her physical appearance. His reason that she often comes veiled who counterchecked and proved to be false. His accent, which was found to be similar to the birthplace of the victim, is also another evidence that made the detective stick to him as the most likely suspect.

6) The solution: Lieutenant Zeleke made a frantic search for Dinkinesh, the only person who can identify the suspect, and is able to find her. He brings her to the suspect and is able to expose the real identity of the killer. She discloses Yimer as the legal husband of "Lekeyelsh" who changed her name to "Aster" in her city life.

7) The explanation: The culprit gives his reasons that led him to the crime. He briefly tells the police that he was trying hard to adjust his life when his wife, the victim, deserted him to flee to the city. However, he was tired of the countryside and came here to look for a job. He went through a difficult life till he was lucky enough to find a job as a gatekeeper in Mulugeta's house. He was able to live peacefully for eight months. And one day he saw his wife serving as a mistress to his employer. Therefore, it was all coincidence that led him to a cold-blooded murder of his late wife.

The author, as we have seen above, is quite similar with other writers of detective stories in his application of the regulative structure. Such application has been found to be central to the conventional use of detective fictions. The ritual of investigation, deduction and inevitable solution limit the boundaries of the genre.

In *Agatami*, the characters are stereotypes and represent the various class they belong to in the actual structure of the society. The behaviours, attitudes and actions of the characters, the situations they are in all reflect the ideology of the period. As it would be shown in detail, the characters are drawn from two opposite groups, the peasantry and the capitalist. According to Collin Watson (1978) this is a characteristic feature of the classical detective fiction. "The division between town and country is [seen]... in the whodunit literature... The special image of the capital was calculated to give readers a pleasant sense of venturing among the wealthy, the daring, the witty and the wicked" (P. 61).

The narrative is divided into four sections, each of which contains a number of sections structured according to a shift in setting and time-scheme moving between present and past.

In the first part of the narratives, the reader is introduced to the scene of the crime with a panoramic view of the third person mode of narration. This comfortable vantage point makes it possible to familiarize the reader not only with the in-and-out of the main setting and full physical description of the character but, also to the inner

emotional feelings of the character directly affected by the scene of the crime. For instance,

> በአካባቢው ከሚገኙት አነስተኛ ቤቶች በመጠኑም ሆነ በዐይነቱ ጎላ ብሎ የሚታይ ቪላ ቤተ ለብቻው አፈንግጦ ይገኛል::...ቤቱ ፍፁም ዘመናዊ ሲሆን ሳሎኔ ውሃ ሰማያዊ ሆኖ ውስጡም በውድ ዕቃዎች አሸብርቋል...በግምት ሃያ ዘመጠኝ ዓመቱ የሚሆነው ወጣት በዐይነቱ ምርጥ ከሆነ ሶፋ ላይ ቁጭ ብሎ በትካዜ ተውጧል::...ክፉኛ እንደጨነቀው ያስታውቃል:: (ገፅ 5-6)
>
> **The villa stood conspicuously above the surrounding small houses... It is very modern and the blue living room is decorated with expensive furniture... A young man, approximately twenty-nine years old, sits on the expensive comfortable sofa, feeling depressed... His anguish is clearly visible.**

Mulugeta, who is the son of a well-to-do family and who leads a comfortable life, owning a beautiful villa in the northern part of Addis Ababa, is in a state of turmoil due to some sudden catastrophe with which he met. The narrator takes the opportunity, following the decision of Mulugeta to phone his family, to tell us about the latter. The scene also shifts to his parents' house. Here, the narrator gets into unnecessary length pouring out the biographies of Bejirond Tafesse and Woizero Altaye Endaylalu. We have the same kind of unimportant background information when the author introduces Lakech, Mulugeta's younger sister, a few pages later. When one considers the latter's insignificant role (she only appears once in the first part) and her function in the narrative it makes us wonder why the author puts all those details about her.

The remaining sections of the first part exposes us, through summary and few scenes, to the real identity of the victim and Mulugeta's relationship to the latter. The author transforms the progression of the story through the instabilities created between Mulugeta and his parents who now considers him a disgrace to the family's long-standing prestige. We learn that he was having an affair with a bar lady, called Aster, for over two months without the knowledge of his fiancee, Meaza. He had been betrothed to the latter for over four years through his upper class family. The victim, who now we know as Aster, has come with him to spend the night together, i.e., the previous night. Every Saturday they usually come to his house to make love. But this morning around 6:00 A.M., he has left her sleeping in his bedroom to see his friend who has lost a father three days ago. That morning happens to be a "selest", (this signifies a third day after the death of a person, and it is a customary cultural obligation for a friend or a relative to go to the family of the deceased person). Upon his return from the 'Selest' at about 8:00 A.M., he found Aster dead in his bedroom. His conservative parents, after getting the above information from him, become mad that the very involvement of their son with a prostitute is a big blow to their respectable name. Therefore, to avert this, they resort to the only seeming solution. They suggest to Mulugeta the idea of burying the victim in secret and hush the matter once and for all. However, Mulugeta does not accept their proposal.

This part becomes some what boring by the arrival of the younger sister who, though he sides with her brother learning their conflict, does not serve any purpose to advance the plot. The conflict between the family rises to its climax when Mulugeta reaches a decision to inform the police. However, upon learning that Mulugeta has meant to call

his friend, captain Tamiru, who is also the head of criminal investigation bureau, the tension some what reduces and the family gets relief.

The author, we notice, deals with a minor theme in line with the major theme, that is the solution of the mystery. The sub-plot focuses on the cultural conflict between the older and younger generation. He portrays Bejirond as conservative, selfish, contemptuous and very feudalistic in manner and appearance. His wife also shares the same characteristics. The author has made this clear in his introduction.

> ....ለዚሁም[ለታሪኩ] መነሻ ያደረኩት በቅድመ አብዮት የነበረን ወግ አጥባቂ ቤተሰብ ሲሆን ግንባር ቀደም ባለታሪኮቹም የዚሁ ቤተሰብ አባሎች ናቸው። (ገፅ 3)
>
> **...I used the pre-revolution conservative family as a background source of my narratives and also the main characters are members of this family.**

However, the members of this family are Mulugeta and Lakech, and they are far from reflecting the attitude of their family. As members of the younger generation they both reject the conventions, beliefs and norms of the ruling class to which their family belongs. Lakech marries someone of her choice from the lower class against their wish, and Mulugeta also falls in love with a bar maid being disdainful to his finance, Meaza. The latter is not only a daughter of a rich family but also a choice of Mulugeta's family for a wife. The author, therefore, gave much space to such a conflict of the family belonging to different generation.

The arrival of the captain to the scene, further brings out the arrogance and corruptive nature of Bejirond. A little earlier we are able to observe the attitude of the upper class to the country's law. When Mulugeta rejects their idea of burying Aster in secret, his argument was in accordance with the power of the law to easily detect their mischievous deed but Bejirond retorts back: **አሁን እኛን እንዲህ አድርጋችኋል ብሎ ደፍሮ የሚጠይቀን ሹም ይኖራል ብለህ ነው የፈራኸው?** (ገፅ 35) *(Are you afraid that there would be any official who dares to approach and ask us whether we have done this or not?)*

The author, although delineates Bejirond in such a striking manner, he balances the story through captain Tamiru. He described him thus: **"በአጭር ጊዜ የወንጀል ምርመራ ክፍል ኃላፊ ለመሆን የበቃ ታታሪና አርቆ አስተዋይ ነው።** (ገፅ 35) (*He was able to become, within a short period, the head of crime investigation bureau due to his intelligence and hard-working nature*). This conflicting nature of the two groups, one representing the true justice and the other corruption and suppression of truth, is clearly shown through Bejirond and the captain. As soon as the captain arrives, despite his friendship with Mulugeta, he stands firm to his principle and starts collecting evidence. He takes actions and calls technical policemen to take finger-print marks and remove the corpse for a post-mortem examination. On the other hand, Bejirond appraising the situation and the captain's business-like attitude, attempts to bribe the captain implying a further threat: **"...ዋናው አዛጦችሁንም ደህና አድርጌ አውቃቸዋለሁ። ስለዚህ ለጋራ ጥቅማችን ስንል መግባባት እንዳለብን አንተም አትስተውም።** (44) *(...I have a good and close acquaintance with your superior. Therefore, I have no doubt you will agree that we should cooperate for our mutual*

benefit). However, the captain ignores him and goes to resume his legal duty. This first part comes to a close with the removal of the body. Here, the omniscient narrator attempts to enter into the minds of Bejirond, his wife, Lakech and Mulugeta and gives the reader their view point towards the victim. The author uses this just for an emphasis and to foreground their difference of ideological outlook.

The second part of the narratives suddenly shifts to a different spatial, temporal, and emotional stance, one that puts some distance between that emotional family scene and their concern towards the victim. Here, the narrative concerns itself solely on the investigation of the police and their focus on two issues: the identification of the victim and the 'whodunnit' aspect of the crime. The narrator feigns ignorance and attempts to link the reader with whatever the police are doing through their perspective, mostly the view point of captain Tamiru. The crime investigation squad comprises of four persons, namely; Lieut. Oumer, Lieut. Zeleke, Lieut. Ayele and their boss, captain Tamiru. In the course of their investigation, we learn mostly the aftermath of it in their meeting room at the police station, they discover that the victim has been known by two different names, "Aster Abeje" and "Likeyelesh Abeje". She came to the city three years ago to make her living as a bar-maid leaving her peasant husband in the country side. The information which they are able to get from two different bars where she was working also reveals that she was constantly delirious during the night about her child, who was dead and buried in the country side. Moreover, they have found that she was involved as a witness for a murder committed in one of the bars she was working. Although they were informed that her only intimate friend was a woman from her birthplace called Dinkinesh, they are unable to locate her. We are also informed that

Mulugeta has been imprisoned as a prime suspect. The autopsy revealed that she was strangled to death between 6:30 - 7:30 A.M. Although Mulugeta was absent from 6:00 - 8:00 A.M., they could not verify the exact time of his Absence. The post-mortem also revealed that she was three month's pregnant, whereas Mulugeta explicitly denied and brought their acquaintance to be only two months.

In line with the conventional mode of the detective genre, the credibility of the story lies upon the writer's careful selection of the story information he lays at the background and the desired effect he wants to create. Therefore, the suspense lies not only with our undoubtful desire to see the enigma solved but also with our inability to see the solutions ourselves. The narrative, therefore, progresses and continues diverting our attention towards various suspects in accordance with the perspective of the police we are made to adopt.

Hence, the police turn their attention towards Mulugeta's house and call in and question those persons with whom Mulugeta is residing and having relation with. The police's curiosity now centres upon six suspects, labelled as most-likely and less-likely suspects. The four person listed in the first category includes; Meaza (Mulugeta's fiancee), Belachew (Meaza's brother and a crook), Alemitu (Mulugetàs maid) and Mulugeta himself. In the second category we have Beyene (Mulugeta's Gardner) and Yimer (Mulugeta's gatekeeper).

Despite the text's attempt to make the reader participate in the investigation process, it seems that it is unable to do that because of its dependence on retrospective summary

than actual physical action. The reader is, therefore, reduced to a mere observer than active player. The reader's appraisal of each suspect is limited to a second-hand information and evaluative discussion of the police detectives in their assembly-room. Hence, the reader is unable to know the characters physically because they are all kept in the background unnecessarily.

Thus, the second part of the text has been structured accordingly, issuing and holding information, dropping clues casually so as to control the process of ideation. It also provides purpose for the plot and help to further guide the direction of the narratives. For instance, the following dialogue not only illustrates the motives of each suspect which the police are able to deduce from their investigation but also shape the expectation of the reader in line with the defined and limited investigation process. Lieut. Oumer addresses his colléagues:

> እንዲህ ከሆነ ሰዎቹ መናገር ከፈለጉት በላይ የሚያውቁት ምሥጢር ያለ ይመስላል። ይኸውም ሙሉጌታ በአስቴር ምክንያት ከእጮኛው መጣላቱን መደበቁ። አለሚቱ አስቴርን ቀደም ሲል ማወቋን መሸሸጓ። ዘበኛው ይመር መልኳን ያላያትን ሴት የምትመላለሰው አንድ እሷ ነበረች ብሎ መናገሩ። አትክልተኛው በየነ ስለአስቴር በወሬ ከመስማቱ በቀር በዐይኔ አላየሁም ማለቱ። የወንጀሉ ፈፃሚዎች በግቢው ውስጥ ካሉት ውስጥ ነው ለማለት ያስደፍራል (ገፅ 71)

> **Reviewing the situation again, it seems that the people still harbour some secret apart from the information they gave out. Thus, Mulugeta hid the quarrel he has had with his fiancee because of Aster. Alemitu concealed her previous acquaintance with Aster. The gatekeeper Yimer gave a statement about seeing a woman, without being able to describe her. Beyene the Gardner denied as to everseeing Aster except hearing her name. Therefore, it is possible to say that the murder has been committed by one of them.**

Accordingly, the reader is made to be curious as to the motive of each suspect through such hypothesis and inferences made by the police. However, this part comes to a close without a satisfying clue and hard circumstantial evidence. But it opens up another direction for two of the police inspectors. Lieut. Ayele is shown making investigation about Belachew (Meaza's brother), whom he knew to be dangerous. His sudden disappearance also makes him more suspicious. On the other hand, Lieut. Zeleke made a choice to follow the scent of Dinkinesh (Aster's childhood friend), believing she might know some secret about Aster, which could probably give them a clue to the identity of the real killer.

The third part of the narrative deals with the sub-plot and re-introduces Bejirond Tafesse and his wife. It displays their interference, as an act of concern for the imprisonment of their son, with the law to hush the matter once and for all according to the traditional practice of solving similar cases. This kind of secondary plot is "one of the constitutive conventions of the detective story", according to Dove (1997: 30). This convention can serve the "dual purpose of distraction and delay" (Ibid.). In most detective novels the sub-plot deals with love story, and such temporary distraction is justifiable because it enables the reader to get temporary relief from the stress of the main plot.

This part, though interrupts the main plot, is intended to entertain the reader. It is funny as well as dramatic in its presentation. Someone approaches Bejirond in his office and introduces himself as a close relative of the dead woman, Aster. He is able to convince

Bejirond that the family has decided to settle the matter peacefully. Bejirond agrees and they choose a convenient day for the reconciliation. On the day of the appointment, Bejirond receives three people who claim to be the victim's mother, uncle and the relative who has approached Bejirond before. The whole scene is presented as a kind of 'duel' where both parties are confronted as players. Each is seen acting with precaution not to be the loser of the game. In the first part, for instance, the attitude of Bejirond and his wife towards the victim was very inhuman.

