

AN ANALYSIS OF THEMES AND
LITERARY TECHNIQUES IN THE NOVELS OF
BAALU GIRMA

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ABSTRACT

It is the purpose of this study to analyse critically some of the most important themes and techniques of the novels of Baalu Girma. The novels examined here are Kadmas Bashager, Yehillina Dewol, Yekey Kokeb Tirri and Derasiw.

The study is divided into four chapters. Each chapter other than the introductory and the final consists of five points.

The introductory chapter besides stating the focus and limitation of the study, briefly reviews previous works on the novels and establishes the need for this study. It also attempts to give a very brief summary of the development of the Ethiopian novel.

Chapter two opens with brief statements that discuss the chapter's purpose and the points it covers. It then proceeds to the examination of five leading themes of the novels. Efforts are made to understand the meaning and relevance of the themes to the society.

The third chapter begins with a statement of purpose as well as a description of the points it treats. Here some of the important literary devices which the novelist has used to express his subject matter are analysed. This chapter not only attempts to study the author's techniques, but points out their successes and limitations.

The final chapter summarizes the most important points of the foregoing discussions and brings out succinctly the importance of the study.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine the major themes and techniques in the four novels of Baalu Girma: Kadmas Bashager, Yehillina Dewol, Yekey Kokeb Tirri and Derasiw. The analysis pays attention not only to the relevance and meaning of the themes to the Ethiopian community and humanity at large but also to the treatment of the subjects in order to determine the success of the author's technique.

The need for such a work has arisen in the absence of any other comprehensive study of the subjects this paper treats. This paper then, is an effort that goes towards satisfying the need for a detailed examination of the author's works.

Secondly, some of the novels' issues and the way they are looked at by the author are not common to other Ethiopian novelists and as such deserve due attention. The relation of the sexes and problems of Ethiopian artists which are central to Baalu's novels, for instance, need a thorough examination. Thus this paper is also an effort to deal with these.

Since two of the novels that are part of this study were written recently, they not only reflect the existing milieu in which the writer lives but typify the development of the Ethiopian novel both thematically and technically.

This study, however, does not include Baalu's latest novel, Haddis which was published in mid 1975, after this research

had made significant progress. It must be also pointed out that a profound analysis of the prose style of Baalu has not been carried out here, since that subject has been dealt with fully by others.

Since the novels are written in Amharic, English translations of relevant quotations appear side by side with the original. While doing this, I have tried as best as I could to come as close as possible to the author's original idea.

As the Ethiopian calendar is different from the Gregorian, dates for all Amharic works in this paper are given according to the Ethiopian calendar.

Since Baalu's novels are considered to be among the best in Amharic, it is inevitable that others before me have touched on them. Most of the studies however have taken up smaller points here and there and only a few others are full length treatments of certain items of the novels. Some of these deserve praise. Mesfin Habtermariam's excellent review of Yekey Kokeb Tirri is a brief assessment of the novel's successes and weaknesses.¹ Bisrat Gabriel Franswa's senior essay on the protagonist of Kadmas Bashager is a character analysis of the hero.² It brings into light Aberra's characteristics and background thoroughly; and makes passing remarks on the theme and on a few other characters.

Girma Zenebe devotes a few pages to themes of the first three novels of Baalu in his senior essay which deals with themes of

Amharic novels. The themes of Baalu's novels here are not looked into, but only a summary of them has been given.³ Ato Fekade Azeze's brief seminar paper on Ethiopian novels after the revolution touches on the two later novels of Baalu and brings out such essential points as the author's technique of characterization.⁴ In Zemenay Lake's comparative study of Kadmas Bashager and Derasiw themes and techniques are discussed briefly.⁵ However there is little or no discussion of the novel's language nor the underlying elements of the themes such as courage and sacrifice. Aklil Mitchel's study of the style of Baalu Girma analyses the kind of sentences the author uses in his novels, but fails to bring out any weaknesses in the novels' language.⁶

Finally, R.K. Molvaer touches on the major themes of Kadmas Bashager and Yehillina Dewol to support his argument that most Ethiopian authors write about the need for change.⁷

These are the major existing criticisms of the novels of Baalu Girma. In principle I have made no attempt to take issue with these critiques nor to use their conclusions to give strength to my argument. The discussion in this paper is mainly restricted to the texts themselves and the conclusion drawn here is only a logical outcome of such analysis.

Just before we move into the next chapter a few things may

be said about the Amharic novel and Baalu Girma*.

The Amharic novel came into being with Afework Gebreyesus's Libwoled Tarik whose theme may be said to be religior.⁸ This was followed by Hiruy Woldeselasse who wrote no less than three novels which dealt with the social problems of the time. These two authors are considered as having provided the origin for the styles of modern Amharic writing. The former for complexity and the innovation of new words, the latter for simplicity and directness.

Although writing existed in Ethiopia before and even during the Italian occupation, it was only after the Italians were forced to leave the country that more novels began to appear. Authors such as Mekonnen Endalkachew, Weldegiorgis Woldeyohannes, Imiru Haileselesse and Girmachew Teklehawariat tried their hands at writing novels. Modernization was central to most of their themes. Araaya written by Girmachew Tekelehawariat is considered to be the most important among them because of its description of scenes and portrayal of characters.⁹ Other writers followed and in general terms it could be said they all discussed the need for progress and condemned vice in their society.

As education flourished, other young writers came to the scene and started pointing their fingers at injustices and social evils of their society. The authors' modern education helped them

* Zemenay Lake's "A comparative study of Kadmas Bashager and Derasiw", devotes its introductory part to a brief but useful biographical account of Baalu.

acquire techniques by which they could shape their experiences. Thus modern devices of fiction appeared with the writings of such prominent Ethiopian novelists as Haddis Alemayehu, Dagnachew Worku and Berhanu Zerhiun.

Baalu Girma is undoubtedly one among such a group. His interest in writing dates back to his student days. His articles such as "Occupational Therapy" indicated the importance of work for a backward society like Ethiopia.¹⁰ His short stories such as "Men Of Two Worlds" or "Beyebirow yemibakknew Gize" (Time unnecessarily Spent In Every Office) that appeared in a magazine of which he was once editor-in-chief, were criticisms of modern city people who lacked commitment to work.¹² His efforts did not stop at that, but have made him the master of five novels some of which rank among the best of Amharic writing. Baalu Girma today is not only a prominent literary figure, but a permanent secretary of the Ministry of Information and National Guidance.

CHAPTER TWO

THEMES

This chapter is devoted to the study of some themes in the four novels of Baalu Girma: Kadmas Bashager, Yehillina Dewol, Yekey Kokeb Tirri and Derasiw. Most of the themes are common to all the novels, however, a theme which is the major concern of one novel may only be a minor one in the other.

The themes are arranged into five headings. When a theme is common to all the novels, as is often the case, the discussion of it is closely followed in all the novels it appears. Such a method enables one to ascertain whether or not the treatment of such a theme is the same in every novel.

The discussion of the themes takes the following into consideration: their relevance and importance to the Ethiopian society, the manner and depth in which they are discussed and the point of view of the author on them.

2.1. Self-evaluation

An assessment of the self is the prime concern of Baalu's first novel, Kadmas Bashager. The novel opens and we see the hero, Aberra Worku, eating his heart out. The house he is in is quiet. Its stillness has become melodious to Aberra, for he does not want to be more disturbed than he is. He likes the outward silence, perhaps this may a little lessen the burning shame he deeply senses inside: his inability to find a role in life.

And the search for his role in life and society continues.

Aberra is a character who has the potential to be a good artist. This potential, sad as it may be, has not been exploited yet. Instead he is a bureaucrat who is doing a job that he is not good at. He fails to gather courage to leave his office job and exploit his potential so that he might serve his society best. The failure is partly Aberra's himself in that he does not want to lose the luxury he is in by resigning from such a well-paying job. The other contributors to the failure of Aberra are his relatives who constantly keep on nagging him not to leave his job, but to get married and become a father. Hailemariam Kassa, Aberra's dear friend, strongly advises him to use his potential and become an artist. Unable either to follow the advice of his friend or his relatives, Aberra Worku is being tormented. Down in his heart he feels that Hailemariam is right, but luxury and the feeling toward his traditional relatives delay his determination.

The reality is hard for Aberra. To change the traditional outlook his relatives have, he himself has got to change first. This, it seems, is no easy task. Feeling guilty about his inability to put his talent into practice, he could never be at peace with himself. As a way out he starts taking refuge in drink. But still he continues the search for his role.

On the eve of Easter we see Aberra and Hailemariam enjoying themselves at Gunnet Hotel. The author reminds us that Easter eve is one on which tremendous sacrifice must be paid referring to the sheep and chickens that are slaughtered for the celebration on the

morrow. But Aberra and Hailemariam do not seem to notice this. They are unable to see how this act of piety requires tremendous offerings of animals; they do not understand the amount of sacrifice and the extent to which this must go into their devotion if they are really to put their knowledge at the service of their fellow countrymen. That is what Baalu wants to bring out. True to Baalu's observation, we see these characters talk to bring an end to their rotten life. But the will to act on is not to be seen. That the discussion to bring an end to their useless life takes place on the eve of Easter by itself is symbolic of the sacrifice these people must pay. These characters, Baalu seems to imply, could only save themselves from such a decayed life by becoming iron-willed and starting to work hard towards the realization of their aspirations. Great is the sacrifice needed to overcome their feeble will and their comfort-like characteristics they are possessed with. Hailemariam seems to understand this, and yet he is a long way away from finding the courage needed for commitment.

Aberra's purposelessness is also expressed well in analogy between his drawings, which were just mere finger exercises, and his life. Baalu tells us that his, Aberra's drawings bring out the potential but lack life. They are as meaningless as is the artist who drew them - so observes Baalu.

Perhaps a little more inclined to the tears shed by his sister - in - law, and to the earnest wish of Lulit to marry him, Aberra submits himself to marriage despite the advice of Hailemariam. The marriage, however does not give him peace. Aberra tries to put the blame on his relatives. He wonders why they always try to

make him the object of their will. Hailemariam comes to his help and 'intellectual' as he is goes deep into the heart of the matter of Aberra's conflict with these traditionalists who are a stumbling block in Aberra's search for a role. Hailemariam proceeds thus:

"... አንደኛ አቶ አባተ ያሉት ሰዎች ይህንም ይብዛም ትርጉም ይኑረው አይኑረው የሚረዱትን ያውቃሉ። ስለ ዚህ ጠንካሮች ናቸው። ከዎኝነትና ከሌሎች የሚመጡ ንግዳሪ አይደሉም ... አንደኛናሰበው። እኛ ገን የገን ፈላጊውን አናውቅም። ፍለጋ ላይ ነን። የኑሮውን ሕልውና ባወቀና ባለበት ሰው መሀል መገባባት ለኖር አይችልም። እኛ ገን በምንም ነገር አናምንም። እም ነት የለንም ... ራሳችንን ማንነታችንን ስለማናውቅ ... #14

"... people like Ato Abate at least know what they want, whether small or great, sensible or otherwise. Hence they are strong. It is not a strength that comes out of ignorance and foolishness as we seem to think. We do not know what we want ... We are on the look. There is no mutual understanding between one who has purpose and another who does not have any. But we do not believe in anything. We have no faith ... because we do not know ourselves ... we do not know who we are ..."

Thus Hailemariam appreciates people like Aberra's brother for their unflinching courage and principle for a cause for which they stand, whether bad or good. Hence it is a question of devotion that the author raises here again. Through this character Baalu seems to stress the importance of discovering purpose in life. The author rightly does so, for it is only when one discovers his best gift and uses it to the interests of others that society could improve.

Self criticism is essential for the evaluation of the self.

Both Aberra's and Hailemariam's criticisms of themselves are stronger than the criticisms they make of the society they are part of. Two points may be noted here. First the idea of self-criticism which is not common in Amharic novels is introduced here. It is true that most Ethiopian novelists make their characters criticize the system, but little self-criticism of characters is shown. Baalu here however is concerned with self-criticism of his characters. Secondly most Ethiopian novelists, more often than not, interfere in the story they tell and criticize the system. Baalu in Kadmas Bashager, however, apart from the self criticism of the characters, criticizes the system (though to a lesser degree) through the characters themselves. His interference is kept at the minimum.

It is to Baalu Girma's credit that he has provided the reader with an introspective novel like Kadmas Bashager where the characters constantly keep on asking questions about themselves. We feel that they are directly speaking to us and hence they manage to have us by their side.

Aberra represents the decadent intellectuals of the then Ethiopia who were known as the "Makiato Literati". These were all talk. It is from such a circle that Aberra tries to break loose. But a quick get-away from an environment one is brought up in is no easy matter. This being so Aberra's effort to find a sense of purpose in life does not come soon. It does come at last but sacrifices, dear as they are, have to be paid in order to make Aberra a new man. And the dear lives of Hailemariam and Ato Abate have to go into it. Aberra has also to suffer by going to jail. Thus purposefulness for Aberra is

dearly bought.

Baalu ends the novel with Aberra going to prison for a period of three years. It is here, detached from the luxury of city life that Aberra starts 'dying a little' and begins to have a sense of purpose. With the divorce of his wife, Lulit, it seems he regains freedom to practise the talent he has. The courage that betrayed him appears, and he becomes determined to answer the call for a new life looking 'beyond the horizon!' Hailemariam's idea remains undefeated. Aberra Worku comes to life - a life given to a fine cause.

2.2. Carrying out the Task

The theme of progress has been a concern for many Ethiopian authors. Early writers such as Blatengeta Hiruy Woldesselassie and Girmachew Teklehawriat had written about it. Novels like Fiker Eskemakaber, Adeferes, and the few other Amharic novels implicitly or explicitly deal with the need for change.

Baalu Girma is no exception. His task in Kadmas Bashager, as we have seen was to bring out in depth the disillusionment and self-criticisms of the changing elements themselves: the elite represented by Aberra Worku and Hailemariam Kassa. A preoccupation with the minds of such people has simply meant a concern for change, and the novel has touched on the issue of change time and again.

That change is essential has been realized. Baalu's next concern seems with these questions: "What is to be changed?" "How is it going to be carried out?" and "change towards what?". It is to these questions that Baalu tries to respond in his three other novels. By

doing so he contributes his share to the society.

To start with the poverty, maladministration and corruption that are rampant in the country have to be fought back. According to Baalu, these social evils could only come to an end with the help of the educated who have courage and unbending commitment to help the masses. And the ones who are supposed to bring change should have these qualities. That was the core of the argument in Kadmas Bashager.

In his next novel, Yehillina Dewol, Baalu goes a step further and shows how this task of changing a society could be carried out. Here a young teacher, named Haddis Sahile goes from the University to the rural area of Supe Boro in Illubabor region. His task becomes a blessing for this poverty stricken people and out of the way place. He teaches and builds a school. The students and a few other people like Fitawrari Teka help him with the building of the school. The infirmity of purpose and the absence of will of the two "been-to's" of Kadmas Bashager are substituted with the dedication, principle and determination of Haddis, the protagonist of Yehillina Dewol. 'Work, do not be work-shy', becomes his motto.

Supe Boro, the setting of the novel, is a small poor village far away from the metropolis, Addis Ababa. The problems of any village of the Third World hang on Supe Boro. No good roads. Not enough schools. It is a forgotten, unfortunate town like Illmorogo in Ngugi wa Thiong's Petals of Blood, except for its seasonal coffee beans which go to the fat people in Addis who are the owners of the land.

Baalu feels that such a condition must be changed. He believes that this change could be brought about by means of education and work. Hence the hero of the novel starts building up a community school without waiting for help from the central government which would never come. The hero feels that if the people are organized they can even recruit teachers. Thus the time to sit and think is over for Haddis Sahile. He obviously regrets the lost time when he says the following to the rusty school director whose motto is patience

"... መጻሕፍት ሲገኙ ለገደገርጥ ጊዜው ይጠይቅናል ::
የኔ አሳብ - አዎን - ሕዝቡ ጉልበትና ገንዘቡን
አስተባብሮ ትምህርት ቤት ከሠራ አስተማሪዎቻችንም መቀ
ጠር መቻል አለበት :: ትምህርት የሕብረተሰቡ ጉዳይ ነ
ነው :: በሕብረተሰቡ የሚካሄዱ ትምህርት ቤቶች ናቸው
ው ባህኑ ጊዜ የሚያስፈልጉት ..."¹⁵

"... before we are able to crawl, the time requires us to run, yes, my opinion - is if the people are able to build school by bringing their money and energy together, they must also be able to recruit teachers. Education is the business of the community. What we need now are schools that are run by the community ..."

Such is the opinion of Haddis. Whether this could have been a solution to the problem should not concern us here. It leaves little doubt that the answer is in the negative. However, there are some important points in here. First we notice a shift towards practice, with less time to sleep, something must be done if progress is to be achieved. Secondly, what this something is has been made clear. It is education.

The evil of feudalism which existed then does not escape the attention of Baalu Girma. The suffering of the tenants at the hands of

the landlords is pathetically depicted. The peasants who go to Fitawrari Teka for help are only paradigms of hundreds of thousands of peasants who had been suffering elsewhere in the then feudal

Ethiopia. It is interesting to note the generosity and kindness of such a Fitawrari* character. Characters who are Fitawraris are mostly depicted as cruel and self-seeking in Amharic novels. Examples are the Fitawraris of Fiker Eskemekaber. Baalu's purpose in portraying this character of high status as a kind man is perhaps to indicate that there are certain people who sympathize with the afflictions of the poor irrespective of the class they belong to. It is only in front of this character that the poor lament of their miseries. The reader's sympathy goes out to these wretched peasants. Here is just one example of how a poor peasant who has been dismissed from the plot he farms captures the reader's sympathy while appealing to the kind Fitawrari Teka:

“... ስምና አድራሻ የለን። ያህን ስም ገባር ነበር። የኛ ስም ተሻሻሎ ጭሰኛ ከተባለ ቀይቷል። የአያት ቀደመ አያቶቻችን አትበት በተቀበረበት ወራት ገባር ጭሰኛ ተባለን ከሰበአዊ ፍጡር በታች ሆነን ኖርን። ሰጡ የመሆን ገዳይ ቀርቶ ስም ኑን ይገባ አድጌ ልክ ከኖርንበት ወራት ተባረርን* የት ልንደርስ ነጭ ...”

“... we do not have names and addresses. My father's name had been giabbar [approx. serf]. Our name improved and it has been long since it is called tenant. We lived inhumanly as serfs and tenants in a place where our forefathers were buried. Our humanity is ignored. In addition, recently, they forced us to leave the plots on which we have lived our whole lives ...”

*Fitawrari is an honourable title which used to be given by Ethiopian emperors.

*Underlining mine.