> ...የሷ ከዚህ መሞት የእኛን ክብር እንዲያዋርድ ስማችንን እንዲበክል ዝናችንን እንዲያረክስ ደግሞ አንፈልግም:: (23)
>
> **...We don't want the death of this woman here to be the cause of our disgrace, and defamation.**

On the other hand, in this scene, where they are prepared to play a different role in order to mitigate the "family" of the victim, Bejirond expresses his grief thus:

> ...መቸም የልጃችን የአስቴር በአፍላ ዕድሜዋ መቀጨት ከልብ ያሳዘነን መሆኑን...ሃዘናቸው· ሃዘናችን መሆኑን እንዲያው·ቁልን እንወዳለን:: (87-8)
>
> **...Well, we would like you to know that we are deeply grieved in the untimely death of Aster... we would like you also to know that your pain is our pain.**

The objective of the whole game and the concern of each party is towards the actual payment of "*Yedem Kassa*", (debt of blood) or indemnity although we could not fail to notice the allocation of too much narrative space, (pp: 80-103).

The scene is less boring, due to its dramatic presentation and comic effect. With too much of going around the bush, both parties agree to the sum of birr 2,000 as the actual price of the indemnity.

The last two sections of this part picks up the line of the major plot and deals with the actual investigation of the two police detectives, Lieut. Ayele and Zeleke. The former, who from the very start have focused on Belachew because of his bad character and police record, approaches Meaza and tells her that the disappearance of her brother proved his involvement in the crime. To this allegation Meaza becomes indignant and insists that neither her brother or her have nothing to do with the crime. However, the Lieutenant leaves her with some clue to show her that he knows more about her brother.

On the other side, Lieutenant Zeleke is able to locate Dinkinesh, (the narrator goes to great length accounting her past history and present situation) and inform her about the death of her friend, Aster. He also relates to her how she has been murdered by someone unknown to them. The scene comes to a close as Dinkinesh cries against the injustice done to her friend.

The last part of the narrative moves towards the resolution interlacing the major and secondary plots. Bejirond, although he comes to the police station holding the sealed statement of Aster's "family" to reclaim his son back, the police file on the real identity of the victim's family confirms that he has been tricked by impostors. The unravelling of the real criminal, the concern of the main plot, accelerates on two direction. Belachew, on his way back from his pick-pocketing business in Dire-Dawa falls in the

hands of the police, however, no evidence could be found against him to charge him with the murder.

The discovery of Dinkinesh, as Lieut. Zeleke rightly guesses, finally led to the identification of the real criminal. Lieut. Zeleke gets Dinkinesh to hide near Mulugeta's house while he walks into it and appears a little while later with Yimer. As the two stand chatting, Dinkinesh is able to recognize the person. Yimer was the husband of Aster. Later on, he has been taken to the police station, but he denies any acquaintance with Aster. However, when they bring him face-to-face with Dinkinesh, there is nothing he can do but confess to his crime.

We came to know the significance of the title of the book *Agatami* (*Coincidence*), upon hearing his confession. His involvement with the crime was not a premeditated action but a coincidence, he could not escape. When Aster deserted him, he was determined to accept his fate, but could not endure his loneliness. After some time he came to the city to find a job. It took him few months before he was employed as a gatekeeper at Mulugeta's house. He has had peaceful time for over eight months. However, one Saturday night he saw his wife as a mistress to his boss. He was able to restrain his emotion and remain cool. For her, he was simply a gatekeeper and did not recognise him. Those Saturday nights became permanent. He then decided to take leave on those days and was able to have it. But that Sunday morning on his way back from church, he saw Mulugeta leaving early. Suddenly, he became conscious of the day and knew that Aster was still in the house. It was then:

በድንገት በመንፈሴ ውስጥ ያልነበረ መጥፎ ስሜት ተጠነሰሰ። በውስጤም አንዳች ነገር አደረ። ከውጭ ሰርጎ የገባው ሀይል እንድበቀል በል! በል! አለኝ (158)

Suddenly, I became obsessed with something new. It got inside me. This outside power which took possession of my body shouted for revenge and said, do it! do it!

The last two pages are devoted, as an anti-climax of the story, to the narrator commenting on and judging the action of Yimer. It seems that he wanted to persuade the reader in favour of the criminal, Yimer. There is an inner monologue, attributed to captain Tamiru, which is, in fact, less reliable to be his. It is rather the narrator's voice speaking to us:

ግን አስቴርንና ይመርን ካልታሰበ ቦታ እንዲገናኙ ያደረገ ሀይል ምንድነው? ተፈጥሮ የራሷ የሆነ የመቅጫ ህግ ይኖራት ይሆን? ወይስ በዘልማድ እንደሚባለው መጥፎ አጋጣሚ መሆኑ ነው ብሎ አሰበ። (160-1)

But what is the force that lies behind the unexpected meeting of Aster and Yimer? Is it that nature has its own law and means of punishment? or, he thought, is it bad coincidence as people usually believe?

As the narrator would like us to believe, this voice could belong to captain Tamiru. But there is still the feeling of its unreliability. A person who, throughout his professional life, is able to experience so many incredible crimes might not be so easily affected by or become philosophical on such possibilities. It seems that the writer wants to evade any criticism directed to such issues of the text. However, it is not only Yimer and Aster who happen to meet accidentally, but we have such coincidence of Alemitu and

Aster. Alemitu's husband was killed in a bar where Aster had been working. The latter was also taken to the court as one of the witnesses. So, is it a force of nature that made Alemitu and Aster to meet as a maidservant and a mistress of the house respectively?

The novel, *Agatami*, in general manages to evoke the response of the reader by making its narration following the conventional genre structure. It attempts to make the present mysterious crime more meaningful by interspersing it with dips into the past. The normal point of view in the story is that of the impersonal author. But, often, he tries to distance himself from the events and shifts the view point to the characters. He puts us into the characters' mind through the conventions of internal monologue. When the story reaches a crucial point, the narrator intrudes to place key questions which further guide the story by arousing the expectation of the reader.

To some degree, the novel lacks unity, coherence and consistency due to lack of one central focus or perspective which is often important for this kind of fiction. The novel of crime usually centres its story around the main detective who is representing social order and Justice. The suspense then derives from the reader's plain desire to see the mystery solved. His inability to see the solution himself makes him identify with that of the central character, the detective. In such cases the use of a limited third person point of view can be adapted so that the author as well as the reader are able to follow the perspective of the central character and share his view on events. In Yilma's novel we do not only see this important central reflector but, we are mostly given a report or a summary of events omitting the real physical investigation. Therefore, our curiosity and the desire to know what is happening or has happened is continually suppressed.

For instance, the text first foregrounds the police detectives on page fifty and after that the reader passively observes their hypothesis and inferences based on the summary of events and the suspects' biographical data. This continues up to page seventy-five. The reader is, therefore, denied from getting actual experience from his perception of events.

The introduction of the sub-plot, that relates the story of Bejirond's family vis-a-vis the impostors, covers almost one-third of the whole text. Although it is meant to serve as a temporary distraction and delay, it lacks strength and movement. Its lack of credibility is also another factor that makes this part ineffective. This paralysis, which appears in the narrator's knowledge of Bejirond's world, is the unstable situation. It typically consists a discrepancy in knowledge, judgements, values between the narrator and authorial audience. The argument is that it is unfathomable and less convincing to accept Bejirond's blind submission to the impostors in relation to our knowledge of the behaviour of the upper class to which he belongs. It is, often, in their nature to become more suspicious and inquisitive when it comes, especially, to a situation of this kind involving money. Therefore, the digression of the text from the main line of action through the formation of the above sub-plot rather diffuses the narration with lack of the dynamic and unifying quality of detective fiction.

The other point that needs to be mentioned is the text's ability to form a gap and delay of information that is crucial for the readability of such kind of novel. Rimon-Kennan addresses this issue relating it to detective fictions:

> **The hermeneutic aspect of reading consists in detecting an enigma (a gap), searching for clues, forming hypothesis, trying to choose among them and ...constructing one finalized hypothesis. (1983: 125).**

The text contains temporary and permanent gaps in the course of the story. But they are not so strong as they are meant to be in detective fiction. The temporary gaps concern the information gaps which arise from the interviews of the suspects. For instance; Meaza's threat, "I am not Meaza if I do not make them sorry" (p. 65), Beyene's statement, "I have never seen Aster except hearing her name" (p. 71), Alemitu's sarcastic remark to Beyene, "Your new mistress is fond of your garden" (p. 71), Yimer's paradoxical statement to the police, " I know that Mulugeta escorts a woman every Saturday ... I could not know whether she is black or red... She often comes veiled" (p. 64), are all gaps which are central to the narrative formed to arouse the expectation of the reader as to who has done the crime. It keeps questions like, "who did it?" and "why?" alive, and the gap remains open or gets delayed to create suspense.

The permanent gap of the story concerns Aster's delirious condition due to the death of her child. The people she had worked with, when she was alive, has testified to the police that she was often heard saying, "Don't stare at me like that, my child. Let the lord bless me with your day, my child" (p. 53). The police, her husband Yimer or her friend Dinkinesh are unable to ascertain for sure that she has had something to do with the death of her child. Therefore, this gap which comes to the reader early in the text

remains open to the end. We would be inclined to deduce that this gap in the text is also the result of the gap contained in the actual story.

The temporal aspect of the text is like many of the detective stories, in which their manipulation of time is one of their marked regulative structure and special quality. The narrative of *Agatami* applies the use of dual chronology. It tells two stories simultaneously, that of the investigation (present) and of the suspect's history (past). The two important questions to the puzzle, "who dunit?" and "what happened" are interlaced and are able to move the narratives till the final solution of the mystery.

In conclusion, the author, it seems, has not been able to make a careful balancing of factors, or circumstantial evidence to give his narrative the required precision of the detective formula. It is this thoughtful construction of circumstantial evidence against each suspect that creates the suspense and gives strength to the text. The knowledge of the author concerning the two worlds of the characters, that of the law and the criminal, is a key factor to place the reader at the centre of the two world. Moreover, the credibility of detective story lies in hes/her careful selection of the story information s/he lays at the background and the desired effect s/he wants to create. Apart from this, the writer's use of short and simple language makes the story readable. Moreover, when the language is made to describe the physical and emotional action of the characters, it has visual power. Thus, the author is able to thematize his narrative focusing on the self-discipline and team effort of the police force in order to bring justice and order for the public.

3.1.2 *Adaptation*

A critical appraisal of the screen version of the above detective fiction focuses mainly on two essential points.

First, it attempts to show how the makers of the screen version have been able to rearrange the plot of the original text in relation to the demand of the visual medium i.e., how the shift has been made from purely verbal narrative to a narration through audio-visual images. The other point which this thesis attempts to discuss relates to some of the narrative techniques used in the screen version. In the process, emphasis will be laid on those elements which are carried over from their source, and those which depart from it. These elements which the study attempts to evaluate are mode of narration, character and action.

The television version preserves the novel's essential story material but differs in adapting its own narrative plot suitable to its medium. This change in narrative procedures, especially in regard to plot chronology, is crucial to the overall narrative impact.

Here is a charted out plot segmentation of the visual text that contains the major divisions of the plot as well as sequences. Hopefully this will help readers to see any shift that has been made in the process of transformation.

***Agatami*: plot segmentation**

- credit titles super imposed on teasers.

1. Mulugeta's house:

    a) First conflict between Mulugeta and Meaza.

    b) night club scene: Mulugeta and Aster

2. Ato Tafesse's residence:

    a) Mulugeta's family discuss about his behaviour

3. Meaza's place, Night club and Mulugeta's place (Montage)

    a) Meaza alone in her bed-room thinking about Mulugeta, reading book, calling his house (twice)

    b) Mulugeta and Aster in night club: drinking, smoking and dancing discreetly; later, "love-making" at his house.

4) Mulugeta's residence: conflict reaches climax;

    - Meaza slaps Mulugeta and leaves threateningly

5) Restaurant: Meaza and Taye (a broker)

    - Taye reveals secret about Mulugeta and Aster; gives her an appointment to show her night club.

6) Mulugeta's residence: Beyene and Alemitu.

    - they talk about Aster. Her being a new mistress to the house:

    Beyene leaves with Yimer for a drink.

7) Night club: Mulugeta and Aster; Taye and Meaza:

    a) The former inside the night club dancing

    b) The latter outside the night club spying on them

    c) Mulugeta quarrels with a young man over Aster; Mulugeta & Aster go to his house.

8) Mulugeta's place: Mulugeta, Aster and Alemitu:

- Mulugeta furious about his quarrel in the night club, ignores Aster; she begs him and they make peace; Alemitu and Aster stare at each other.

9) Mulugeta's house: Mulugeta leaves early

10) Mulugeta's house: Mulugeta discovers Aster dead

a) He calls his family

b) Argument ensues between the family: Mulugeta calls the police.

11) Police station: Captain Tamiru interrogates Mulugeta.

12) Night club: Captain Tamiru and two police detectives,

a) They interrogate the employers about Aster.

b) They go out and share the assignment.

13) Mulugeta's house: Meaza, Beyene and Alemitu:

- Meaza checks on Mulugeta and they tell her that he is still at the police station.

14) Mulugeta's house: Detective Oumer and Beyene :

- Oumer questions Beyene about him and his where-abouts on the day of the crime.

15) Achamyelesh's bar: Detective Ayele and Achamyelesh

- He questions the woman about Aster and Alemitu.

16) Police station: Detective Oumer and Mulugeta.

- He questions him about Meaza and Alemitu

17) Police station: Captain Tamiru and Alemitu

- The Captain confronts Alemitu that she does know Aster before and has had reason to kill her.

18) Mulugeta's house: Detective Oumer and Yimer

- The detective questions the gatekeeper in search of a clue

19) Police station: Captain Tamiru and Meaza

- He questions her about her knowledge of Mulugeta's relationship with Aster; her where-abouts on the day of the murder

20) Meaza's house: Meaza and Taye.

- They talk about their being a focus of suspect and he takes money from her so as to get more information from the inside.