Baalu here has used actual historical fact in his novel, the fact that during the time this novel was written i.e. in the early sixties; (according to the Ethiopian calendar) the rich from the capital went to different parts of Ethiopia to start modern farming and the poor tenants had to be forced to leave their plots to the would-be capitalist farmers.¹⁷ What in reality took place was heart-rending. And it is this reality that Baalu is trying to capture here. Thus Baalu brings out the bitterness of the suffering of the victims and the inhumanity of the ill-fated mission of the land lords. He sympathizes with the saddening situation. At the same time he feels that only sympathy is no solution. Hence, in Yehillina Dewol Baalu seems to argue for a push of using any chances, however slim they may be in the struggle of this human made calamity. His characters: Haddis and his followers all work hard despite the hinderances and inconveniences from individuals and the government. The hero, for example, carries out not only his assignment of teaching but goes further than this in as much as circumstances permit him. Put another way, Haddis is not limited to the four - walled space of the classroom. He is out with the people. He builds a school. He keeps on enlightening the people on the importance of change and on how this could be achieved.

Yes, education is a life - guard, a weapon that man should be armed with if he is to escape the cruelty of nature. The poor people of Supe Boro with no education and hence with no ability to control a fractional part of nature, cannot but be totally at the mercy of it. We see the people of Supe Boro suffering in the drought, making no effort to resist. Animals become bony; rivers dry; birds

disappear. Left with no alternatives, the people of Supe begin to pray for mercy. Baalu obviously laughs at such an idea when he makes the hero believe that nature can with the help of education be controlled. Baalu's observation here is central to the theme of the novel. He pities the poor people of Supe Boro; At the same time he strongly brings out the need for education which he regards as the only hope for a better future.

Baaluu's observation that nature is kind only to those who are educated and hard working is correct. In the absence of these nature is pitiless and merciless. That this is so, is clearly shown in this novel and the lazy and ignorant people of Supe suffer a great deal. Baalu, as reflected in this novel, seems to believe, that these people could come out of their miseries only through hard work and education. Haddis, the hero, preaches this time and again and builds a school to this end.

Thus this is how Baalu feels change could be carried out. Progress, and even life itself is at risk without education. Mere prayings of the people of Supe Boro bring no mercy. Work and education are essential. The idea that man is capable of unfolding the secrets of nature appears in all the novels of Baalu Girma. He keeps on hammering this idea into the minds of most traditionalists who firmly

believe in the unknowability of nature and who thus make no effort to probe into her secrets.

Baalu attacks the traditionalists represented by Ato Yirga Alemu (there is a pun on the first name and it means let everything stay as it is) and Yeshitila. The conversations between Haddis and these traditionalists bring out the need for change. And Haddis stresses his idea of acting quick despite the support of the two for the statusquo.

As the conversations among these characters continue Baalu probes into the mind of Zinash, a sort of well-off prostitute. Her sense of the past is superbly brought out, showing the reader the decadence of life in the metropolis: drinking, dancing and womanizing. At Supe hunger and ignorance prevail. The reader, thus, no doubt understands the urgency of the need for change both in the city and in a rural area like Supe Boro. Haddis makes it clear here at Supe Boro that change could only come by means of work and not through talks and readings that could not be put into practice. Thus Yehillina Dewol goes further than Baalu's earlier novel because it deals with the execution of the process of change itself.

The need to commit oneself to the struggle of nation building is further carried on by Baalu in his first novel that came out after the revolution: Yekey Kokeb Tirri. Here the hero is made to love his country and the revolution. Ever since the time he was elected as chairman of the revolutionary squad of his kabele (the area in which he lives), he makes a tremendous effort in helping the people defend

the revolution. Against the other side of his that urges him to forget the revolution and side with Hirut and her parents who are depicted as reactionaries, Derebe Gudeta struggles hard to stick to his principle of being with the masses.

The need for a "working hand," that concern of Baalu in Yehillina Dewol, gets perfected here in the person of Derebe who works himself to death, sparing no time for lunch. This is the kind of dedication that Baalu stresses in this novel.

Both Yehillina Dewol and Yekey Kokeb Tirri deal with how change could be achieved, in the actual execution of it, yet there is a marked difference between them. The former looks for loop-holes, and does not try to bring a radical change to the system; the latter deals with the system and defends it. Written after a major change of ideology-after the proclamation of Socialism, its main purpose is to defend the gains which this system brought about.

In Derasiw the importance of work and education are well observed by Baalu. There is a reference to the literacy campaign which has won Ethiopia world recognition. Slogans like, "Illiteracy shall be eradicated" and "we shall struggle against illiteracy" are what Sirak hears early in the evening as he goes home. There is also an instance where he says that education is useful for anything.¹⁸

The idea of a "working hand" seems to regenerate in Baalu again and in this novel as in all the others, he warns of the danger of idleness. In Derasiw Sirak's work place is described as full of unnecessary talk, and backbiting. The absence of sincerity and devotion to work is also a concern for other Ethiopian writers such

as Berhanu Zerihun who tells us of useless young men who do nothing in their offices but talk of the dates they have had over the week-ends in his Chereka Sitwata.¹⁹

In sum, Baalu's preoccupation with the theme of change is seen in all his novels, and the means by which this could come about are markedly put forth. They are education, love of work and unflinching courage.

2.3. The Writer and His Uphill Task

Of all Ethiopian novelists to date, it is only perhaps Baalu Girma who is concerned with art in general and the creative writer in particular. His concern is one that must be appreciated since it brings into the light the importance of a writer or that of an artist in general to a society. The theme has been a concern of many great writers of the world among which such prominent names as Henry James could be found. The task of the writer has also been the concern of African writers such as Chinua Achebe.²⁰

The theme started creeping into the work of Baalu in his very first novel, Kadmas Bashager. Apart from portraying the two important characters as artists: Aberra as a would-be painter and Hailemariam as a gifted writer, Baalu also tries to define what art is. He also gets down to the actual role of writer and the possible problems that this writer is likely to face.

To begin with, Baalu seems to hold the view that art is essentially a matter of gift. He seems to be in harmony with Alexandar Pope

who a long time ago had pointed out that the genius for writing is innate.²¹ In Kadmas Bashager, for example, the two characters have a natural gift for art. It is so with all the characters who are real literary artists in Baalu's novels.

Baalu first of all deals with what the objective of a writer should be. In Kadmas Bashager the aim of the writer as exemplified by Hailemariam is to write about the basic goodness of man and the beauty of this world. Furthermore, the writer according to this character, should realize that the constant obstacles that man faces are surmountable.²² Both in Yekey Kokeb Tirri and Derasiw this remains basic as far as the aim of the writer is concerned. Hence the literary character, Emaalaf, of Yekey Kokeb Tirri is interested in writing about the pleasure and importance of sex, while in Derasiw the literary character, who is also the protagonist of the novel is interested in writing about courage and love which could make man happy. Thus in all the novels (Yehillina Dewol is an exception, for no literary character appears there) we see the literary characters struggling in one way or another for the betterment of this life: how to make it sweeter.

The concern with the work and life of a writer becomes of so much interest to Baalu that he devotes a whole novel, entitled Derasiw (The Author), to it. Here the main character is an author, Sirak. And Baalu takes us into the world of a literary artist: the joys and despairs of creative pursuit. In this novel Baalu fully deals with the problem the Ethiopian writer faces while performing this uphill task.

Baalu discusses the desirability of a fit environment for writers in particular and artists in general. It appears that Baalu is of the opinion that a work of art more than anything else requires a peaceful mind. One of the ways that could help achieve this peaceful mind according to almost all the literary characters of Baalu Girma, is to live single and unmarried. An artist, (this is either implied or stated straightforward in the three novels) should put so much of himself in his work that he must try not to get involved in other things that may need his devotion and sympathy. Hailemariam in Kadmas Bashager is single and tries, though unsuccessfully, to persuade Aberra not to get married if the latter is going to become an artist. He feels marriage interferes with his work. His one prayer is, "God save me from marriage".²³

In Yekey Kokeb Tirri Finot recalls the words of her ideal Emaalaf, the literary character, and tells Derebe how the former used to look at marriage:

ከሕይወት ለምድ ግንኙነት ጥረት ነው። ገን ሰውን
ተሉ ብለሽ የገለ ገብረተሽ ለማድረግ አትዋክሪ።
በሰዎቹ መሀከል ዋናው ነገር መዋደድ ነው አንጂ
ገብቻ አይደለም። ገብቻ አንጻሩ ሌላውን የገለ
ገብረተ አድርጌ የሚይዘበት ተቋም ነው ...
ይለኛለ²⁴

'It is good to get experience out of life. But do not be eager to make a person your private property. What matters among people is love, but not marriage. Marriage is an instrument by which one makes the other private property ...' he says to me.

This is the opinion of a literary character on marriage. It is no less discouraged here than in Kadmas Bashager. The similarity of what this character says in the above quotation with what Georges Markow-Totevy says of Henry James in his study entitled: Henry James is striking. Markow-Totevy proceeds:

According to James, love also contradicts freedom, because it implies possession—the exclusive power of one partner over the other—physical as well as moral possession. He mistrusts marriage and any kind of intimacy where the closeness of the relationship seems to be eventually destructive...²⁵

Looking at these quotations, it would be perhaps possible to say that Henry James and Baalu have the same opinion.

Marriage or any other interference appears to take away some of the freedom of the author. The interference of his family in his work is a problem Sirak faces in Derasiw. It becomes very harmful particularly when the family of the author is uneducated and therefore is unsympathetic with the writer's work.

In Ethiopian society where the basic essentials for a writer have not been understood, let alone practised, the writer's task becomes extremely demanding. His task becomes two-fold: that of finding the mental peace to write and the means to publish his writing. Thus the problems are both spiritual and material. They include the writer's relationship with his family and the society he lives in.

In Derasiw the relationship of the author, Sirak and his family is extensively dealt with. Unable to be at peace with himself partly

because of his love for Seble, but principally because of lack of a suitable place for writing, Sirak gets stuck at one point with the novel he has started writing. Married to a woman who is no better in understanding the peace of mind that a writer requires than the small child they have, Sirak spends most of his time arguing with her about the importance of writing. But to no effect. Thus no peace at home. Worse still is the office he works in. The result is he is unable to make progress.

His wife, Tsige, does not stop at that. She thinks that writing is the devil's work. Tsige is not must the wife of Sirak only, but a representative of traditionalists who take writing as a sign of unhealthiness, disgrace and a curse. According to Tsige it is just a useless thing that disrupts the peace in the family, one that needs an urgent cure. This is the kind of predicament to which most Ethiopian writers would fall into. Sirak in this novel fights against the backward attitude of his wife and spends so much time doing this that he becomes unable to find either the time or the peace to deal with his writing.

The environment outside the family is no different. There are a number of problems that the Ethiopian author faces. And this has been of concern to Baalu. The writer in Ethiopia cannot live by writing alone. He has to take up another job in an office. The result is he cannot fully devote his time to writing. Writing is considered to be a minor task by the society. Thus the writer in Ethiopia becomes a split person, his efforts being divided between his

office work and writing. Such a circumstance worries Baalu Girma, and it appears that he argues that artists be left to themselves so that they may have enough time to give due attention to their work.

In Kadmas Bashager a would-be artist, Aberra is persuaded to leave his job, but he brings out the impossibility of doing so as the society does not care for the development of art. He feels he cannot live on it and says to his friend that the Ethiopian society is not one in which every body's talent is recognized despite the country's 3,000 years old civilization.²⁶ This is the fear of many Ethiopian writers. Baalu seems to imply, through such characters, that the Ethiopian society has not reached the level of appreciating a work of art and as such does not have much taste for it. Where then is the writer to sell his work? The mention of "3,000 years old civilization" is a sarcasm by which Baalu makes this character mock at his society's extremely slow moving progress.

That most Ethiopians seem to care little for art in general is common knowledge. The level of development that the society is in, by itself is a stumbling block to the understanding of art in any of its forms. In a country where the bulk of the people is illiterate, this fact should not come as a surprise. Nor does it need keen observation to notice that even those with education have little culture of reading or appreciating any other work of art. The literary character in Yekey Kokeb Tirri rightly complains about his society's lack of sympathy in the following passage. The tone is unmistakably bitter, for he almost weeps over the heedlessness of both the people and the government in this manner:

"... ሕብረተሰቡ ሥራቸንን አይጥመውም :: እኛ የቢነት ሰዎች እንቁ ነን እንላለን፤ የሚያየን የለም :: ጣር ነን እንላለን፤ የሚልሰን የለም :: የባለድናቸውን ልጆች አይሰውሉም

"በዚያ ላይ የሚረዳን ድርጅት የለም :: አንድ ደራሲ ድርሰቱን ከመጻፍ አንስቶ እስከ ቸር ቸር ድረስ ያለውን ሥራ የሚያካሄድ ራሱ ነው :: የቲያትር ድርሰት ጭሰም ሆነ የሰዓሊ አድል ከደራሲያን የተለየ አይደለም ::

"ይህ ሳይንስ ሕብረተሰቡ... ገበሬን አፈር ገሬ - ባለአጃቸን ጠይብ፣ ቡዳ ጠዘተ. አያለ እንደሚያራክሰው ሁሉ የቢነት ሰዎችንም አዘግሪ . . . መተኛ ደብተራ አያለ ሲያሰጣቸው ቁይቷ"።?፣

' the society does not like our work. We say we are jewels, but nobody looks at us. We say we are honey but nobody touches us. Our children [the work produced] are not kissed.... '

" added to that, there is no organization to help us. It is the author only who does everything: from writing his script to selling his novel by retail. The fate of a playwright or an artist is no different from a novelist . . . "

" It is not only this. The society considers ... a farmer to be a mere soil pusher, those with working hands evil, buda*. In the same way it looks down on men of art calling them azmari [a derogatory word for a singer], charmer, dabtara [a derogatory word for a writer].

Hence not only does the Ethiopian writer, not have mental peace at home, but he is also in conflict with his society. No wonder, then, that many people refrain from becoming artists in

* a person supposed to have an eye that is harmful to others

such hostile circumstances. Impassivity is obviously no solution. The battle, surely, will only be won through struggle, as Baalu Girma himself is doing.

As if the hostile attitude of the society towards them is not enough they are never friendly among themselves, torn as they are by malice and jealousy. Compassion among fellow writers is essential. Understanding among themselves is no less important. It is only then that the culture of just criticism could develop among them. But the situation now seems a long way from being conducive. Criticism for all its merits is always seen as something destructive by most Ethiopian artists. Thus most of them would not tolerate hearing anything bad about their work, however defective it is. Baalu makes a reference to such kind of author in Derasiw when Eskender, a beginner writer, stubbornly refuses to accept Sirak's constructive criticisms feeling that the latter's act is one of jealousy.

Baalu goes further and finds out the causes for malice and jealousy which he thinks are common among Ethiopian people in general. One character in Derasiw ascribes the cause to the way Ethiopians are brought up. He mentions what Ethiopian parents say to their children: "if you do not eat this, I will give it to somebody" or "be like Mr. X and then you will be rewarded."²⁸ He argues that a child brought up under the instruction of such words will not be far from jealousy and malice. Whether this is right or wrong should not concern us here.

What is important for our purpose here is that Baalu not only points out the inconvenient circumstances for writing but goes deep to find the root cause for all these by means of such characters.

To sum up, in Derasiw Baalu shows how writing is an extremely difficult task and points out the essentials for it. These are mainly gift, courage and harmony with the self and the society. Where these are non-existent the writer should try to get them through hard work and courage. Sirak in Derasiw becomes successful after a bitter struggle with himself and the environment. Furthermore, Baalu in this novel points out perfection in writing takes a long time to come. And in this all those giant writers whose names still live are in harmony with him. Fielding, Tolstoy, Maupassant ...

2.4. Social Criticisms

If progress is to be achieved the challenge first of all will be with the hindrances that work against the achievement of this essential goal. Briefly, the first challenge is with backward traditional values. The second challenge is coping with the problems it brings about.

The tug of war between traditionalists and the young generation is a preoccupation of Baalu in his novels. In his first novel Kadmas Bashager we see Ato Abate and ~~W~~to Bafana opposing the young. For instance, Ato Abate tries to persuade Aberra to marry in the traditional way that incurs a lot of unnecessary expenses, to be a father and to go to church. Wzo Bafana, Aberra's mother is no exception. She finds it hard to accept the fact that time changes.

and with it people's attitude. The youth who she thinks always turn a deaf ear to what the old say irritate her and she barks at her son in these words:

"... አይ ዘመን ያባተህ ጭብብ ጠንካራ ነበር አንክ ::
ዎ ነው ልጄ አርጊተኛ አንዲጠር፤ ሕፃናት አንዲያደጉ ፊ
ታቸሁን ወይ አዎላካቸሁ በተወሰሱ ..."²⁹

"... what a time: the belief of your father was strong. My boy, why is that you do not turn your face to your God so that the aged may live and the young may grow ..."

This clearly shows how the old are worried about their sons' and daughters' attitude towards the age old way of life. The Ethiopian saying 'because of the dry wood the moist also burns' seems to capture their minds. They think disaster is going to come to themselves because of the sin of their children: the sin of not going to church. In Yehillina Dewol a character, argues for the spread of religion.³⁰ He no doubt belongs to the traditionalists. In Yekey Kokeb Tirri, Wzo Amsale thinks that the earth is going to tremble because the young are unwilling to obey her. She becomes bitter about her children that she thinks of them as a whip with which God punishes the old.³¹ In Derasiw there are traditionalists like elder Altaye and Tsige herself who believe in charms and witch-craft. They are unwilling to give up these backward beliefs.

The backward attitude towards women in Ethiopia is one that must be challenged. Baalu very well realizes this. That the position of the Ethiopian woman has been an inferior one is common knowledge. Sayings like 'the place for a woman and a cat is the kitchen',

' a cat and a donkey need stick ' and hosts of others contribute to the inferiority of the Ethiopian woman in one way or another. Baalu's interest, however, seems to be how the educated youth look at their female fellow Ethiopians. Not much change seems to have taken place even with the 'elites' Baalu examines. The educated characters Aberra and Hailemariam cannot get rid of the deeply implanted idea of the inferiority of woman. For instance, Hailemariam warns Aberra 'not to think blindly like a woman'.³² In another instance in the same novel Aberra says to Lulit, ' we have become useless and cowards like a woman ...'.³³ In Derasiw a character who is educated tells his wife that 'the kitchen and not the office is her right place'.³⁴

The absurd notion of many Ethiopians who feel that a woman is only created for the sexual satisfaction of man comes under strong criticisms by characters like Finot of Yekey Kokeb Tirri.³⁵

Other harmful ways of life that are still maintained by the traditionalists are raised by Baalu in his novels. These include the unbalanced food culture and the damaging way of expressing grief. These particularly become a butt of ridicule in Yekey Kokeb Tirri.³⁶

Of all subjects nothing seems so interesting for Baalu as the way one looks at life. In Derasiw Sirak, the protagonist, earnestly asks the beginner writer, Eskender, how the latter looks at life for Sirak seems to consider the point of view one has towards life is central to man's progress. This is certainly true.