21) Police station: Captain Tamiru and the two detectives

- They discuss about, the possible involvement of the families of both Mulugeta and Meaza with the murder; the need to locate Dinkinesh, Aster's childhood friend, so as to get some clue

22) Restaurant: Meaza and Taye

- They talk about the strong suspicion of the police on her and Mulugeta's family
- Taye convinces Meaza to persuade Mulugeta's family for reconciliation with Aster's family

23) Achamyelesh's bar: Achamyelesh and Detective Ayele:

- He interviews her about Aster and more about Dinkinesh and the latter's where abouts.

24) Police station: Captain Tamiru and Beyene.

- The Captain attempts to threaten the gardener as being a possible killer of the victim.

25) Spare part shop: Ato Tafesse, Meaza and Taye:

- Ato Tafesse agrees to the reconciliation.

26) Ato Tafesse's house: Ato Tafesse and Taye

- The latter calls the former to ascertain about the news concerning the imprisonment of Mulugeta. He makes the call not as Taye but pretending to be Ato Tafesse's relative from Wollo.

27) Bar: Detective Ayele and Dinkinesh:

- Dinkinesh tells the detective all she knows about Aster; and he in turn informs her of the situation concerning the death of her friend.

28) Spare part shop: Ato Tafesse and Taye

- Taye exerts force on Ato Tafesse to speed the process of the reconciliation and execution of the indemnity. They finally settle to a day.

29) Police station: Meaza and Mulugeta

- The former brings him food and he accepts.
- She informs him about the reconciliation

30) Ato Tafesse's house: Mulugeta's family and Aster's "family", (her mother, uncle and Taye);

-Both party agree to a payment of birr 8,000 as an indemnity for the loss of Aster.

31) Police station: Dinkinesh

-As she comes out of the room of the investigation, she suddenly notices Yimer and the police and she runs out of the police station

32) Police station: Captain Tamiru and Yimer.

- He questions him about his knowledge of Aster and Meaza, and Yimer tells him what he knows

33) BAR: Dinkinesh: she makes a call to Detective Ayele.

34) Police station: Captain Tamiru and Yimer.

- The question continues and the Captain further threatens him to come out with the truth.

35) BAR: Dinkinesh and Detective Ayele

- She tells him something and he makes a call to the captain

36) Police station: Captain Tamiru and Ato Tafesse

- Ato Tafesse produces the seal of indemnity to the Captain to reclaim his son back

- The Captain then cross-checks the name of Aster's family both on the seal and the police file. He finds out that Ato Tafesse has been tricked by impostors.

37) An old room: Taye and the two other impostors

- They share the money

38) Police station: Captain Tamiru, Meaza and Detective Oumer

- The Captain tells Meaza that her relation with Taye and being accomplice to a false reconciliation is a proof to her being a guilty person.

- The Captain receives a call from Detective Ayele and he leaves in a hurry.

39) Police station: Captain Tamiru, Detective Ayele and Yimer.

- Yimer's confession of his crime. He has been identified by Dinkinesh as an ex-husband of Aster.

- Detective Oumer enters to announce the arrest of the impostors.

40) Police station: Mulugeta, Meaza and Mulugeta's Family

- All receive Mulugeta as he comes out of prison

- End credit titles.

The drama opens with teasers and superimposed credit titles. It then establishes the setting of the story. We understand from the high angle extreme long shot that, the story takes place somewhere in Addis. But from this opening shot we can see the TV screen deviates from the actual setting of the novel. The latter explicitly states the whereabouts of the story, while the former's static shot focusing on the central part of Addis does not seem to care about the exact location of the story. In the following shot, we are formally introduced by a medium front shot to a beautiful villa and this makes us further anticipate the social position of the characters. As far as the introduction of the setting concerns, both the verbal and visual text objectively orient their audience with the same panoramic view. But the shift of the screen in chronological order, character foregrounding, emphasis in character relationship takes place right after the introduction of the setting.

As the major shift and artistic realization of the story lies especially in the first two part of the television production, the study would also like to focus mostly on those parts and attempt to point out their artistic merit. The plot segment of the two parts cover from 1-10

The next shot that follows the introduction of the setting, introduces us with a medium shot to two young couples lying on the bed. The way the camera frames the characters as well as their position on the bed makes us sense a seed of conflict and a feeling of tension going on between them. The opening dialogue of the woman confirms our guess: "ምንድነው ግን የሆነከው?...እኔ እንጃ..ግን ይሄን አምስትና ስድስት ወራት በፍፁም ትክክል አይደለህም(ገፅ 1)" (*"what is really the matter with you?... ...I don't*

know... But for the last five or six months it seems there is something wrong with you"). The man becomes indifferent and sleeps the other side avoiding her eyes. The close up shot of the woman reveals her dismay but she tries once again. He simply answers her back with short phrases: "I don't know", "leave me alone" etc. This increases her agitation and she becomes insistent to know the truth. This objective narration suddenly shifts into subjective point of view, when the camera zooms in to a close up face of the man. With a defocus-focus shot of the man we move to a crowded night club scene where the man is seen smoking and drinking with a bar-maid. Through this parallel editing of two contrasting scenes, combining visual actions and piece of dialogue, we are able to construct the story. We learn the staggering relation that exists between the man and the woman due to the former newly formed relationship with another woman. But, we are only able to understand the identity of the characters and the significance of the above visual presentation, as against the original novel, in the ensuing revealing scene.

This scene, which cuts on the bar scene, takes us to another setting to reveal a well-to-do elderly family and a servant, (we learn later about the identity of the people in the room: the two elderly figure are Ato Tafesse and his wife; while the servant is Beyene, Mulugeta's Gardner). Ato Tafesse interviews Beyene about the rumour concerning Mulugeta's recent "flirtation with a prostitute". The Gardner, to their dismay, confirms about the rumour being true. But he is not sure whether Meaza, Mulugeta's fiancee, knows about this situation or not. The father becomes nervous and dials Mulugeta's house and a cut shows us a maid answering it. He wants to know if Mulugeta is there, and she says no. He reminds her to call back as soon as he is in.

The scenes of the drama that follow continue to foreground the gradual breakage of Mulugeta's relationship with Meaza. His intimate involvement with Aster and the lone-some, desperate situation of Meaza, has been clearly stressed through the use of the setting. The real lively night club is made to visually contrast with the quiet, depressing atmosphere of Meaza's bed room. The director, fully aware of the natural flexibility of the screen in its disposition of time and space than the novel, gives us a fast montage of shots in the night club interlaced with the small, cold bedroom. We observe also an economical and pleasing device to indicate the lapse of time as a way of emphasizing Meaza's restless night. The close up shot of the time on the clock points at 4:10 p.m in Meaza's bedroom of sequence (3a), and after a series of simultaneous to-and-fro presentations of the two scenes, (the night club and Meaza's bed room), we see the clock at Mulugeta's house pointing to 1:25 p.m (3b). This is important not only in accelerating the tempo of events and make the narrative exciting but, the art of condensing the duration and inclusion of what is essential to the articulation of the plot creates dramatic effect.

We also notice the director's presentation of simultaneous contrasting scenes in the two bed rooms (3a and 3b) to further foreground the detonation of the betrothal between Meaza and Mulugeta. This parallel presentation comprises of Mulugeta and Aster caressing each other as the one taking off the other's clothes; Meaza caressing the table flower as she lies on the bed; Mulugeta playfully throwing Aster on the bed ready to make love; Meaza as before but now playing with a flame of a candle she alights.

Meaza's play act with the candle is meant to symbolize her burning love for Mulugeta in need of consummation.

The scenes reach their climax when Meaza, unable to control her suspicion of him, makes a call and Mulugeta hesitatingly answers it. The sarcastic remark, "well come back", the concern on Mulugeta's face and his lame excuse, "I was with my friends", and her slamming of the telephone receiver on him with a threatening remark, "I'll see you tomorrow", ...etc., creates the little moment of dramatic suspense alerting us to what is going to happen next. Thus, the director not only provides a basis for what is to come and initiates us into the narrative but also able to arouse our curiosity by bringing us into a series of actions that has already started. However, the *adaptation* though at its best in inventing incidents and scenes that have been only hinted in the novel sparingly, it lacks to suggest possible causes that has brought a change in the character's situation. We only see the effect of the conflict between Mulugeta and Meaza but are not able to speculate the cause that is hovering in our mind.

The drama continues in its chronological order and the next scene fades in to indicate the early morning scene in Meaza's bedroom. She yawns and clutches her head which implies her sleepless night. When she goes to the bath room to wash her face the scene changes with a cut to Mulugeta's bath room washing his body. It indicates the simultaneous parallel actions but pointing to the contrasting mood of the characters. The tempo rises as Mulugeta, aware of Meaza's threatening remark of the previous night, makes a run to his bedroom to wake up Aster and literally dragging her out of the house. But before she leaves, we notice one of her earring gets dropped without her

knowledge. The overall effect of this textual signal is to build suspense because we know, as Mulugeta does not, that Meaza's discovery of the earring will put an end to his lies and most probably to their staggering relationships. Accordingly, that is how the scene turns out confirming our guess. (Seg. 4).

This scene might serve as an example to show the awareness of the adapters in their manipulation of the screen medium to tell their story effectively. First, we see there is an effective employment of view point manipulating the screen's capacity to alter its narrative voice between objectivity and subjectivity. When the camera makes us view the commotion of Mulugeta and Aster; the fall of the earring without the knowledge of both characters, then, the narration here is objective. This gives us superior knowledge over the two characters and we have the suspense because we can anticipate effects that the character cannot. As soon as Meaza arrives the narrative viewpoint shifts to her. The camera assumes the limited third-person form of narration and we observe from her view point everything that happens in the ensuing scene. It is an exciting dramatic moment for us because of the degree of knowledge we have over them. The other point is their use of the earring (object) and the bed room (setting) to "...forward the action with almost the same power as actors", as Longman indicates, when he makes a point of emphasizing on the power of the screen. He adds:

> **The film... by close-ups or a moving cameras. ...can imbue [objects and settings] with expressive power. Objects can reveal a great deal about the human life revolving around them. (1986: 184).**

The verbal conflict between Mulugeta and Meaza turns to physical assault when Meaza slaps Mulugeta hard on the face infuriated by his deeds and lies. She leaves his house with a threatening remark,“ ባልሰራላቸው· እውነት መአዛ አይደለሁም" (p: 4) (*I am not Meaza if I am unable to give them what they deserve*). This final phrase of Meaza helps to arouse our expectation and leaves us in suspense till the presentation of the second part in the following week.

The television *adaptation* of *Agatami*, in the second part, is also able to further dramatize the original story with a clear focus and direction. There are new scenes and incidents with new dialogues (Seg. 5,7 and 8), scenes that have been retrospectively mentioned in the book (Seg. 6 and 9) and an actual presentation of a scene taken from the book but with some fleshing out, (Seg. 10a and b).

The opening scene (Seg. 5) places us in a restaurant where we find Meaza, the aftermath of the conflict still visible on her, talking with Taye who is a broker and an acquaintance to her family. The camera favours Meaza most of the time. The Mise-en-scene also comments on their actions and the mood they are in. Taye seems to enjoy the meal that he has been served where as Meaza sits dejectedly, her hands on her lap ignoring the food in front of her. She angrily says; “ድልነቴ ነዋ:: ወንድ ማመኔ ነው· ለዚህ ያበቃኝ... ለማንኛውም ከዚህ በፊት የተናገርኩህን ይቅርታ አድርግልኝ" (*It is my stupidity. Yes it is my blind faith in such a man that puts me in such a mess. Please accept my apology for whatever I said to you before.*) This and the rest of the conversation between them tells us that Taye was spying on Mulugeta's relationship with Aster. But it seems that Meaza has refused to accept his news till today. They

leave the restaurant exchanging an appointment for that night. He wants her to see them with her own eyes.

The next scene (Seg. 6) appears suddenly without a bridge to connect it with the previous one. It seems to abuse the screen's capability to jump in time and space without any good motivation and the required cue to caution the viewer. "One must not change scene just to change scenes" (Longman, 1986: 184). The scene presents Beyene and Alemitu in the garden of Mulugeta's house. Alemitu teases Beyene that his new mistress (referring to Aster) has liked his garden. Alemitu continues her playful act and it seems she has an eye on him. He ignores her and leaves with Yimer to accompany him for a drink. The scene is unnecessarying long and boring. This scene could have been represented retrospectively like in the novel, as its relevance lies only in furnishing information to the inquiring police detectives. Moreover, whatever relevant information it contains, it is given to the viewer again (Seg. 14 and 24) and that makes it redundant.

The scene that follows (Seg. 7 a,b,c) develops tensions with the use of parallel actions contrasting between the night club scene (interior) and the two people in the car (exterior). The scene opens with a long shot of the crowded night club foregrounding Mulugeta and Aster as they dance near the balcony. The cut from this reveals a young man gazing intently on Aster. It cuts to the exterior to reveal Meaza and Taye sitting in a car in front of the night club. They are waiting for Mulugeta and Aster to come out. Back in the night club the young man creates a scene with Mulugeta. He threatens Aster to dance with him. Some people in the crowd stop the fight and Mulugeta leaves

the club furiously. He gets into his car and waits for Aster. A few seconds later Aster comes to join him. Mulugeta, probably being jealous because of the young man's attitude towards Aster, becomes rough with her. We are observing all this exterior scene, since Mulugeta has left the club, from the point-of-view of Meaza and Taye. As Mulugeta and Aster leave the place the same point-of-view continues and we see the plate number of their car in a close-up shot.

These scenes (Seg. 7 a,b,c) are able, in terms of Mise-en-scene, to create tensions and hold the attentions of the viewers through a visible contrast between the exterior and the interior scenes. The scenes also establish the mood through juxtaposition of actual interior music and sound with alternating shots effectively photographed with colourful lights. The rhythm and pleasing effect of this scene gets a parallel contrast with the quiet, dark and depressing effect of the exterior scene. However, the lighting used for the photography of the exterior scene is so poor that the viewer gets into trouble as to recognize who is who.

Back in the house of Mulugeta, we observe two things: (Seg. 8) the tension between Mulugeta and Aster lingers for some moment before they finally make peace: there is a curious feeling and inner tension between Aster and Alemitu (the maid). These two parallel actions revolve around Aster. The tension between Aster and Alemitu, with its visual presentation (without dialogue), takes much of the screen time and creates a curious feeling in us. The camera, with a reversal shot of their point-of-views, foregrounds this unsettling feeling between them through various means. Initially, they were simply gazing each other intently. Then, the camera focuses on Aster smoking

nervously. A few seconds later, the camera gives us a close-up shot of Alemitu's hand filling Aster's glass with "Ambo" water, However, we notice as her hands shake and spills the 'Ambo' on the table. Aster makes a gesture to stop her, and the camera pulls back into a medium shot to show us the embarrassment of Alemitu as she walks out of the frame. The significance of this whole scene lies in its ability to arouse our curiosity thereby creating suspense by restricting our knowledge only to what is presented visually. The adapters, like the author of the novel, are creating informational gap which is important for the development of crime story.