Seen in this light, what makes Baalu very much concerned with the issue is the rather pessimistic and erroneous attitude of many Ethiopians towards life. A challenge is made to such a point of view particularly in his later novels: Yekey Kokeb Tirri and Derasiw

Traditionalists look at life as a meaningless, sour and dream-like phenomenon with nothing good in it. All dull and bitter. Baalu's opinion, however, differs from such a pessimistic attitude. The difference is the traditionalists exaggerate the misfortune and bleakness that may sometimes be found in life, while Baalu by and large, points his finger at the latent joys and blessings of life if man keeps on constantly struggling against the fading drawbacks he faces. The transient bitterness in the struggle to lead a good life is minor for Baalu as compared to the sweetness that could be gained after the struggle. Such an idea is made clear even in his first novel when Hailemariam tells Aberra that the difficulties encountered by man in the struggle of the attainment of happiness and beauty in life could be overshadowed by the fruit of the successful battle.³⁷

Baaluu's strong belief in optimism appears clearly and more forcefully in his later novels. The inevitability of surmounting problems in life, be it man-made or natural becomes a theme of these novels. Armed with what Baalu thinks are the essentials that make life sweet and peaceful, the heroes of Yekey Kokeb Tirri and Derasiw strive hard to change the dull and dismal environment they live in.

⑥ The courage, dedication, determination and the optimist point of view they have help these characters bring about defeatism to the hopeless outlook of the traditionalists.

Baalu Girma ascribes this pessimistic outlook of life to lack of courage, hope and purposelessness. It is, for example, when he seems to lose these that the hero of Yehillina Dewol becomes frustrated and starts looking at life as gloomy, meaningless whose final goal is death.³⁸ In Yekey Kokeb Tirri, a character feels the same when he is in a state of frustration. This character, also holds the view that the world is unknowable and dismisses all efforts being made to come to grips with life's secrets as useless. Life for him is just useless. It is in a reply to such kind of attitude that Baalu puts in the following words in the mouth of Derebe, the protagonist:

"... ሕይወት ግን ብረህ ናት :: የሰው ልጅ ያለ ተስፋ
አይኖርም :: ተስፋ የሚያደርገው ደግሞ በከንቱ አይደ
ለም :: ባለው የመጠራመር ችሎታ ዓለምን ሊያውቃት ይ
ቸላል :: አንድ ቀን ተፈጥሮን ድል ያደርጋል :: የተ
ፈጥሮን ሚስጥር፣ የሕይወትን ትርጉም ፈለፍሎ ያውቃል ::
እና የሰው ገቡ ሕይወት ነው እንጂ ቀት አይደለም..."³⁹

"... life is but cheerful. Man cannot live without hope; he also does not hope for nothing. With his capability to think, he is able to find out what the world is, and one day he will conquer nature and discover the meaning of life. And so man's goal is life and not death ..."

This is surely an optimistic point of view of life. It mentions that hope is an integral part of life without which it

would be difficult for human beings to live. It sums up man's goal: to find out purpose in life and to struggle with nature. These will surely make life interesting. This passage is directed at hopelessness and defeatism which are in most cases brought about by a low level of consciousness and frustration. The commentary on life here is a basic one and has a tremendous significance in human life.

Baalu looks at life as an eternal process of overcoming problems. He feels that every body in the society should contribute his share in surmounting difficulties that society faces. Thus all his heroes whatever the degree may be involve themselves in the struggle. Aberra in Kadmas Bashager makes an effort, however arm-chair it is. Haddis is Yehillina Dewol, Derebe in Yekey Kokeb Tirri and Sirak in Derasiw strive hard to better the world they live in. That each in his undertaking becomes successful is a testimony to the truth that there is always some kind of reward after a just struggle. And if one dies in a just struggle, Baalu seems to believe that it is only a death to the victim but a light to the living.

Baalu Girma also deals with social evils that are spreading widely as the society aspires to become modern. It is a paradox that the abundance of such evils increase as the society makes a little step towards modernism. Prostitution is one such evil that does not escape the pen of Baalu.

In all the novels of Baalu Girma there is a reference to

prostitution. We come across characters who are or had been prostitutes in all his novels. In Kadmas Bashager, we see prostitutes who ogle at Hailemariam while Aberra goes with one to the bedroom to make love.⁴⁰ In Yehillina Dewol there are prostitute characters like Shitaye and Zinash who often worry about what they are. In Yekey Kokeb Tirri we see Derebe the protagonist chatting and inviting one to a drink.⁴¹ In fact Baalu like Berhanu Zerihun in Charaka Sitiwata, makes a reference to the number of prostitutes in Addis Ababa in this novel. He puts the number nearer to two-hundred thousand.⁴² In Derasiw, Tsige, the hero's wife had been a prostitute until the time he picked her for marriage. All these indicate that prostitution has come to be a part of life, particularly in the metropolis. The intention of Baalu is clear: it is an urgent warning not to remain aloof to such a grave evil.

Corruption and idleness that are rampant in 'modern' Addis Ababa are also shown in Baalu's novels. Thus in Kadmas Bashager characters like Tesema Dejene and Bekelle Roba are typical of the idleness common in every office here in town. They represent people with no sense of purpose in the bureaucracy. Even the prison in this novel, we are told, is an extension of the outside world where bribery is being practised.

In Yehillina Dewol Baalu demonstrates how this evil, corruption is common. A character tells Haddis that money contributed by the rural people for making bridges and roads goes

to the pockets of the officials.⁴³ There are also instances where we see when power corrupts in the same novel. A character who is the secretary of the Woreda (quite a key post in those days) takes a peasant girl and rapes her; but the law is unable to reach him because of the post he has.⁴⁴ And a character who is the head of the local force of supe frankly admits that he has stopped struggling for justice and has become part of the corrupt system of the country.⁴⁵

In Yekey Kokeb Tirri, those who come from a humble origin are not able to get a job ~~straightway~~. Derebe gets his job because of people like Wzo Amsale and Getachew. Finot is able to get one by putting her sex at the service of the big officials. Wzo Amsale crowns it all when she says that money speaks and it has saved many people from death.⁴⁶

In Derasiw reference is made to the self-granted absence of bureaucrats from their offices under the pretext of false meetings.⁴⁷

A break away from feudalism is a theme that has always been the concern for Baalu. It is interesting to note how writers like Baalu were able to succeed in getting such novels published at the time when the government protected feudalism. Perhaps, proximity to people working in the censorship or using deceptive titles might have been helpful in making such authors achieve their purpose.

In Kadmas Bashager the suffering of the peasantry is brought

out by Baalu when we are made to know that salaries of fat city people come from their hard labour. A character in this novel tells Aberra that everybody in the city enjoys the sweat of the peasant and this has become so common that nobody worries about.⁴⁸ Wzo Bafana, Aberra's mother, recalls the time before the death of the Fitawrari, her husband, and one is made aware of the feudals' enjoyment of eating and drinking.

In Yehillina Dewol the misery of the peasants is dealt with; the suffering of the people is described pathetically.

The peasants of Supe pay taxes for health, education and yet do not get any service for what they pay. Devoid of all essentials that make living bearable, if not comfortable, the peasants of Supe in Yehillina Dewol are presented as miserable and poor. They are always at hand to the merciless exploiters of the land lords who mostly live in the metropolis and yet they are so distant from the fruit of their sweat. The peasants toil hard to provide the luxury their masters need. Even though much of what city people enjoy and live on come from the sweat of the rural people's brows, nevertheless, the well-to-do city people never respect them. Here in Yehillina Dewol a character who forgets that the rural people are the backbone of the country, despises them in the following manner:

"... የባለገር ሰው ልቦሱ አዳፏ፤ አንደበቱ ጉልዳፋ፤
ቢነገረት የጭያዳጭጥ ... ነገር ። ... ለባለገር
አካባቢን አፈረንና ሰጡን ልለይ አልቻልን ። አንድ
ና ቸው ስኔ ... በከተማ ተፈጥሮንና ሰጡን ለይተህ ጭ
የት ተቸላላህ ..."⁴⁹

"... a rural person's clothes are dirty. His
speech is not refined. He does not listen when he
he is talked to ... [In the rural area] I
cannot differentiate the soil from the person.
All are the same for me .! . In the city
you can make a distinction between nature and
man ..."

This is an observation made by an incompassionate character
towards the life of the Ethiopian peasant. It captures the
horrifying stark reality of the condition of the rural people.
The 'dirty clothes', the 'unrefined speech' and the comparison of
the rural person's appearance with soil all indicate that poverty
and ignorance have befallen him.

As the miseries of the poor in the rural areas are brought
out, so is the loss of health and poverty of the many unemployed
who squat in the cities. In Kadmas Bashager Baalu deliberately
makes us contrast the condition of the ailing beggars who desperately
beg for a penny as Aberra and Lulit relax in their car drinking
milk with coffee in sips.⁵⁰ In Yehillina Dewol there is an episode
in which the hero and a character argue over the issue of how
progress could be achieved. As they do so ailing beggars some
without noses, others without eyes and almost completely ruined
surround them begging hard for coins.⁵¹ In Derasiw the setting itself
is a squalid area known as Teret Sefer, where Baalu spares no
effort to describe the poor people's life in this microcosm of the

slums of Addis Ababa.

In sum, Baalu's effort is to do away with all evils whether these are caused in the strife for progress or in the absence of it. As the years have elapsed, there seems to be a considerable change in Baalu's attitude towards how his wish of progress for the people of Ethiopia could be achieved. In his early novels he seems to believe that change could come about even by means of individual struggle. With his later novels after the revolution, however, his belief in organization and mass struggle is getting firmly implanted in his thinking. Yes, with the numerous difficulties that this society is still facing, the need for herculean efforts seems to be urgent to cope with the problems. And these could only come from the masses.

2.5 Sexual Love

Sex as it appears in the novels of Baalu Girma is nature's best gift to man. Happiness and youthfulness spring from it. Sex is as likeable as sweet-sounding music. In Kadmas Bashager, Aberra, the protagonist, used to tell his one time girl friend who was unable to make love without music, that sex by itself is nature's supreme music. There is a reference to music, flowers, names of angels in almost all the four novels of Baalu when characters make love. Surely, this is to indicate how sweet and enjoyable sex is.

In Kadmas Bashager immediately after the novel opens we are introduced to Aberra's sexual affair in a flashback. He vividly remembers his sexual experiences with black and white ladies and even the one that he had with a certain maid by the name Tirngo way back. These memories make him happy. Though distant, they live in him. They make him desirous. All this is to tell us that sex is a natural necessity which had been part of the character and that still continues to be so. Its pleasure-giving aspect is not undermined. Every body needs it. Every one gets pleasure out of it. The 'intellectual' character, Hailemariam in Kadmas Bashager has sex merely because it gives him pleasure. He is not sentimental about it. He simply looks where pleasure is and he gets it with prostitutes, and maids as far as sex is concerned. Thus sexual love is only a state of making sexual intercourse to be happy for such a character. But for the hero of Kadmas Bashager it is more than this: stronger and passionate. It is this strong desire of Aberra which makes him feel the sole possessor of Lulit. It is this uncontrollable passion of love that makes him kill his wife under the fit of jealousy. Thus in this novel sexual love is experienced both interms of its joy and tribulations. In other words there is both care-free sex like the one Hailemariam is practising and passionate sexual love like the one Aberra is practising. The novel as a whole presents sex as an important element in human life. And much of the action that we see is caused by the sexual love among the different characters.

Sexual love also gets a significant treatment in Yehillina Dewol. The protagonist's life is closely related to the love he has for a girl named Aynalem. In as much as he builds the school for the people of Supe, we are told, he also builds up his love for this girl in his heart. The hero's sexual affair with the prostitute character is described time and again in the novel and the enjoyment they get out of it is brought out. As in Kadmas Bashager, the relationship between the sexes has again an important influence on the characters involved. It is instrumental in determining a character's life. It is this sexual love that Shitaye has for the protagonist that drives her to jail, for as she hears that Haddis's marriage with Aynalem she falsely testifies against the treacherous accusation of Haddis in a fit of jealousy. The result of such a false testimony could not be minimized. It made Haddis go to jail for sometime and when the truth came out Shitaye has to go to jail for a longer time.

In both Baalu's later novels sexual love is of paramount importance, a force that moves on the stories. Thus in Yekey Kokeb Tirri it is the relationship between Derebe and Hirut that serves as a spring board for the story to move on. It is the love of the hero for this girl that is the main driving force behind his desire for success. The memory of the sexual intercourse that he had with her, has never left him. We see him being haunted by it. He keeps on dreaming to have her. Sex in this novel is abundant. The old like Wzo Amsale and Ato Gulilat and the young like Teferra and Hirut do it. We even see birds

ing. In fact, the whole novel is sprinkled with scenes of actual love making.

Sex is a crucial element in Derasiw. It is, for instance, the frigid type of sex that is implied that makes the already bad relationship between Sirak and Tsige worse. Sirak gets caught by the sex appeal of another female character, Seble who has got a husband. His love for his wife, thus, begins to deteriorate. This is also the case with Seble's love for her husband, Zemene, for she also becomes attracted towards Sirak. Such an act affects all the other characters like Tsige, Eskender and Zemene. Thus the sexual love becomes a cause for the intricate relationship among the main characters of the novel. It is from the sexual love that the characters indulge themselves in that most of the conflicts which give momentum for the story take place.

Sexual love is central to Baalu's novels. There is nothing ugly in it. Nevertheless, the influence and the power it has on its victims is unmistakable. It could make its victims commit murder as is the case of the hero of Kadmas Bashager or it could interfere with their undertakings as is the case with the protagonists of the other novels.

Love of the opposite sexes in the novels of Baalu has a slim chance of success. We see the characters attracted to one another in most instances, but they do not stay long together. The love dies out (an exception to this is Yehillina Dewol where the love of the hero and Aynalem lives on). Most of the

characters seem to be convinced of an inevitable impossibility, separation or denial of their love. Thus the love between Aberra and Lulit in Kadmas Bashager ends in separation. Derebe's love for Hirut never becomes feasible. The love between Sirak and Seble in Derasiw is short lived.

Appealing physical appearance seems to be the main magnetic power that attracts the sexes towards each other. Thus Aberra in Kadmas Bashager is powerfully moved by the beauty of Lulit at his first sight and falls in love because of her attractiveness. In Yehillina Dewol Baalu fails to give the reasons that made the hero of this novel fall in love with Aynalem. In all the rest of the novels, however, it is the impressive looks of the female characters that exercise the major pull on the would-be male lovers. In Yekey Kokeb Tirri Baalu spares no effort in describing how the sexually appealing appearance of the girl, Hirut, has become the cause for the violent, passionate love of Derebe towards her. In Derasiw Sirak's attraction to Seble is primarily because of the latter's good looks.

Baaluu feels that sexual love is an essential part of life. He feels that sex gives a sap, a vigour to life. He rightly feels so. He understands that sexual love is the source of human beings. Thus sex, for Baalu is not only a spice without which life becomes dull, but is an element that after all determines the existence of homosapiens. Sirak, the hero of Derasiw best sums up Baalu's opinion of the importance of

sexual love when he says:

"አኛ የተገኘ ነው ከፍቅርና ፍቅር ከሚያስገኘው ገንጥነት ነው :: ፍቅር የሕይወት ምንጭ የሕይወት ቀዎ ነው :: ለሰው ልጅ ፍቅር እንደእንጆራ እንደውሃ እንደአየር ያስፈልገዋል :: ስንት ሚሊዮን ሰዎች በየ ምሽት ፍቅርን ፍለጋ በጩላማ ውስጥ እንደሚደናበሩ ማሰብ ትቸያለሽ? ስንት የፍቅር እርካታ አገኘቶ በደስታ ሲሆን? ስንት ፍቅር አጥቶ በደረቀ ሌሊት ሲያፈጥሩ ሁሉም ስለፍቅር ያሰባሉ? ገን ማንም ስለ ፍቅር ወና ገርና ወጻፍ አይፈልገው :: ጤናማ አመለካከት አይደለም ..."52

"We have come into being because of love and the sexual activity that love brings about. Love is the source of life, the spice of life, love for human beings is as essential as are food, water and air. Can you imagine how millions of people look for love at night? How many of these swim in the satisfaction that love making gives, while many unable to make love lie in their beds staring at a cold night? ... Everybody thinks about love, but no one wants to talk or to write about love. It is not a healthy outlook ..."

This, it seems, is the core of Baalu's attitude of sexual love. Baalu's concern with such an important theme has begun to appear as early as the time he has started writing novels. Thus in both his early novels we see characters that not only talk of sex but who actually wallow in it. If there are characters who do not think anything but sex and its pleasure, like Bekelle Roba of Kadmas Bashager, they become a butt of ridicule for Baalu. The author does this to point out the harm in overindulgence and not to underrate its vitality in life.

The pleasure that sexual intercourse gives is realized and expressed with the help of symbols that could bring out its pleasantness and desirability vividly. This is so in all the novels of Baalu. Thus the warm feelings, delightfulness and youthfulness that are associated with love making are described with appropriate metaphors and ~~similes~~ mostly taken from nature. The following is how an 'intellectual' character in Yekey Kokeb Tirri felt of sex before his death as told by his girl friend who seems to have the same opinion. Finot recalls what he used to say:

"... ተፈጥሮ ወፈንደቅ የምትጀምረው አበባቸ ሲፈኑ ነው። አበባ ፍትዕት ነው። ውበት ነው። ወንድ ሴት ለአቅዎ አጻም ሲደርሱ ፍትዕት ሲያምራቸው። ነው ውበት የሚመዘኛት ... ጠረፍ ቸው ከረቅ ይጠራል። ትንፋሽ ቸው አንደላሳት ምሳሌ ከረቅ ይለባሉናል። ፍትዕት ያሰፈ ነድቃቸዋል። ሕይወት ያኑ ነው የምትጠፍጠው..."⁵³

"... nature begins to rejoice when flowers bloom. Flower is sex, it is beauty. It is when people reach the age of puberty and become desirous of sex that they become more beautiful ... They smell sweet from a distance, their breath is as hot as a tongue of fire. Sex makes them happy .. Life is sweet then"

Sex as we see from this quotation is associated with things that are beautiful, cheery and vibrant such as flower, fire and youth. Although we cannot be so sure as to whether the author exactly holds the same opinion as this character, there is no doubt that Baalu's attitude towards sex comes nearer to such kind of idea as entertained by the character he has created. Elsewhere in his novels, Baalu never fails to catch the

exuberant sweetness of sexual love and Baalu's characters become full of life and cheery when they make or about to make love. One example from Derasiw substantiates this. The case of a lover who meets the woman he has been longing for catches Baalu's imagination. The act is described thus with a sprinkling of images out of the real and unreal world as:

ከገፈር ዋን ጣላ አደረገኝ :: ወፍራም ከገፈርቸዋ
ሊፈላገግ የደረሱ የዐገረኝ እምብዞቸ መሰለው ታዩ
ት :: የሚታዩት ትገፋሽዋ ገረፈው ... ራሱን መቆ
ጣጠር አቃተው የእርስዎ ስሜት ከሱ የላላ ስላ ነበ
ረም

የኪረቤላ የሸገት - ገሰሰት ዜማ - የሊቃነ መለሰ
ከት ወዘ ዋዘና ሸበሸባ-የጆኖች ዘማሪ የገነት አየር-
የማርያም መገደለዊት ሸቶ ... ባሕር ሲናወጥ-ዋገድ
ሲነሣና ሲወድቅ - አደይ አበባ ... ሲፈነጻ - ም
ድሪ ተገ ሲሞላ - ሁለተኛ ዘም - ዘም ታ :⁵⁴

She let down her lip. Her thick lips looked to him bud of roses ready to bloom. Her hot breath bit him ... He could not control himself it was so with her ...