The next scene (Seg. 9) fades in with a dim blue light together with a background sound of birds singing to signify the time, i.e., the early dawn. A close-up shot of Beyene shows him asleep. It cuts to a medium shot of Mulugeta, dressed in full overcoat, coming out of the house. The camera covers his full view as he walks to his car and gets in. The focus changes to Beyene half-waking as we hear the car leaving. Beyene clutches his head feeling pain and he gets to his sleep. In this scene, we encounter the same problem as before (Seg. 7b). The photography is so weak because of the deficiency in the use of light. Lighting plays a very important role in film/TV not only to properly light the setting but more often applied to comment on the action.

The previous scene fades out and the next scene (Seg. 10) fades in with a full close-up shot of a closed door. The camera then slowly pans till the focus rests on the lower part of a bed revealing someone's leg on it. The reverse shot brings us to the same closed door and then, seconds later, the door opens and Mulugeta comes in. As soon as we register his sudden startling reaction, the camera takes his point-of-view and shows us

the object of his reaction. It is the body of Aster lying motionless between two pillows. In the reverse shot from Aster, we observe Mulugeta staring at the body standing where he was before. He repeatedly calls her name as if to check she is alive or dead. He then realizes the tragic situation he is in, and runs out of the bed room leaving the door open. The camera stays there as if to foreground the mystery surrounding the death of Aster. The camera cuts here to take us to the living room and we see Mulugeta, the terror visible in his face, making a call to his father. The camera cuts to and brings us to the father receiving the call. Then we follow the conversation with a to-and-fro cut shot one to the other. Mulugeta's, "I want you to come fast" bewilders the father initially, then gradually changes into an alarm as he founds the call to be secretive and unusual. After wards, the arrival of both parents, Mulugeta's father and mother, to the tragic scene and the ensuing dialogue between the family, seeking solution to the accident, are all but a direct transfer of the verbal text.

The rest of the plot more or less follows the narrative structures of the original plot, which focuses mainly on the involvement of the police detectives to investigate the scene of the crime and the scenes of the sub-plot focusing on the process of making reconciliation. However, there are some significant alterations, deletions and amalgamation of characters and situations that have been made by the adapters to give coherence and unity to the screen narration, though, sometimes they fail to comply with that. Therefore, it is worth the effort to see some of these changes before commenting on those two parts which have been discussed in detail.

One of the characters omitted in the picture is Lakech. In the book, she is the younger sister of Mulugeta and a married woman against the wishes of her parents, Bejirond Tafesse and Woizero Altaye. Her role in the story does not go beyond the exposition part. The only reason for her being there is to serve as a means and be an impetus to the characterization of her parents. The book, through her, further foregrounds the conservative attitude and superiority complex of her upper class family. On the other hand, her portrayal as a sympathetic and humanistic person makes her one with her brother, Mulugeta. Therefore, the author of the novel uses her to create a balance in the family's dispute that took place in Mulugeta's house when the elders insist to bury the victim in secret. However, her role in the story is insignificant and her being there does not add further knowledge towards the characters. Therefore, it seems reasonable to see the adapters deleting her role from the text.

The other character which has been deleted from the story is Belachew, the younger brother of Meaza. His function in the original text is that of a potential suspect towards the murder. The author takes much narrative space (pp. 124-30) to inform the reader about his untutored upbringing, bad behaviour and crookedness so as to foreground his potential as a possible killer. However, we are unnecessarily bombarded with information which adds little to our earlier exposition of him by Detective Ayele.

> እሩቅ ሳንሄድ ወንድሟ አለ። ትምህርቱን አቋርጦ ቤተሰቡን ያሰለቸ። የቤታቸውን ዕቃ ሸጦ የጨረሰ። ከአንዴም ሁለቴ በማጭበርበር የተሳረ። ይህ ጎረምሳ የሙሉጌታን ቤት መውጫ መግቢያውን ጠንቅቆ የሚያውቅ ስለሆነ አስቴርን አንቆ መግደል ይችላል።
> (66-7)

> **In short, we have her brother. A drop-out from school and a nuisance to his family. A thief who persistently trades on his family's property. Imprisoned, once or twice, found cheating. This young man, further knows the in-and-outs of Mulugeta's house and can easily strangle Aster to her death.**

So, the information that comes after so many pages is not only unimportant but also too late to impress the reader and keep him in suspense. However, the importance of his role in the overall narrative functions of the story should not be over looked. Among the six suspects, who are labelled as potential and minor suspects, Belachew takes the prominent place to really arouse the expectation of the reader. Apart from his insidious character, his intimacy towards his sister, Meaza, could easily provoke him to revenge the cause of her injury. He would be tempted to kill Aster in order to redress his sister's marriage with Mulugeta; or he just takes revenge on Mulugeta by making him look the real murderer of Aster. While the reader and the detectives are working on this hypothesis, his disappearance from the area, (we know later that he has gone to 'Kulubi Gebriel' for a pick pocketing business) further strengthens the suspicion on him. Therefore, this character has a definite role in the game of detection as he is able to hook the attention of the reader till s/he finds him free of the crime towards the end of the book. But in the screen version, Meaza has no brother and some of Belachew's role has been transferred to the screen's Taye, the impostor. But he is rather near to the novel's Taye than Belachew. The screen version, therefore, lacks some of the strength the novel has, due to the deletion of Belachew's role. The other suspects are not strong enough to arouse the expectation of the viewers.

The other change concerning character's role points to the police detectives. They were four in the book, whereas in the screen version they are three. The role of Lieut. Zeleke has been distributed to the other three. However, there appears to be a big deletion concerning his one important function in the narrative of the original. In the novel, it was Lieut. Zeleke who has been able to use his intelligence to detect the real criminal and finally able to locate Dinkinesh, the key person to the whole mystery. She was the only person who can identify the criminal, Yimer.

The *adaptation* not only erased his role but made the final discovery of the convict accidental. Detective Ayele, who has now been given some of the functions of the omitted character, locates Dinkinesh simply in one of the bars. All the obstacles Lieut. Zeleke faced to find this woman, the tension and suspense inherent in the progression of the narrative till her discovery are all absent in the *adaptation.* Moreover, the television's Dinkinesh is not strange towards the death of her friend, Aster. The detective has no definite purpose, as the novel's Detective Zeleke, to look for Dinkinesh. She tells him some information about Aster's past history exactly as in the book. He leaves her at that but before he goes, he tells her that he might come to see her if need be. It is after some distracting scenes that we notice how the screen version dilutes all the tension and suspense built so far, by making an unmotivated move in the most revealing part of the plot. The scene (Seg. 31) goes like this: Dinkinesh comes out of the police station (probably she has been called for further question), and as soon as she reaches the out-door steps she suddenly stops seeing something in front of her. The camera then takes her point-of-view to reveal to us Yimer and detective Oumer making their way to the investigation room. The camera turns towards her as she runs

to the outside gate of the police station. Later on, she phones detective Ayele and tells him to come and see her. Now, the whole point of the previous and the ensuing scenes (Seg. 33,35 & 39) have been worked out to one final conclusion, that is, Dinkinesh identifies the criminal not through the intelligence and effort of the police detective, which is paramount to the convention of the genre, but simply by sheer accident. This is a radical deviation both from the original novel and the whole purpose of crime fiction. This makes also insignificant the thematic functions of the narrative.

Apart from deletions, there is also significant alterations in some of the surviving characters. There is a noticeable change in the character of Taye. In the novel the author portrays him as the most clever crook who trades on the innocence and weaker side of rich people. He often dresses himself as a respectable gentleman as a cover to his real behaviour. The author relates one incident to show Taye's clever trick on people. However, all this information concerning Taye has been restricted to the reader till his identity is revealed after the fake reconciliation scene.

The screen's Taye, on the other hand, is a combination of two characters, Belachew and the novel's Taye. Here, he is portrayed as a broker and a person who is able to make an acquaintance with Meaza's family, probably on business matter. Therefore, taking Belachew's role, he is the one who tells Meaza about Mulugeta's intimacy with Aster. The viewer initially has been kept at a distance as to his true identity. Gradually, when he starts to make advantages of Aster's death (Seg. 20,22,25,28 & 30), then, we know of his being a swindler. But up to that point, the adapters use his character as an informational gap, so as to arouse the viewer's tentative curiosity, that he and Meaza

have some connections with the killing of Aster. Anyhow, although it is not strong as Belachew's in the novel, it might not be taken as irrelevant. We notice the adapters, wanting to make the story up-to-date, have raised the indemnity (Seg. 30) from birr 2,000 to birr 8,000. It is in conjunction with the difference that exists in the birr's value between the periods, i.e., the time of writing the novel (1970's) and that of the *adaptation* (1990).

The adapters' feeling to up-date the story in terms of characterization is also visible in the few alterations they make on Bejirond Tafesse. Yilma's (the author) conception of this character lies within his notion of the ruling class ideology of the time. He makes this clear in his introduction.

In the *adaptation*, Bejirond and his class distinctions has been transformed to Ato Tafesse, a well-to-do business man. However, except omitting some of the dialogue used to highlight the novel's Bejirond, we do not see much striking difference in characterization between the two Tafesse's. Therefore, the adapters take no heed to work on his characterization. We also notice that the *adaptation* makes, except two scenes (Seg. 25 & 28) created by the adapters, a complete carry over from the novel (Seg. 30 &36), particularly, the indemnity scene and Ato Tafesse's discovery of the fake identity of the "relatives" at the police station.

Concerning the presentation of captain Tamiru, who is the head of the crime investigative unit, he is more distinct and individualized in the novel. The reader finds him as a very strict and honest person towards his profession (see 3.1.2). His friendship

with Mulugeta or the bribe and the threat from Bejirond does not temps him not to stick with the ethics of his profession. The screen's captain, on the other hand, do not seem to have these qualities. He is just a captain doing his assignment like any body. We do not see any attempt made by the adapters to individualize him further from his subordinates.

The other minor alteration concerns the where-abouts of Meaza on the day of the crime. In the novel, we learn through her interview with the police, that she has left for Sodere together with her family on Friday night, i.e., two days before the murder. The *adaptation* does a change and presents her physically trailing both Aster and Mulugeta on the eve of the crime, i.e., Saturday night. Her interview with captain Tamiru (Seg. 19) also reveals that she has been at the church with her family at the exact time of the murder. Although she is the focus of suspicion both in the novel and the screen, the latter makes it strong to arouse our curiosity. In the novel, she stays completely in the background, where-as in the screen she is visually foregrounded and we can easily see her motivation to consider her as one of the suspect.

There is also another minor change concerning the background history of Aster to make the story more creditable. In the novel, we are told that Aster had left the countryside with her friend Dinkinesh with in a fortnight of the death of her child. The *adaptation* not only alters the fortnight into five months but it makes also the same length of time between Dinkinesh's arrival to the city and Aster's.

We have, so far, been able to see that the adapters have attempted to restructure and create a new shape out of the original story, through deletions, additions, alterations and amalgamations so as to make it presentable to the visual medium. But, as it has been pointed out, it fails to incorporate some of the original narrative elements which were more functional than the rest. This is, may be, due to the involvement of the author in the making of the *adaptation*. According to Lodge:

> **...But it is not always easy, especially for the author of the original novel, to see what is essential and what is not. (1996: 226).**

The author of the novel, when confronted with the new visual medium, which depends mostly on moving image and actions than description and dialogue, and that which makes its story in a perpetual present time, might have difficulty when changing his verbal text to the image medium.

However, the *adaptation* has been able to take advantages of space and the screen's capacity for broad action, particularly in those two parts, which we have seen in detail. The adapters are able to construct visual scenes and to write suggestive dialogues from scanty background information and actual narration from which the original novel has dealt with. Therefore, the achievement of the *adaptation* lies in its skilful transformation of the original text rather then translating it from page to screen. The adapters, though it is not consistent throughout the narrative, have made an attempt to bring focus and a structure of feeling of the drama than the original text.

One of the big difference that we notice between the original narrative text and its screen version is mainly that of structure and emphasis. One might not fail to notice this difference, especially in their exposition part where they choose in their own way to foreground the death of Aster, which is the motive of the main plot of the narrative. We can easily see from the following diagram how they have constructed their plot:

The plot structure of the novel

Story

- (i) crime conceived
- (ii) crime planned
- (iii) crime committed
- Plot
  - (iv) crime discovered
  - (v) detectives investigate
  - (vi) detectives reveal

(i) (ii) (and (iii)

The above diagram shows us the construction of the plot which the original novel draws from the over all story for its narration. As we have seen in the text, Aster has been murdered a little earlier before the plot action begins. The narrative opens with the effect of the murder on Mulugeta, and progresses interweaving a retrospective account of the story and the present investigation of the crime. As a result, the verbal text suffers from lack of actual scenes impregnated with series of actions that could trigger the reader's active involvement into the secret of the narrative. Instead the text bombards us with information, details of character's history who stay in the background of the narrative.

On the other hand, the television *adaptation* patterns its plot development moving back to an earlier story event which have been sparsely hinted in the original text.

The plot structure of the *adaptation.*

Story

Plot

(i) crime conceived
(ii) crime planned
(iii) crime committed
(iv) crime discovered
(v) detectives investigate
(vi) detectives reveal

(i) (ii) (and (iii)

This thoughtful construction of the story order reveals to some extent the adapters' attempt at interpreting the original text so as to give shape to the narrative structure. Because of such an arrangement the adapters have been able to move the story forward, to build suspense and to provoke and grip the reader's emotion and attention. Further more, they attempt to give the story a vantage point so that the viewer could identify with the main characters coping with their problems. The original story of the novel which was simply structured around a police search of a criminal has been transformed into a more revealing human relationship. We see an attempt on the part of the adapters to construct the narrative around a triangular love story between Mulugeta and Meaza and Mulugeta and Aster. This is clearly foregrounded in the first two parts of the dramatised version of the visual text. This comes to us with little dialogue but mostly through powerfull visual presentation. The way the adapters are able to plant a seed of conflict between Mulugeta and Meaza right from the opening scene, moreover, their use of parallel action to emphasize the situation shows, technically, the adapters knowledge of the screen medium and their ability to tell a story in selected sequence escaping laws of time and space. The director can move easily from one setting to

another and time also can be quickened or arrested according the effect he wishes to create.