The flute of cherub - the song of angels - the graceful movement and religious dance of the archangel-birds' song - the fragrance of heaven-when the sea swells-when waves rise and fall-quiet they became-silence.

Mention of 'the song of angels' and 'fragrance of heaven' elevate the blissful nature of sexual intercourse. The words in this passage have evocative power. We are made to feel the temptation of the man when he looks at her 'thick lips' which look 'buds of roses'. Here Baalu makes an effort to imprint a mark in our minds. With the strong images he chooses he makes

us experience how these lovers felt.

It is undoubtedly Baalu Girma who more than any other Ethiopian writer is well aware of the need to teach the importance of sex to his society. His effort in doing so must be appreciated in view of the fact that most Ethiopians are either ignorant or are extremely distasteful of this subject. Hence in writing about the role of sex, Baalu not only tries to fully exploit the theme, but is courageous enough to tell the society that inattention to such an important matter as sex is merely a sign of backwardness. This is the whole point he wants to get at when treating this theme. Baalu also shows us the role that sexual love plays in the intricate relationship of his characters who are microcosm of the Ethiopian society.

Talking about sexual love has always been considered as something useless and shameful in Ethiopia. Worse is, of course, writing about such a 'disgusting' theme. In Ethiopia the sexual organs are considered to be shameful. The Amharic word hatiat which means sperm has its meaning as sin. The society is still a strong adherent of such backward attitude. It is to such kind a society that Baalu responds to in an effort to fight such a backward way of thinking.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERARY TECHNIQUES

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse some of the literary techniques that appear in the four novels whose themes have already been discussed. It is divided into five headings.

Apart from bringing out the techniques and the way the author uses them, this chapter also discusses their weaknesses and strengths as used in the novels. Thus ² an effort will be made to determine whether the novelist's techniques have been used effectively to make his work lively and above all intelligible.

3.1 Methods of Narration

In all his four novels Baalu Girma employs the omiscient method of narration. He tells his story omnisciently moving from character to character, providing us with comments or introducing us to some new information.

The method of telling a story in the third person gives the author a means to probe into the protagonist's inner feelings. Using such a method, the author can tell us everything about his character even when the latter is in an awkward position to express his feelings. Furthermore, such a method enables the author to exhibit knowledge which does not necessarily belong

to any of the characters. Thus he may describe scenes or situations when it might be impossible for the characters to do so.

All the advantages of telling a story in the third person seem very obvious and giving examples of how these advantages actually operate in a novel seems to be unnecessarily time-consuming. However, one example of how the author brings out the inner feelings of a character when the latter is in no position to speak to any one is given below. Ato Gulilat in Yekey Kokeb Firri hides his feelings of fear and ambition from his wife and yet his inner thoughts could never be concealed from Baalu:

. . . [አቶ ጊሊላት] በጠይዘር አጠባለ ጠባይ
ክፋኛ ክፋኛ ጠለጠፎ ሲገረጹ ቀዳ ስንድ አርገ
ቀር ተጥፎ ጠረታ ጠጠባቴ ላይ ቀር የፊታዬ ራሳት
ጠዕረጌ ይሰረዘላኝ ብዬ ጠጠላክት አሁን ጠን
ይባላሉ ? አይ የሰጡ ነገር : ስንት ዘመን ይኼ
አንዳለጠና ሁሉ . . . : በጣላት ተቀጡ: 55

. . . [Ato Gulilat] highly surprised at Wzo Amsale's change of behaviour said, 'have I not been thrown away like a used kunna (a measure), made to retire on a pension. And now why do I apply for the cancellation of my title of Fitawrari? Look at the jolly of man. Didn't I long for this very title itself for years. . . 'regretted thoughtfully to himself.

Thus we know what is going on deep in the mind of this character. It is implied that this application for the deprivation of the title occurs to him out of fear. Courage has betrayed him and yet he refrains from being frank about it. But the reader is able to see the two sides of this character because the author interiorizes him.

Baalu is always near his characters, commenting on their intentions, thoughts, actions and feelings. His psychological insight combined with his knowledge of human relationship are factors behind the validity of his authorial comments.

Baalu also uses the epistolary method in three of his novels: Yehillina Dewol, Yekey Kokeb Tirri and Derasiw.

Thus Aynalem in Yehillina Dewol weeps as she reads the rather lengthy and sentimental letter of the hero, Haddis, which he has sent her.⁵⁶ In the same novel, there is another letter written by Shitaye to Haddis.⁵⁷ In Yekey Kokeb Tirri, Finot gives Derebe the letter written to her by Emaalaf who has committed suicide; Derebe reads it with tears falling down from his eyes.⁵⁸ In Derasiw Tsige gives a letter written by Haji Mustefa to Haddis, and the latter reads it.⁵⁹

In each of these instances when the characters read the letters we are fully exposed to their thoughts and feelings towards the people who have written them. Furthermore, by means of the letters we are able to know how the writers of the letters themselves felt at the time of writing. Apart from these, the

epistolary method as used in Baalu's novels has other functions. It gives a pleasing variety of style as well as room for controlled sentimentality. In addition, Baalu uses it for raising digressive subjects. For instance, Emaalaf's letter in Yekey Kokeb Tirri raises issues which are not necessarily part of the themes the novel is supposed to deal with. Some of the letters are important technically. The letter in Yehillina Dewol which gives a break for the story is a case in point.

Baalu not only goes inside his characters' minds, but also detaches himself from his characters so as to present them objectively. Here is an example of how Baalu combines detachment and interiorization.

ደረሰው ዘጠብ ጠላቱ ቆይቶ ጠላቱ ነበር።።
 ከተገኘ ጠረባዛው ላይ ከፈተ የተከፈለው
 ያረፈ ፋፍል አብዋራውን እያቦነ ነበት ያረገበታል።።
 እሱም ጠላቱን ያረገጠ።። የፋይሎቹ አብዋራ ስፍኖ
 ነፍሱን የሚያጠጣ ጠላቱ ታየው ተነስቶ ከፋይሎቹ
 ለመሸሽ ፈለገ።።⁶⁰

The author . . . was sitting quietly. The old files that were heavily piled in front of him stare at him blowing their dust off. He stares back at them. It seemed to him the dust on the files could choke the life out of him and he wanted to run away from them.

The first three sentences are observations of a detached author. The author in these sentences is speaking for himself

and for us. The character hardly thinks of his silence. That this character is quiet, however, does not escape the eyes of the author. It is in the last sentence that one can see how Baalu goes inside the character's thinking, and thus tells us how the character felt like running.

Generally, Baalu uses the method he chose effectively. The epistolary method which he uses for various purposes also colours his style, although this at times seems highly fictitious. One error, Baalu may be accused of as far his point of view is concerned is that he explains so much about some of his characters that they become highly transparent. Otherwise, he makes the reader move along with him with no difficulty.

3.2 The Plots

The plots of the novels of Baalu Girma are relatively intricate when compared to those of other Amharic novelists. Each character's life and action is interwoven with those of the others. The plots also use elements like suspense, foreshadowing and contingency.

In Kadmas Bashager the plot starts moving because of the conflict within Aberra himself: to remain purposeless as he is or to become resolute. The other conflict is between himself and the traditionalists who are very much concerned with the values they uphold. Thus they want him to marry and have

children. They are not interested in what he longs for, but constantly urge him to remain in his present post.

It is the conflict within himself, however, that keeps the story moving to the end. As for the second conflict, Aberra resolves it by marrying Lulit Tadesse in response to the wish of the traditionalists. This marriage is an important step in the development of the story for it brings into the scene Lulit who is going to be the cause of Aberra's death.

The conflict within Aberra continues. It is when he becomes determined to resolve it that things begin to get out of hand. In order to fulfil his inner wish and that of Hailemariam, he quits his office job to devote himself full time to art, his mission in life. Thus he goes to his office to collect his last salary. But it is coincidence that when Aberra phones Lulit she is not in her office. Some kind of emotion forces him to go to her office to know her whereabouts, but the guard on duty tells him that she has just left in a car with an unknown man. Aberra immediately drives to a suburban hotel where he suspects her to be. Here again, by coincidence, the type of car which he was told Lulit had left in and the car parked outside the hotel are the same. Thus convinced that his wife, Lulit, is making love to another man, Aberra straightway goes in and kills a lady whom he has mistaken for Lulit. As he is doing all this Lulit is out with Hailemariam buying a birthday gift for Aberra himself.

The conflict of the minor characters is also brought to a close after the downfall of Aberra (he goes to jail for a term of three years for the crime). His mother dies at the news of his imprisonment and his brother kills Hailemariam whom he thinks to be the main cause of the catastrophe.

It is a tragic irony that Aberra by trying to fulfil the wishes of his parents becomes the cause of their death.