The beginning of the adapted Television drama, for those who have not read or heard of the novel, promises a captivating love story till it suddenly switches to a detective story after the first two parts of the screen narration. It is exactly after those two parts the *adaptation* seem to loose its perspective or vantage point. It follows the direction of the book and we just see a bunch of police detectives interviewing suspects and arrive to the criminal, not by their intelligence but, by pure accident. Therefore, it kills the excitement we have already built in those parts. The characters who are able to form a relationship with us, because of our knowledge about them, somewhat disappear and stay at the background. Mulugeta became a prisoner, and Meaza has been given, unlike the novel, an unconvincing role of forming a relationship with a swindler in a pseudo-reconciliation situation. It would have been more revealing and consistent with those parts if Meaza, to save her love, has been foregrounded in the process of discovering the criminal. This is not writing a new story, because in their interpretation of the original text, they have already portrayed Meaza in that direction. She did not quit her relationship with Mulugeta, though she understood his infidelity towards her. We see her going to his house (Seg. 13) and later to prison (Seg. 29) to provide him with food.

In conclusion, one could say, the *adaptation* of *Agatami*, to some extent, has been able to interpret the original text and give sound articulation to the diffused narrative elements. Moreover, it has been able to bring good entertainment and experience to the television audience in the absence of well-made television dramas. However, when one

considers the capacity of the detective genre to shape its materials with mounting tensions, exciting and captivating action, suspense, surprise, pace and rhythm, one could say that the television *adaptation* is less efficient in those areas. Above all, what makes the screen version less effective, in controlling the internal and external cadences, is the absence of precision in the area of lighting, sound effect, music and the rhythm of film editing. Every director could have his own method in which he chooses to structure his film, However, what gives the film its style, character and power is the director's ability to deal "...with a variety of artistic elements— literature, visual composition, light and shade, music... the goal is a unified work of art" (Bobker, 1977: 167). The director of *Agatami* states, in his interview with the researcher, that he faced a lot of problems like scarcity of camera, lights, costume and above all a disorganized working condition around the studio. (See appendix A).

We now move to the next section which deals with the screen *adaptation* of Sebhat's short story, *Amist Sidist Sebat*. This section also has two subsections. The first section attempts to make a critical analysis of the source text and the next deals with the *adaptation* in the same manner.

3.2 *Amist Sidist Sebat* (*Five Six Seven*)

3.2.1 Text

'*Amist Sidist Sebat*' is one of the ten short stories published in a book form in 1981 E.C. The author, Sibhat Gebre Egzabher, apart from writing short stories and literary

articles in magazines and newspapers since the 1960's, has also recently published a novel, entitled *'Tikusat' (Fever)*.

'*Amist Sidist Sebat*' is a tragic and bitter story that uses the 'slice-of-life' technique to present the helpless situation of the common man in his relation to nature, fellow human beings and God. It attempts to bring the doomed nature of man's existence and seems to question why man is thrown into the universe to experience suffering, pain, insanity and emptiness. Thus, the narrative, through the tormenting experience of the central character, foregrounds the impersonality and irrationality of the universe.

The story relates the baffling, painful and exasperated life situation of Besufekad, the father-figure and the central character of the story, whose endeavour and life-and-death struggle to keep his family alive turns ironically to nothingness. The narrator, with a limited and objective point-of-view narration, introduces us to a once strong and healthy farmer who has now been reduced into carrying the burden that has befallen his family. Inspite of his lone crusade to fight poverty and hunger, doing all the domestic and field work; despite his plea to "Fatari" (the Creator) to take his life in exchange for the well-being of his children, everything he has earned or "given" from Him has been taken away. His wife and five children are carried off to their grave through starvation. He becomes insane and loses his faith in God. Accordingly, he goes to the grave side as one who discovers the truth. He stands naked on a tomb to give a "sermon" to the dead about the real Satan which, according to him is nothing but the human belly.

> ...እዚያኛው ሀገር ሰይጣንን አይታችሁታል? አላያችሁትም እዚሁ ትታችሁት ሄዳችሁ እዚያ እንዴት ታገኙታላችሁ? እዚሁ ነው ከእኛ ጋር ይኖራል... ሰይጣን ማለት ጎተራ ነው፤

ስልቻ ነው። የማይሞላ ጉድ ነው። ሰይጣን ማለት ሆድ ነው።
(115)

...Have you seen the devil over there? No, you have not. How can you when you left him here? He is here living with us... Devil means nothing but a barn; a bag; an odd thing that is never full. Devil means belly.

He cries thus for his ox which he has slaughtered to stay alive. He then asks forgiveness not from God but from the priest, a human being like him. When he is about to die, he is haunted by the warmth of his home and family.

Sebhat's short story is an ironic representation of the contemporary man through extraordinary mimetic power of language and metaphoric use of Job's story from the Bible. In other words, his story is one re-enacting, echoing or parodying a Biblical or literary precursor-narrative. In this regard, the story seems to challenge the reader to see afresh his religious belief and practices. To discern this religious allusion, let us briefly review the life of Job and Sebhat's Besufekad.

Besufekad was an innocent and God-fearing person. Likewise Job was, "...blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil" (Thompson, 1982: 515) Like Besufekad he was blessed with children and with many cattle; but in Besufekad's case, he was also "blessed" with poverty. In the text, this is foregrounded right from the beginning: " ሳጅ ከወጡ በኋላ ፈጣሪ ድህነትንና ፍሬን አጣምሮ ሰጣቸው" (111) (*upon his marriage, God blessed him with poverty and offspring together).* But after that he was made to stand aloof and be a witness to the destruction of his cattle, children and wife.

In the Bible, Lord said to Satan, when the latter confronts Him with, that Job fears Him only because of His generosity towards him:

> **Very well, then everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger (1482: 515).**

And, Satan took away everything; his cattle, servants, and children but Job stood firm to his spiritual faith. He, rather than charging God with what had befallen on him, fell to the ground and worshipped God.

> **Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised. (Ibid.: 515-6)**

On the other hand, Besufekad, who is part of the contemporary world, could not stand the indifference of God when death gradually took away his children one by one, despite his persistent plea for mercy. He could not understand why God gave him children in the first place without providing him the means to nourish them. At first, his accusation was just a demand for an answer to this puzzle.

> **የማበላቸውን ከልክለህ ልጆች የሰጠኸኝ ምነው?** (115)
> **why is it that you blessed me with children denying me the means to feed them? (p: 115).**

However, despite his plea and courageous struggle, he is not able to save his wife and children. He is forced to kill and eat "Sisay", (the name of his last ox) his "friend", his "food provider". All and everything stood against him. Nature, in the form of drought; society, in the form of woizero Yeshumnesh (a rich land lady); the universe, in the form

of the impersonal God. His loneliness and despondence drove him to insanity. It was his final break with reality. Besufekad, unlike Job, "who fell to the ground and worshipped God" (p. 516), goes to the grave yard to stand naked on the tomb, giving his back to the church, on the day of crucifixion. He preached to the dead thus:

> እንግዲህ ሰሞኑን ስለክርስቶስ ስቅለት ትሰማላችሁ። ግን ማነው ሰው ሆኖ ያልተሰቀለ? ማነው በልጁ ለቅሶ ያልተቸነከረ? ማነው በሚስቱ ሞት ያልተቀበረ? ደጋግሞ ሊነሳ ደጋግሞ ያልተቀበረ ማነው... እሳት። ገሃነም ትገባላችሁ ብለው ያስፈራሩናል የትነው ያለነውና ነው? ገሃነም አይደለም? 116)

> **This week you will hear how Christ has been crucified. But who among human beings is not crucified? Who is not nailed through the death of his child? Who is not buried through the death of his wife? Who has not been buried repeatedly to rise again from his grave?... Fire. 'You will go to hell', they say, to terrify us. But where are we now? Is it not in Hell?! (p. 116).**

The implied author enables his reader to see this repudiation of reality by the mad person through the eyes of the priest, Aba Wolde Mariam, who happens to be there on the way back from his church sermon. Besufekad indignantly accuses God in front of the priest. Contrary to what Job has done, he kneels down carrying a stone to ask forgiveness from the priest. The latter attempts to direct his forgiveness to God. Besufekad suddenly rises throwing the stone in anger and says; " **አልፈልግም የሱን ይቅርታ**" (*I do not want His forgiveness*!). Accordingly, while Job gets rewarded and becomes prosperous again, having twice as much as he had before for his spiritual integrity; Besufekad went to his grave happily, relieved of his haunting experience and night mare.

The author, therefore, in basing on or parodying the story of Job from the Bible, seems to construct his narrative to a different end. His character is not like Job who has been made a centre of contest between God and Satan. His is a representative of the common man in today's world whose life is unfathomable and, one that is forced to live in an impersonal and irrational universe which is full of unpleasant dreams and nightmares. Moreover, this common man is seen as one who is entangled in a web of calamities as well as uncertainties.

The narrative of *Amist Sidist Sebat* does not follow a well-constructed plot which most short stories are made up of. In other words, it is not a tight plot with an alluring start and powerful conflict, which moves towards its climax full of suspense and finally, denouement presenting the outcome of the story. It rather takes a conscious plotting in a slice-of-life technique (the Chekovian tradition) to "reflect the confusing and complex formlessness of life itself" (Dominique, 1992: 22). The author attempts to present the tragic life of his characters through a restricted third person point-of-view mixed with an objective view point without intruding to give comment or judgement on their action (a dominant style in many of his works). Olga Yazbec in her MA thesis. *The state of short stories in Ethiopia* (1981), described his techniques as:

> **The slice-of-life technique is aimed at utter objectivity in recording and portraying the phenomena of life. The writer refrains himself from making any value judgements very often... the writer's aim is not in the presentation of a plot, but on the objective depiction of a given situation in life (p. 27).**

Hence, the reader can participate in the story without anybody's intrusion and is free to interpret it according to his own experience, ideology and apprehension.

His short story, *Amist Sidist Sebat*, is divided into two sections and, accordingly, the narrative structure is in accordance with the central character's normal and abnormal state of mind, indicative of the main tension of the narrative. This tension comprises of a deeper psychological reality as opposed to the grim reality of everyday's life. The two sections create parallelism with a degree of difference and similarity from the initial illusions of the uncompromising stipulating attitude of Besufekad's sweating in the farm; to his final hallucination of the defeated, weakly submission of himself. The two sections are also paralleled with spatial metaphors. The farm as symbolizing life in the first section is paralleled with the grave symbolizing death in the second section. This parallelism signifies not only the text's structural unity but also its thematic unity. The tension created through such parallelism culminates in the father-figure character's death which sub-consciously appeals to him as a release from hell, i.e., the earth. "ሰው· ሲሞት ደስ ይለዋል ማለት ነው·" (120) (*Does it mean that people would be happy when they die).*

We observe also a difference in the mode of narration between the two sections. In the first section, the narrator though restricted in his view point and involvement in the story, does not seem to be very distant from the character. His narrative tone reveals that he is somewhat sympathetic towards Besufekad's painful experience which we, the readers also share. The values and beliefs inherent in the central character; like his selfless love towards his children and his determination to sacrifice himself for them, is

what triggers ours' as well as the narrator's close identification with him. However, considering the bitter mood and dark atmosphere of the story the narrator tone is very light.

In the second section, the text introduces a great jump in spatio-temporality, in accordance with "...the genre's capacity to encapsulate the fleeting and episodic nature of contemporary experience..." (Dominique, 1992: 36), as well as to dislocate violently the logical time as it appears in the rational world; which all suggest the absurdity of human life. Human beings are doomed to a life of insecurity and anxiety and, therefore, the measurement of time is irrelevant in one's life unless they lead to the real meaning and purpose of one's existence. Thus, the narrator breaks the chronological order of the narrative and simply informs us about the setting with no apparent cause and effect relationship with that of the first section. He thus creates an ambiguity in the reader's mind not only with his discontinuity of spatio-temporal order but, in his narrational attitude towards his subject. He chooses to stand aloof from the character and instead presents him through the view point of the priest. To show his detachment, the narrator even does not show us the character's identity:

> አባ ወልደማርያም ...ከቤተክርስቲያን ወጥተው በመቃብሩ በኩል ሲያልፍ አዩት:: ራቁቱን ባርኔጣ አድርጎ መቃብር ድንጋይላይ ወጥቶ ሲቆም:: ፊቱ ወደዚያ ነው:: ረዥም አርባ ቅልጥም ቀጭን እንደጅማት (115)

> **Father Woldemariam... upon his return from the church and crossing the pathway through the graveyard, saw him. Naked, but wearing a hut, moving to stand on the tomb facing the opposite direction. very tall as if having forty legs and thin like suture.**

The author thus by depersonalizing the character shows us that he no longer holds his identity. In a way, it seems, he is trying to make him more insignificant as well as to universalize him. We can infer from this that the author is emphasizing the general situation of human beings. In this world, human beings have become devalued as human beings; that personal identity is non existent. We also realize that the author is making a narrative strategy to avoid a sign of unreliability and thereby denying the reader the opportunity to infer the author's different assumptions, knowledge or values. In other words, he is able to create a gap so that the reader would not be in a position to accept every statement of the narrator as true or reliable.

In order to achieve a single unified tone and to create the dark atmosphere and tragic mood of the story, the author employs symbols, personification, allegorical imagery, fore shadowing and imagery.

The character's name is used as allegorical imagery to signify their place in the story. The name of the central character. " በርሱ ፍቃድ" *(Divine providence)* refers to the text's explicit meaning. It is through His Divine Providence that the character is "endowed" with poverty and children. Upon His will the character goes mad and dies. The narrator confirms this with a paradox concluding sentence of the text: " በርሱ ፍቃድ አለፈለት፤ አለፈ:: " (120) *(Divine providence became fortunate; he passed away).*

The first sentence indicates that Besufekad is at last relived of his burden through His Divine providence, and the second refers to the actual fact of his passing away.

The name of the other character, Woizero Yeshumnesh also indicates her social position in the community. The function of this character in the narrative is to make an emphasis on the ironical life situation of Besufekad pertaining to his social relation. It is also to show the rugged individualism prevailing in the society. Besufekad, who has been "blessed" with five children and poverty is in stark contrast with the woman who has been "blessed" with wealth and childlessness. Therefore, she is virtually in a position to buy the labour of doomed persons like Besufekad to do the farming for her. All of Besufekad's cattle perish, except one ox. Therefore, he is not able to farm his land. The woman has four pairs of oxen. Thinking she would sympathize with him, he approaches her to lend him one of her oxen for some days. The woman, ignoring his plight, decides to put him on a lease so that he also farms her land every two days. Besufekad, realizing the injustice inherent in this forced agreement, makes a complaint to her. She then says: "አቦ አያ በርሱ-ቃድ! እርስዎም እንዲህ ይላሉ? " (112) *(oh Mr. His Divine Providence! do you also say this)* and remarks that he is in a far better position having five children. This implies to us two things: The exclamation mark beside his name is to suggest that she is not actually referring to his name but, is telling him that it is none other than His Divine Providence that both of them are placed in such a position. On the other hand, when she says that he should also sympathize with her, she is referring to her childlessness. She is suffering psychologically due to her sterility because it has a negative implication in the society.

The author thus is able to show the irony of life through allegorical images, contrasting characters and cultural allusions.

Most of the first section could be taken as foreshadowing the following section. We can have one particular example to see how this foreshadowing is used.

After the retrospective lease scene, we return to the present action where we see Besufekad in deep thought in his farm. But due to his meditation and extreme hunger he forgets to hold the blade and suddenly the plough thrusts deep into the foot of the ox. It starts to bleed. The psychological and emotional state of mind Besufedad gets into, on seeing the blood of the ox is one that foreshadows the future insanity of the character. This image is made stronger and is connected to the old literary trick of pathetic fallacy in the presentation of the only ox bleeding to death. The fate of the ox is used in such a way as to parallel the fate of Besufekad. When all the cattle die, it is the only ox that remains; similarly Besufekad remains alone after burying his wife and children. The ox, being innocent, yields to his bleeding and to his master's whipping (p: 113) which parallels the latter's innocence who also yields to his predicament. Then, when Besufekad is pushed to his last resort and has been forced to eat his "friend Sisay", there we see the end of innocence and the day of insanity.

Although insane, Besufekad could not forget that day he was forced to put a knife on his ox. The verbal narratives expresses the dreariness of the scene through imagery and symbolic words.

> ...በሬው ከማዘኑ የተነሳ ምንም አላለ:: በዝምታ ነፍሱን ሰጠ:: ፀሐይ ይህን አይታ በእፍረት ፊቷን ልትሸሽግ ዞር ብትል ደመና አጣች:: ደም አለቀሰች:: (119)

> **...The ox, though feeling sad said nothing. He surrendered quietly to his fate. The sun, seeing this, wanted to turn her face and hide, but the cloud was not there. She then wept blood.**

This poetic expression is so vivid and powerful that we can clearly visualize the intensity and bitterness of the situation. Light and the sun, conventionally, are associated with joy, warmth, vitality, and love. When the sun turns away her face to weep blood it means, then, it is the absence of all the above positive significations. It shows the psychological and emotional state of Busufekad, that he gets into, on slaughtering his "last friend and food provider". For him, it is like destroying some sacred object. Even now as he recalls the situation, we notice how he is terrified by his deed. He calls that "person" Judah and distances himself from the narration of his own story. It is not with "I" that he narrates but with a "HE" putting himself in the third person. The author thus reveals the characteristics of schizoid personality.

The author imaginatively parallels the above scene with the final part of the narrative where the character is about to die. His psychological mood is depicted through paradoxical situation. As the priest tries to walk him with his support, Besufekad realizes that his final hour has come and requests the priest to take rest. The priest helps him lie down slowly. Besufekad then speaks: "**የፀሐይዋ መሞቅ ደስ ይላል**" (*the warmth of the sun is pleasing).* But the narrator states the fact: "**ስፍራው ግን የምሽት ጥላ ሰፍሮበታል**" (119) (*But the place has been enveloped by the shadow of the night*: .) The vision which manifests itself through the symbolism of the sun carries with it the simple delight which he has moments before he dies. It signifies the

memorable phase of his mind itself. The reality which has been symbolized by "the shadow of the night" and what he is leaving behind is nothing but a "...dream... dream... dream" (p: 120); his last words before he dies.

In summary, *Amist Sidist Sebat* is quite a disturbing emotional experience to the reader. The author, with an in-depth narration manifests the tragedy of the common man with all his anxiety and insecurity due to a sense of loss of his inability to find solutions for his predicament. The fact that man is doomed to suffer or that social relation is nothing but a conglomeration of individuals who are there to rob each other and fill their bellies has been explicitly and implicitly shown in the text. The underlying conception of the story is poetic, not didactic. The tone of the text, given the very real human problem it deals with, is less bitter and emotional. The sense of logical time passing is not present at all in the text. There is timelessness like what we face in a dream or fantasy. The objective point-of-view of the text's narration also contributes a great deal in inviting the reader to participate and interpret the narrative as well as to the subtlety of the theme. We conclude with the statement of the author about his style of writing, which he gave in an interview with Olga Yazbec:

> **I believe that no one equals Chekov in [trying to represent reality as it is...]. My aim as a writer is to represent a given situation in life, but not to interpret it, thus, imposing my meaning on the reader. (1981: 79)**

We now turn to the Television production of the text and see how the adapters, the screen play writer and the director, have attempted in transforming such an insightful text into a form of Television drama.

3.2.2 *Adaptation of the Text*

The Ethiopian Television presented the *adaptation* of *Amist Sidist Sebat* to its audience in 1988 E.C. It was put into a screen play by Feleke Abebe and the director of the play was Zekarias Haile Mariam.

The outline of the events strictly follow, except some important omissions, the movement of the source text. Let us have a look at the structure of the television drama with the following plot segmentation.

Plot Segmentation

Credit Titles

1. Establishing shot of an old hut in the rural area
    a) Besufekad appears looking sick from the back of the hut and leaves the frame.
    b) The camera pans to reveal a rich looking farmer and a priest on the act of watching Besufekad. Both sit outside. The rich-looking farmer talks about Besufekad to the priest
    c) A point-of-view shot of Besufekad walking supported by an old woman and he holding a bucket.
    d) Back to the farmer and the priest. The former resumes his narration.

2. A long shot of Fanaye, Besufekad's daughter, carrying a pot on her way to the river.

   A medium shot shows her as she adds water into the pot and a long shot on her way back.

3. Back to the farmer and the priest. The story resumes.
4. A medium shot of Woizero Yeshumnesh and Besufekad; talking about the lease.
5. Back to the farmer and the priest. The narration continues.
6. A close shot of Worku (Besufekad's son) with tears on his face.
7. Back to the farmer and the priest. The story goes on.
8. Cut to Worku as before.
9. Cut to the two people as before.
10. Besufekad approaches Worku and sits in front of him. Worku tells the cause of his distress to his father.
    a) Worku leaves the frame.
    b) Besufekad remains where he is. In tears he makes his plea to God.
11. Dissolve to a grave yard scene.
    a) Besufekad stands on the tomb naked. He, looking insane, speaks loudly about his fate.
    b) A priest enters the scene. Besufekad kneels in front of the priest carrying a stone.
    c) Besufekad throws the stone. The priest sits down and tries to calm him down.
    d) Besufekad and the priest start walking. Unable to walk Besufekad lies down and the priest also crouches beside him.
    e) Besufekad enters into delirium. He then dies.

- Final credit titles.

As we can clearly see from the above segmentation of the television drama, there is a high level of fidelity to the narration of the text. Except a crucial omission of the farm scene and a few metaphorical expressions which is intrasigently tied to the narrative text, the drama is a one-to-one copy of the original. In fact, what interests us most is not its being "faithful" to the dialogue, setting and character of the source text, but its introduction of a new character replacing the limited narrator role of the original text. All the narration and summary used by the narrator to convey background information as well as commentary on the action has been given as a "dialogue" to the rich looking farmer. This new character, who is never hinted once in the short story, is made to relate the story of Besufekad to the priest. The problem of the *adaptation* lies here. Lodge (1996) argues that

> **In adapting a novel for the screen there is a natural temptation to dramatize the information supplied by narrative descriptions in the original text by turning it into dialogue, but this is generally to be rejected. Where possible it should be translated into action, gesture, imagery. (p: 215)**

What the adapters have done in the television drama is different from what Lodge suggests here. Lodge is referring to the descriptive functions of the narrating prose which, mostly relates to places, objects, activities and psychological action pertaining to the characters. According to him, therefore, instead of turning these information to a dialogue the adapter should attempt to use the resources of the screen media to represent them through actions.

In this 'dramatized' text of *Amist Sidist Sebat*, the adapters' choice of narrative view-point not only makes the whole production less attractive but also damages the intention of the text which we have seen earlier (3.2.1). The fact that the original text chooses to present the tormenting experience of the central character objectively, or through restricted point-of-view, is to ensure the reader's involvement into the nature of Besufekad's thought processes in relation to the ensuing action of the story. The purpose of the text in using such a restricted consciousness approach is to avoid authorial intervention. That being the case, the narrator is there to provide the context of comment, speculation in which the principal action-the story of Besufekad-is embedded. Thus, the narrator in the short story is part of the textual patterning and is indispensable to the narrative's preoccupations. Hence, the reader is aware of having at his disposal mostly the insights and perceptions of the central character.

But, in the screen version the narrator is physically foregrounded. There is nothing to suggest as to the identity of the narrator or his relation with the central character. But, because of the visual capacity of the screen, we are able to pick some information as to the two persons depicted as a narrator and narratee. From the actual setting, costume, physical appearance and through the positioning and placement of the characters in relation to each other within the frame, we are able to infer their social positions in the community. Hence, in this opening scene we have a land owner and a priest. We meet both of them sitting outside enjoying the weather as well as the "Tella" (traditional beer), in front of them. It is through their point-of-view that the camera introduces us to Besufekad, looking sick as he walks away from his hut with a great effort. These two scenes (Seg. 1a and 1b) which come to us visually (without dialogue) in the exposition

part, seem to serve as a good contrast between Besufekad's dejected mood vis-a-vis the relaxed atmosphere of the land-owner and the priest. The difference is also emphasized through costume. This is how the screen version of the short story begins, promising us an enticing dramatic movement. However, as soon as the land owner becomes a narrator, contrary to the convention of the screen narration, the progression of the drama degenerates. Instead of finding a visual equivalent picture and showing us what is happening through pictures, the adapters give us the narrative information of the source text through an omniscient narrator word by word. This is not only an act of misusing the power of the screen media, but also twisting the meaning of the original text for no purpose. It denies us the conceptual and imaginative involvement that we got from Sebhat's use of shifted perspective. Through such perspective and the authorial disembodied voice we were allowed to rediscover what we already know. In the television drama, we are detached observers and; more than that, because the narrational point-of-view is poorly motivated, it makes the narration unreliable. We do not see anything substantial that incites the land owner, except a casual glance at Besufekad, to make him recount the story of Besufekad. This applies equally to the priest. His role as an addressee seems far from the actual reality of the community. We can assume that, in a small rural area where everyone knows everyone else, the story of Besufekad would not be new to the priest. As the viewer's knowledge of Besufekad and his family is very much restricted to the view point and focalisation of the land owner's (narrator), it is difficult for the viewer to share the sympathetic voice and exaggerated sentimental reaction of the narrator and the priest. This feeling might also be accounted for by the viewer's understanding of the gap between the narrator's value, attitude and knowledge and that of the central character.

The other incomprehensible fact about this television *adaptation* is related to the screen's persistence in presenting in the form of narration the immediate action of the main character in the story. Although we might be inclined to accept, with reservation, Besufekad's background historical information in the form of verbal narration, it would be more than the well-established screen convention to see present actions explained in the processes of presenting them. Not mentioning fictitious dramas, there is a tacit agreement even in the presentation of documentaries not to explain everything for the viewer. The picture has to talk for itself.

The source text's preoccupation with the immediate present actions of the characters, excepting the actual scenes, have been described thus: Besufekad is a poor man with five children and his wife, being sick and physically weak, is a cripple woman. Among his five children only Fanaye (eight years old) tries to cover the domestic work but she also becomes sick; Besufekad then carries the burden of doing both the field and domestic work by himself (farming, gathering fire wood, grinding cereals... etc.). So, the argument is that the adapters could have easily bodied forth the above verbal narration into perceptual concreteness. There is no attempt on the part of the adapters to make a conscientious visual transformation of the original which is expressed in prose narratives. It might be unrewarding for the adapter to attempt dramatizing narrative literature unless, first and foremost, he is able to think in terms of screen pictures.

The confusion that arises from this screen *adaptation* is related with our inability to take the screen's back-and-forth presentation (Seg. 1-10) of Besufekad's life as a form of flashback or an actual picture illustration of his present life through the eyes of the narrator. Both are far-fetched ideas, because in both cases, there is no hint or clue which leads us to infer about the narrator's knowledge of Besufekad's life, or his present conversation with Woizero Yeshumnesh and his son, Worku (Seg. 4 and 10). What we have is simply a clutter of information that we hear coming from an obtrusive authorial voice. According to Ellis (1991):

> **...such omniscient [narrator], although arguably inherent in the camera's eye is rarely attempted in the cinema, where an insistent authorial voice is a distraction from the pictures on the screen. (1992: 68)**

Apart from this, sometimes the picture is vague in that it does not give us information concerning the characters. For instance, the scene (Seg. 1c) where we see Besufekad walking supported by an old woman, does not have any information as to his relation with the woman or where he is going. In screen *adaptation* the original narrative must be visualized in terms of individual shots. Accordingly, each shot should be scrutinized carefully in terms of its clarity and unity with the preceding and the coming shot. As Manoogian (1966) points out:

> **The excitement and intensity of the film ultimately depend on the individual shot, not only in terms of its angle, distance and composition, but on the significance of its content. (p: 61)**

Instead of such a confusion between giving unnecessary verbal information and being vague, the adapters of *Amist Sidist Sebat* could have achieved a unified view point through the camera. The camera alternating between objective and subjective points of view might have helped their adapted material by making its own statement about the character relationships with one another, with their environment and even about their states of mind as well as their emotional stances. Alternatively, they could have used the voice-over technique to fulfil their interest of retaining the authorial voice of the text. At least, that might have given them the chance to concentrate on the action of the story. But the problem is that such a voice-over technique is mostly used traditionally as an equivalent of the novel's first-person narration, not for a narration presented through an objective point-of-view . When applied even for the former kind of narration, it is used intermittently to indicate to the viewers the passing of time or to accompany a change of location, (the researcher had a chance of watching a recent *adaptation* of *Great Expectation,* a novel with a first-person narration, without any voice-over technique. The camera is used to tell the story objectively). According to Beja (1976) one of the basic characteristics of the image is its presentness:

> **...by its nature, what we see on the screen is in the act of happening, we are given the gesture itself, not an account of it... the camera becomes an 'existence' that appropriates and becomes in the film a point of view... [that] passes to the spectator himself. (1976: 75).**

As Beja clearly points out, it is mostly the absence of authorial mediation that gives the story its perceptual advantage. The television drama could easily replace the narrational information of the source text through objective camera shots of the setting and the characters. This corresponds to the descriptive element of the narrator's role. The subjective point-of-view shots of the central character may reinforce the centrality of his consciousness.

The weakness of this screen *adaptation* might be attributed to three important issues, which have been also confirmed by the director of the drama in an interview conducted with him. These issues consist of choice of text with a sensitive subject matter; lack of clear understanding of the workings of the text; and inability to grasp some basic differences between the two narrative forms. Let us have a look briefly at each of these drawbacks which seem to affect the adapted television drama.

One fundamental function expected of adapters of television drama is to allow a societal sharing of information by converting into visual dramas those literary materials that are directly accessible to only few literate people. However, caution must be made about the choice of subject matter due to the viewing aspect as well as to the variety and composition of television audience. As discussed earlier (3.2.1), the explicit meaning of the source text is directed to God's indifference towards his subject. It is tied to one's religious faith. The central character, due to His irresponsiveness towards the painful and tragic death of his children, loses his faith and further denounces the teachings of the church. This kind of thematic speculation might be suitable for written literature (novel, short story, poem). The reader is at liberty to ponder over and make

something out of his reading. Moreover, if the reader finds the content of the narratives incomprehensible, or if it is not to his/her taste, he/she can easily discard it. But when it comes to the mass media (radio, TV, film and theatre), one is writing or adapting to a mass audience who differ in their beliefs, attitudes and world views. That is why mass media productions often avoid controversial and sensitive issues. Instead they choose to proceed with materials that will not offend anyone. They usually attempt to refer to shared or implied systems of audience taste and interest. Thus, they try basically to find the broadest common denominator. According to white (1958), an adapter should ask if the story deals with religion, politics, racial or sex problems. He further adds:

> **The censorship of novel is less strict than that of films, and subjects dealt within this medium cannot necessarily be transformed into picture form. (p: 38)**

The director, Zekarias Haile Mariam, who took the responsibility of directing and presenting the screen *adaptation* does seem to have this realization of the sensitivity of the subject matter. In the interview, he explains:

> **...at the time with the ETV, you are not allowed to focus on religious things. You have to tone them down. It was very difficult... we believed that introducing the priest at the beginning would tone down accusation later. If we used the priest like the text, they would have surely ask us "why is the priest coming to the cemetery?" Nobody could see the angle of Sebhat.. (Zekarias : 1991)**

He further added that it was quite a risk for them even to bring the priest into that scene. Therefore, according to him, they were fortunate that there was no reproof from the media authorities or from the church (see appendix B). We might agree, perhaps, the appearance of the priest in the first part can function to familiarize the viewers and, when he appears later in the grave yard scene, it would not be a shock to them. Anyhow, it is not only the shifting of the priest appearance to the first part that dilutes the implications of the source text, but also the omission of very important elements; of verbal images and narrational strategy. For instance, the curious distancing effect on our view of the "mad" person and the implication made by not giving him identity; the presentation of the scene through the confused observer priest; the significance of the day ("Good Friday") in relation to the insanity of the central character; the latter's appearance turning his face against the church... etc. (see 3.2.1.) are all absent. Therefore, it is perhaps better not to involve with this kind of sensitive text, rather than taking the risk and come up with awkward production. Such a text forces the adapter to be censorious himself and this in turn makes the screen *adaptation* devoid of artistic integrity.

This leads us to the second point, which makes us infer on viewing the production vis-a-vis reading the short story, that the drama reflects back to the adapters' lack of understanding, and sifting out the underlying spirit and tone of the source text. It is essential for the person who needs to be involved in *adaptation*, first and foremost, to attempt and enter into the heart and soul of the book and be in a position to conceptualize the full meaning of the story. If necessary, he/she has to read the text four or five times till he/she is aware of its internal vitality as well as the organic quality

of the work. Then, when he/she gets into the right frame of mind he/she can consider doing the type of *adaptation* he/she feels to do, keeping in mind the frame of reference of his television audience. According to Giddings (1990: 23-4), the "...effects of film and television *adaptation*... [is based]... upon the understanding and appreciation of the original novel", he further adds, "...does the *adaptation* add to the body of interpretation, criticism and analysis of the text? Or does it in some way damage or replace the experience of reading?". Hence, the adapters have always to bear in mind that they "...are adapting not copying" (Hillard, 1997: 436). Unless the adapter aims to add new experience to the original text and thereby enthral his reader/viewer by his contribution, then he had better think twice before meddling with somebody's work. To be an adapter, one needs to "...figure out very clearly what the story is really about, what its theme is, and what message, if any, it carries" (Rosenthal, 1995: 170). In the *adaptation* we have in focus, the adapters neither made the source text their jumping-off point so as to come up with new creative work nor were they able to slavishly follow the original. For instance, they have omitted a key scene which has a symbolic significance to the whole meaning of the text. This crucial omission is the short story's repeated reference to and detailed treatment of the central character's intimate relation with his ox. As discussed earlier (3.2.1), the ox plays a major role and has been purposefully foregrounded in the whole narrative of the text. Even the scene that is presented retrospectively through the character's (Besufekad) mind, his encounter with the land lady, is part-and-parcel of the omitted scene. Here in the *adaptation* (Seg. 4) it stands naked by itself.

The third points relates to the adapters' unawareness of the difference between verbal narratives as opposed to the screen narration; a medium dominated by words into a medium dominated by images. This requires of the adapter to grasp the various forms and stylistic devices of the original and be able to come up with equivalent visual cinematic techniques. This can give the *adaptation* equal force, if not more, as its precursor. Because of the difference in medium as well as the change in the kind of audience (reader Vs viewer) the adapter gets into a process of cutting, amending, simplifying and discovering an interesting story line. This leads him to shaping and moulding the source material into a powerful and spectacular television drama. According to Rosenthal, "The art and craft of *adaptation* is dominated by two things, the need to cut and the need to invent" (1995: 174). In the *adaptation* of *Amist Sidist Sebat* there seems no attempt to use the resources of the screen, such as setting, camera angles and distance, music, sound effects, light and effects of montage as an equivalent for the stylistic devices of the source text. Most of all, as they are engaged in a transformation of a story there seems no reason for "cutting" except "the need to invent" because the text they chose is not a novel or a long text but a short story which has only ten pages. Moreover, they are not doing the *adaptation* for a film screen, which is mostly confined to a two-hour duration, but for television that could accommodate any length of screen time if done in a form of weekly television serial.

Fay Walden, who made an *adaptation* of Austen's pride and prejudice and Hardy's Tess of the D'ubervilles, other than her 18 novels, 20 television plays as well as 14 original and adapted stage plays, speaks of her experience in an interview she gave in Play and players (1992).

> **...A line in a novel can be relatively insignificant but if you put it in the wrong place in the play-at the end of a scene, for example-you can hold everything up or lead everyone astray... sometimes while the dialogue is stiff and unnatural, the novelist's voice is at its strongest in the descriptions... ignore what the author has written as speech [and] distribute the narratives between the character. (p. 44).**

Her experience tells us that the adapter should resist the temptation to transfer all the dialogue of the source text into his adapted material. Every line in the text should be weighed according to its significance in the visual medium. For instance, the background narration of Besufekad's story given in three long paragraphs of the first page has been copied word for word to be uttered by the land owner. It seems quite artificial to listen to those words in the form of dialogue which the author selects to make the reader visualize the situation of the character. Not only that, but their foregrounded significance also diminishes when uttered as dialogue. "**ጎጆ ከወጡ በኋላ ፈጣሪ ድኅነትንና ፍሬን አጣምሮ ሰጣቸው**" (*upon his marriage God blessed him with poverty and off spring..).* This is a foregrounded statement in the text. Therefore, it is unlikely to get the same insight and knowledge of the situation when spoken as a dialogue by the land owner.

The director of *Amist Sidist Sebat* television drama, while accepting all the faults of the *adaptation*, he also feels to direct some of the blames to the working condition of Ethiopian Television:

> **I regret it. If it were now, Besufekad's actions can all visually be seen. You know the problem with the ETV, when the '120 programme' started, I was one of the first...[As] there was no backlog you have to work everyday for that even if you have another big plan... ETV has a very weak capacity in terms of equipment... Therefore, because it is a place full of problems even to get access to a camera, there was no reason to give priority to art. [Zekarias: 1991].**

As a way of recapitulating the discussion so far, the *adaptation* of *Amist Sidist Sebat* suffers not only from the working atmosphere of the Ethiopian Television, though not forgetting ETV's negative consequences on the production, but from all the three aspects which we have seen earlier in the discussion. But if it is possible to claim a single reason for the failure of the screen *adaptation* to come up with captivating visual presentation, it would be their initial mistake of choosing a text which is not apt to the television media. Apart from the text's sensitiveness, the character of the story is inseparable from the language which forms him. In story terms we have almost what is said but not how it is said. The original short story is permeated with biblical rhythms and overtones in a language that moves freely between poetic and conversational styles. It is through such symbolic expression that the author attempts to hint at the destiny of human beings. Moreover, the title of the short story *Amist Sidist Sebat* connotes that human beings are just figures without any apparent identity. The *adaptation*, on the other hand, remains a "faithful" copy of its precursor's story, without paralleling its rich textual meaning.

CONCLUSION

In countries where there is an established practice of writing critical reviews in journals and news papers mostly right after the premier, the trend is to assess whether the production is "faithful" to, or violates, the meaning of its precursor. In other words, these criteics need to see a literal translation of the verbal text into the pictures of the screen. On the other hand, there is an argument against such insistence on fidelity to the text. These group who argue against fidelity issues want to see the screen production, though it is based on prose fictions, as an autonomous entity and their criticism focuses on the artistic integrity of the production.

However, as the two case studies based on ETV's *adaptations* show, criticism should not be directed simply at the artistic violation of the original narrative or the loss of integrity of the receiving medium. It would be understandable that both the original text and the screen medium are bound to suffer if what we finally have is "...a clumsy or insensitive *adaptation*" (Manvil, 1979: 47). What both approaches forget is that there is an inescapable fact within the screen *adaptation*, that is, its being a new work of art made possible through the convergence of related arts. The shifting relationship that exists between the arts and the uncontrollable influence they make on each other is something that should not be overlooked. Earlier novelists like Dickens, Conrad, James and Flaubert have been mentioned by Bluestone (1957), Manvil (1979) and Giddings (1990) as possessing "cinema eye, cinema ear" even before the emergence of the silent film in 1890's. Most of the late cinematic techniques like superimposition, flashback,

pan, camera angles could be traced back to the novels of Dickens, according to Eisenstein (1951). On the other hand, Modernist novelists have borrowed and exploited the fundamental narrative device, the cut, "...which moves the story instantly from one spatio-temporal context to another without explanation" (McFarlane, 1996: 223).

The inter-dependence of the two narrative forms and the growing attraction they have for each other can be observed from the following fact. According to Bluestone (1990: 21), between 1930 - 1945, 17 per cent of the films released by major studios were adapted from novels. Beja (1976), as quoted by Giddings (1990), also states that *adaptation* shares between 20 and 30 per cent of American films released each year, and among these three-quarters of the best awards at the academy were given to those films based on prose fictions. Moreover according to the Magazine Variety (1977), also quoted by Giddings (1990), from the top twenty profit makers of all time, fourteen were based on novels.

The above statistics show us the force and accessibility of literature, both for the audience and film makers, as an adaptable source for the movies.

Although screen *adaptation* is a long established practice in the film /TV/Video culture of many parts of the world, it is still in its infant stage in Ethiopian screen drama. As mentioned in the introduction of chapter three of this study, the *adaptations* are not only few in number but most of them are not in good conditions because of improper documentation of the ETV. The research into the documentation of ETV dramas

revealed that there was no systematic record of all the plays produced until recently. Most of the recorded plays of the earlier period have been wiped out for re-recording or were recycled. Although such is the case, the ETV seems to be now aware of such problems and has taken corrective majors to properly document at least the rest of the plays.

As this study has attempted to demonstrate in Chapter Three, Sections 1 and 2, the two screen *adaptations* fail to make an impact, though in varying degrees, from lack of interpretation, understanding and appreciation of the original texts, inability to properly apply the potentials of the screen medium, all of which are fundamental to the realization of a successful screen production. As has been indicated in Section 1 of the Third Chapter, the *adaptation* of *Agatami* makes an attempt to restructure the original narratives through omission and deletion of characters and incidents which were less functional to the actual narrative. It also provides the audience, in its two expository parts, with a clear focus and captivating visual actions, which is in itself an improvement on, or thoughtful interpretation of, the original. The selection of view points, purposeful application of camera movement, a unified and continuous narrativity through the concept of simultaneity (i.e., presenting two noncontiguous events through parallel editing), the contrast between scenes through mise-en-scene (i.e., staging an action through imaginative use of the setting, lighting, costume and the position of the actors that appear in the film frame) are all the narrative techniques which the director knowledgeably applied in those two parts. However, the following three parts of the television drama fail to demonstrate all those effective screen techniques we have mentioned for the two parts of the ETV drama. One might have the

feeling, because of the difference between those parts, that the directing of the whole TV drama is rather shared by two different persons. But, from the interview the director gave, we learn that the reason for the ineffectualness of those parts was mostly related to the disorganized working atmosphere and lack of technical facilities that he was not able to solve at the time. For him, it was a frustrating and disappointing direction involvement because of the indifference and inadequate attention he got from the two collaborative producers, Mega and ETV (see appendix A).

The same managerial problems and inattentiveness of the ETV, particularly towards dramatic productions, has been mentioned by the director of *Amist Sidist Sebat*. According to him, some of the problems which had direct bearing on the productions were; shortage of time because of the burden put on them to fill-in the air-times of weekly programmes, scarcity of video-cameras, the censorship that forces the director indirectly to censor his materials (see appendix B). Although we could not disregard the above-mentioned problems in affecting the screen *adaptations* in their own way, it would be unfair to put all the blame on the working condition of the ETV. As the study has attempted to illuminate (Chapter III, Section 3.2) the adapters not only fail to properly articulate the nature of the original but they also lack effective utilization of the screen medium. The screen adapter, first of all, needs to have a full understanding of the capacities and limitations of his medium. He then must attempt to understand the explicit and implicit meaning of the verbal text by describing, interpreting and evaluating the functions of each narrative technique imaginatively and laboriously applied by the author of the text. He would then be in a position to make, in line with his clear objective and intention, a faithful reproduction or a parody-like imitation of, or

a new work of art based on interpreting, criticizing and analyzing the original text. One important point that the adapter needs to realize is that screen *adaptation* is not just a work of transfer from word to picture. It requires the adapter to handle the full resources of the screen medium (in terms of its visual, verbal and aural codes) to transform the original text which was expressed through purely verbal means. His work involves cutting, altering, amending and adding in order to give the screen drama its own structure, rhythm, pace and powerful dramatic flow. In television *adaptation* of a novel, one of the problems that confronts the adapter is dividing up "the whole narrative into a number of blocks of equal duration, each of which will have a satisfying dramatic structure" (Lodge, 1996: 219). The adapter needs to work out the temporal format of the drama, often in the serialization of a novel, so that it could fit the predetermined slot assigned to it in the overall organization of the TV format. Above all, the adapter needs to be aware of his/her change of audience. The book was possibly written in line with the taste and consciousness of those relatively small literate sections of the society. The screen version, however, aims at a mass audience. Therefore, the adapter needs to take precautions from getting involved in sensitive, controversial and too philosophical materials.

As stated earlier, the practice of screen *adaptation* is very limited in Ethiopia. The absence of other competing TV channels, lack of well-trained screen writers and directors and the lack of encouraging support from the ETV towards the practice of TV drama are big problems that need to be dealt with in the future. There is now some hope that the situation might change in the near feature. Recently, there has been an increasing practice towards production of video dramas. Up to now, the focus is solely

on original screen dramas. However, it is possible that the producers would entertain *adaptations* if they are provided with one. The other encouraging prospect which we believe would be an impetus to an increasing practice of *adaptation* is related to the consent of the Federal Government to issue licences to private investors in the area of broadcasting media. Therefore, the availability of competing TV channels would create chances for *adaptations* to flourish. Above all, it is imperative to have well-trained adapters, critics and writers who can develop and broaden the scope of this new screen practice. Hopefully, when the situation becomes conducive and encouraging, the practice of screen *adaptation* would no doubt make some contribution to the development of literary experience and culture of the society.

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Appendix A: Interviews with Ato Dagmawi Feyissa.

Q: It is to be remembered that in 1990 E.C. you directed a television *adaptation* called *Agatami*, produced by Mega Creative Arts Centre. Was it your first? If so, how did you find the script? Did you try to read the original text?

D: '*Agatami*' was my first screen directing and was also a challenging work for me. '*Agatami*' is a drama which has its own history. The novel is by Yilma Habteyes who often writes anthologies of detective stories. As I said, the production has its own history. What I mean is that before I came to the scene, the rehearsal of the screen drama had already been started by another director. But due to lack of cameras and other problems, it was discontinued. Then they approached me.

Q: Excuse me, but let me stop you. Hadn't they started shooting before you joined?

D: Well, I think I heard they did some shootings.

Q: So, didn't you use those shootings?

D: No. Because some of my casting was different from them. They were rehearsing it for almost one year. When I came it was already stopped. Everything was forgotten. As it was my first attempt. It was hard for me,

especially towards the beginning. I took up directly without doing any casting, which is a very important job for a director. As some of the actors were known to me, I thought there would be no problem. But it was not like that. They had interpreted their roles already from a different angle from mine. Therefore, it took me some time to rearrange everything according to my interpretation. This was a difficult task for me until we finally started shooting. There were technical problems like shortage of cameras after that.

Q: What about the script?

D: Yes, it was the script which I first got. The *adaptation* had been already done by other people. When I read it I found no problem in it. But, after wards I read the novel just to compare the *adaptation* and to add, if necessary, important ideas. And I found a big difference between the two texts. The novel focuses on two different values, the rural and the urban, before the Derg came to power. The adapters had attempted to change this subject matter in order to make it fit for this period. They had tried to minimize those dominant opposing attitudes of the feudal system and shifted the focus of the *adaptation* towards the tale of detection. When I saw this I thought it was good. If I had been the one who had made the *adaptation* of the novel, may be I would have concentrated on those values which reflected the weaknesses of that system. However, although the *adaptations* made a shift in that direction, it was not visualized properly. Therefore, I tried my best to change most of the dialogue into actions. But there were many problems which made me uncomfortable. Apart from scarcity

of cameras the actors were not enthusiastic and energetic. They were bored due to their involvement in the work for a long time. I myself was about to decide to give up the work because of those problems. I told you it was my first time.

Q: Was there a pressure on you to meet a dead-line?

D: Oh! The work scheduled to be completed in one month. But it took five months. There were problems to get hold of cameras; to get hold of the actors when you need them; to get access to lights and find costumes... Because of these, it was difficult to visualize the story properly. It was difficult to work out each scene transition because of inaccessibility to location. There were many obstacles.

Q: Was there anything which you disliked in the actual screen play? Did you try to do anything to change it? If so, what was the reason?

D: As I told you, there were scenes full of characters' dialogue. I omitted most of them and edited some others. And the other thing was that, I tried to express some of the scenes in visual actions with a minimum of dialogue. But, as I was absent during the editing process, the editors did not use most of them. In the actual production, I used more than 70 video-cassettes to record the actions. What came out as a final television drama is the work of the editors.

Q: When I saw this TV drama, the first two parts impressed me more than the other three parts. Because they were visual, properly focused through parallel actions. They were quite different from the book and even from the adapted script. But after the two parts, the Drama did not have that focus, that strength. Why is that?

D: It is all due to the technical problems which I have mentioned to you before. My big problem was lack of proper, accessible and organized working atmosphere to direct the play according to my schedule. Because in a television production like this, 70% of the work is done during the pre-production period. The rest 30% goes to the production and post-production period. This last part is not difficult compared to the first part. There were actors selected for the different parts one year before I came, and there were also others that have been changed and added. So, in order to co-ordinate those actors and create a smooth flow to the whole action of the drama, to examine the continuity and the rhythm of the show, there had been an attempt to make a full dry-rehearsal. But it was impossible to do the rehearsal with a full cast even for a single day. When we started shooting we faced the same problem. We were forced to shift from one scene to the other without doing it properly. There was no continuos supply of costume, light... etc. to stage the play properly. It was just a disorganized atmosphere. Moreover, you have this problem of camera. We first started the shooting with Pneumatic camera, then we were forced to switch to Beta camera. It was due to the problem created at the ETV. Because of lack of camera we were forced to discontinue our work for two months. Then when you got the

chance to get hold of the camera, you have no alternative but to shoot whatever scene with actors available at that moment. It is just simply to let go the work and get away with it. We had also problems with camera photographers. We used about five different camera persons, though they (the producers) gave the credit by mistake to one camera man. The problem was that you spend your time discussing with and communicating to the camera man what you have planned to use. But when you are about to start shooting he is not there. He is out of town or assigned to some other job by the ETV. Although it had been Mega which was producing the play, the camera and the photographers belonged to the Ethiopian Television. In general, these were the problems which put us in a desperate situation and destroyed our working spirit that we had at the start of the work.

Appendix B: Interviews with Ato Zekarias Hailemariam

Q: It is to be recalled that in 1989 E.C. you were involved as a director in a TV drama based on Sebhat Gebre Egziabher's short story, *Amist Sidist Sebat*, and adapted by Feleke Abebe. Was it your first time to direct a TV drama adapted from literature?

Z: It was not the first time for me to do such a thing. But, this one I remember... It was word for word that he, [Feleke] adapted the short story, especially at the end where there is the cemetery scene. What was the character's name... ?

Q: Besufekad?

Z: Besufekad; yes. His dialogue was not changed. It was presented as it was, I remember. It was very touchy. I used to feel it. We filmed it without a change. But, in the case of others, when we adapt them from literature, there are things that we take as much as those we changed.

Q: Therefore, that was not your first experience?

Z: It was not.

Q: Are there such works that you remember?

Z: Yes, there are. For example, there have been many that have seen screened for "120 programme".

Q: I am talking about those that were published as works of literature, such as Sebhat's *Amist Sidist Sebat* and others, that have been particularly adapted for TV.

Z: Yes, you are right. This is the first.

Q: When you did this *adaptation*, how did you find the script? Did you have previous knowledge about the short story? If not, did you try to read it? Was there anything that you added or cut out from the script?

Z: This is what I was going to tell you. The person brought the script. I have read the book, *Amist Sidist Sebat*, and this short story in particular. When the person came he even told me that he asked the permission of the writer, I remember. I mention the writer's permission because a person has a right as long as he has published the work. He could have sued the ETV and me as I was in charge of the entertainment programme. I would be directly responsible. The ETV can accuse me of having produced a work and spending money on it without authorization. That was possible. After that I had to face two things. As the writer was a famous one, I preferred to visualize the story through pictures. That is all. I do not want to lie. I believed it was better to visually present the

story without changes. Because Feleke told me that the writer would surely see the production when it was released. I compared the script with the story and found out that they were completely similar. Then I said, "if we turn it into images and show it what would happen?"

Q: If you remember very well, what is the theme of the story? Or the subject matter?

Z: Well, the theme is... Besufekad, who used to be very strong, later could not feed his family and he finally sacrifices the ox he loves... meaning, at the very end it portrays the psychological wound he sustains on losing something he loves... that he goes to the cemetery and meets 'Abba' and dies after entrusting his will to him. What I felt then it was that, Besufekad tried everything possible, tried to feed his family as a farmer, but it was not possible. So he slaughters his ox and eats its flesh. This is the story. If a person tries every thing possible and couldn't succeed, it is likely to lose one's mainstay and pass away. That is how I understood it. My concentration was on the character. It was very touching and our focus was to magnify that character. That was our main task.

Q: Were there problems you encountered while producing it? And after it was screened was there any feed back from the writer?

Z: I never had any communication with him. I saw him once in the streets near 'Arat Kilo' after many years.

Q: So you don't know his feelings?

Z: No, I don't.

Q: Did you encounter any problems during the production?

Z: There was no problem.

Q: Well, as you know, television like cinema is a screen show working with actions rather than in words. I have noted that (as it is a short story the writer used a narrator to narrate the story) you included another character who is functioning as a narrator, meaning, instead of converting it into action you used a character to narrate the story. Why?

Z: I regret it. If it were now, Besufekad's actions can all visually be seen. You know the problem with the ETV. When the 120 programme started, I was one of the first. So every Sunday, there was a two-hour air-time to be filled. We had to do it. There was no backlog. You had to work everyday for that even if you had another more important plan. Sometimes, you go out on Fridays and you are expected to fill the air-time. If we had had the time, it would have been possible to go over every detail. The farming scene, the hardship he faces,

(instead of narration) his relation with the ox, everything. probably the effect would have been deeper than the book if it was properly worked through visual images. As I have already told you, even after the change (the new Government) ETV has a very weak capacity in terms of equipment. For your information, I never feel ashamed of saying that the ETV used to sell newspapers (which were stored after being read by the staff) to buy fuel. This is the Ethiopian Television. Therefore, because it is a place full of problems even to get access to a camera, there was no reason to give priority to art. There is News - the ETV has to produce News. It is a television station stretched beyond its capacity. Apart from News, there is "Keyeaktachaw" (from different corners), For the youth, Social Life. etc. In other countries, (we tried to see when we were there) they do only one thing. If they produce News, they buy the other programmes. That is how they manage. But here, because it does everything and, to do everything, equipment is necessary. It was not possible to do this. You cannot produce a TV drama to your liking. You cannot work in a relaxed manner. But looking back on it now, they still screen many of them (Zekarias's works), I feel very sad. I always wish I had the chance to produce them now, because now I have more experience. I can work comfortably. The camera and the equipment are available. At this stage, what I feel is that if the work is not good it should be rejected. If it is not good, it should not be produced. Because it is not wise to repeat the same problem.

Q: There are other things. For example, the narrator: creating that character who is a well-to-do farmer, a land owner, don't you think that it negatively affects the

theme? Instead of that, for example, couldn't you have used the voice-over technique?

Z: There was a lot of argument. The voice-over technique at that time was taken as a fashion by everyone in the ETV, for example "Balegudai". They used voice-over. Afterwards, most of the scripts forwarded to us were full of it. The problem with us, whenever there is something new it is repeated over and over again. Introducing that character (the narrator) raised a lot of debate. Anyhow, lastly he was there. I could imagine it could have a loosening effect...

Q: You see there is Besufekad's relation with that woman who has several heads of ox. It is an unjust relation. Therefore, to see this injustice through the eyes of the narrator, who is a land owner himself, doesn't reduce the viewer's identification with the central character?

Z: Yes, it is a problem. It is true. At the time, the acting of the narrator was supposed to be filmed and cut out later. But the condition did not allow this luxury. However, when we finally used it, we knew it would make negative impact (we talked about it with colleagues like Girma Degefu and Melkamu Demissie). We agreed that the character was not important. Sometimes there are things which you understand but cannot help screening. It was a mistake.

Q: And the priest, were you convinced about him? For example, in the source text his coming at the end is a kind of surprise for the reader. Probably, his presence

at the cemetery was deliberate for the writer. Why did you introduce him at the beginning?

Z: Most of the time, we used to lose elements of suspense like the one you have mentioned. About the priest coming first... at the time with the ETV, you were not allowed to focus on religious things. You have to tone them down. It was very difficult. What ever you screen in the evening, there is a havoc the next morning. We had to resist so many things right to this point. There is always a problem. We believed that introducing the priest at the beginning would tone down accusations later. If we used the priest as in the text, they would have surely asked us, "why is the priest coming to the cemetery?" Nobody could see the angle of Sebhat. At the time there were some reservations about him and others. Therefore, it was very important to tone things down. I remember a person (a writer) called Wudneh Kifle who often came with weird (abstract) scripts. But I like his scripts. He came with one script which says something like. "He and his self discussing". I went a head and finally I was told to stop. Because our bosses preferred something cheap. Our survival depended on their whims.

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my work and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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