Aberra's act, however, is in harmony with his characteristics. His sexual jealousy is hinted at in one or more instances. Even when he was very young, he was jealous of Tringo, the maid, when she committed sex with another man. It seems Aberra had an affair with her once or twice and yet he wanted to possess her. Apart from the fact that Aberra is a jealous lover, Baalu seems to bring out Lulit's beauty for the purpose of making us believe that any man however strong he may be could fall in love with her. No wonder then, such a man as Aberra who is by no means strong in controlling his will falls in love with her. That Lulit will be a worry for him is foreshadowed as early as their first meeting. Baalu observes the danger Aberra felt in this manner:

. . . አንዳት አንድ ተረዳው በያውቀው
በግዛ አንድ መተላቀቁ አያያዟ ነገረው
ለማመለጥ አንድ ገና አልቆከረም . . . 61

... Although he could not tell how he understood, the way she grabbed him told him that she will not let him go easily.

Later on, when she proposes marriage Aberra contemplates whether Lulit is a gift from the sky or a satanic evil.⁶² All these foreshadow Lulit's capacity for causing tragedy in the life of Aberra. The foreshadowing holds true as she becomes instrumental in bringing about the death of three prominent characters as well as the hero's imprisonment.

The interplay of suspense and surprise is of the utmost importance to a novel's plot. In Kadmas Bashager both qualities are present. From the very beginning we are introduced to a character such as Aberra who is full of conflicts. Naturally we become very much interested to know what happens to such a character. We become surprised when we hear of the sudden deaths of characters such as Hailemariam and Abate. But these have been carefully grounded in what has gone before, though they might have escaped our attention. For instance, Ato Abate's hatred of Hailemariam has been thoroughly grounded throughout the novel although we may have been heedless of it. We might have wondered when we heard that Hailemariam has been shot by Ato Abate. But when we remember their enmity we say, ah, that is right. Hailemariam's death is also foreshadowed, though thinly, when

some kind of feeling tells Aberra that he shall not see his friend Hailemariam again, as the latter says goodbye to the former who is in prison. Baulu comments on the feelings of Aberra:

. . . /ለአበራ/ አንድ ስሜት መጥቶ
ሁለተኛ በአይነት ሥጋ አንድሞይ ገናኙ ነገረው።
ለእናቱ መርዶ ልብ ውስጥ ተቀርቆ
የቀረው አንባ ጠይቅ ገንፍሎ አይኖቹ
ጠስቶ አቀረረ። ጠደባ በረ ርቱ "ሀይለማር
ያም፡ ሀይለማር ያም፡ አያለ ተጠራ። ሀይለማ
ር ያም ገን ርቆ ሃይ ነበር. . . 63

. . . [He] Aberra felt that they could not meet again. The tears that remained deep in his heart when he heard of his mother's death forcibly came up to his eyes which began to moisten. He went to the door and called 'Hailemariam!' 'Hailemariam!' But Hailemariam had gone far . . .

Thus this is a foreshadowing that unmistakably indicates the death of Hailemariam. This is particularly clear in the first and last sentences.

Generally speaking, the plot of Kadmas Bashager, for the most part is compact, all points leading to the main theme. It has a rising action: the conflict within Aberra himself and the conflict with the traditionalists. These conflicts

become heightened. He tries to resolve the first one by resigning from his job, the second one by getting married to Lulit. Both actions lead to the climax of the story which leads to the downfall.

The plot of Yehillina Dewol, unlike that of Kadmas Bashager, primarily progresses because of the conflict between the protagonist and the hostile circumstances surrounding the goal he has set himself: that of building a school at Supe.

Supported only by a very few persons, Haddis struggles hard to build a school which he believes is the core of progress. His effort faces strong opposition from the traditionalists who are opposed to modern education. The struggle between Haddis and these people is crucial to the development of the story.

As the building of the school starts the opposition led by Ato Yirga, the school's director, makes every effort to nip the building of the school in the bud. As this continues Aynalem, the girl whom Haddis loves very much, is wed to Dagnachew. But the wedding becomes a failure because the bridegroom does not come to the wedding on time. Fitawarari Teka gives his daughter, Aynalem, to Haddis instead. This becomes a cause for Shitaye, Haddis's ex-girl friend to take revenge on him. At this stage the author employs foreshadowing to prepare us for the seriousness of the coming action. Thus Shitaye contemplates these words, "fire and hay" implying that

she and Haddis have become bitter enemies. Ato Yirga also starts sensing blood. Haddis leaves Supe because Tolosa tells him that Shitaye backed by Ato Yirga has decided to sue Haddis on the ground that he has made her pregnant.

As the plot progresses to its end Ato Yirga is murdered on the day that Haddis leaves for another place, Metu. This is coincidence. It seems logical for the security forces to suspect Haddis as the murderer since the two characters have never been in agreement. But later on the truth comes out and Haddis is freed.

The last part is particularly suspenseful. When we learn that the character who murdered Ato Yirga is Tolosa, we are initially surprised. But this has been subtly grounded by an earlier foreshadowing when Tolosa tells Haddis that "he will hit the snake on its head" referring to whoever is the accuser of Haddis."⁶⁴

The falling action ends with the death of Tolosa, and the fulfilment of Haddis's aspirations: the school is built and the love he has for Aynalem blooms as they start to live again peacefully.

In Yekey Kokeb Tirri Derebe's love for Hirut and the latter's non acceptance of this love is the main impetus for plot development. Other conflicts arise later on as the story progresses. Derebe becomes a revolutionary. This puts him in

a different camp from that of Hirut, the girl he loves very much and her parents all of whom are anti-revolutionaries. He cannot control his love for Hirut; he cannot forget the help her parents had given him before he became a revolutionary. And now that he is the chairman of the revolutionary squad of the area in which these people live, he has to struggle against them. So a conflict within himself arises: whether he should side with the revolution or with the girl whom he loves very much, but who is against the revolution. Much of the action of the novel develops out of this dilemma.

In the sub-plots we see conflicts between Ato Gulilat and Wozo Amsale, between Tesema and his sister Hirut and her boy friend Teferra. All are connected with the major conflict that leads to the main theme.

There are, however, some episodes which break the flow of the story and even distract the attention of the reader from the main theme. Much of chapter 6, for example, is devoted to a certain character's personal life which has little or no relationship to the theme of the novel. Chapter 12 which is a satiric commentary on journalists, though interesting in itself, does not seem to make the story progress.

The novel comes to a close with the protagonist understanding his mission in life: that of devoting himself to the struggle of human freedom. It comes to an end in about twenty-four hours. It starts on a certain night during the

early phase of the revolution and ends on the evening of the next day. It is through the use of extensive flashback that Baalu provides all the essential parts of the story. Derebe's love for Hirut, the development of his zeal for revolution, his relationship with Hirut's parents and all other necessary backgrounds are brought into light by means of flashback.

Foreshadowing is also used in the plot. That this foreshadowing is never overdone is a credit to Baalu. A look at one or two instances may suffice. In Emaalaf's play the protagonist is made to commit suicide.⁶⁵ And when Finot tells Derebe that Emaalaf himself has committed suicide in the next chapter we realize that the act of the protagonist in Emaalaf's play is a foreshadowing, or when Tesema tells his sister right from the very start that she takes things easy, the reader is given a hint of the danger in store for Hirut.⁶⁶

Derasiw's story progresses, to start with, because of the conflict of Sirak, the protagonist, with his wife. Closely interwoven with this main plot is the sub-plot which progresses due to the conflict between Seblework Tafesse and her husband Zemene.

Sirak finds that he is unable to make any progress with the novel he has started writing because he cannot be at peace with his wife. His self-imposed task also interferes with his love for Seblework. The disagreement with her husband and the

impression that Sirak has made on her make her fall in love with the latter. Thus as Sirak and Seble start a new love, the former's disagreement with his wife gets worse, and the story reaches its climax as he becomes ready to divorce his wife. At about this stage the other sub-plot which deals with the relationship between Sirak and the beginning writer, Eskender, comes to a close with the agreement of the two. This plot is important because it is concerned with the problems of artists in Ethiopia which is central to the novel's theme. Furthermore, it is Eskender who becomes influential in the resolution of the main conflict: the quarrel between Sirak and his wife, Tsige.

Another minor episode, but one that leads to the resolution of the main conflict is the discussion of the importance of literature between Bekele and Sirak. The former changes the attitude of Tsige towards literature.

The plot of Derasiw uses suspense and surprise as well as flashback and foreshadowing. Sirak's move to tell Zemene that he, Sirak, has had an affair with the former's wife gives the reader a surprise and the reader becomes very eager to know how Zemene would react to such a person. True to the reader's expectation Zemene strikes Sirak a heavy blow, but to the reader's surprise he immediately regrets his doing so and becomes friendly with Sirak.

The end generally is a surprise because the reader tends to think that divorce for Sirak and Tsige is inevitable, but the novel ends with the two becoming closer to one another. A closer look at the novel, however, shows that this ending has been foreshadowed earlier. For instance, that the love between Seble and Sirak does not last long has been hinted in a seemingly unimportant talk when the latter tells the former that lovers do not remain together.⁶⁷ This implied their imminent separation. Flashback is also used as in the narration of the development of love between Sirak and Seble.

It may be concluded that Baalu's novels have plots, which for the most part, progress out of logical causes and effects. All the plots use elements such as suspense and surprise. That some of his novels like Yehillina Dewal and Yekey Kokeb Tirri are at times crammed with unnecessary episodes that have no direct bearing on the plot can only be described as a weakness.

3.3 Characterization

Characterization is an important technique on which much of a novel's success depends. With this in mind, it is essential to examine some of the characters in the novels of Baalu Girma. By a brief but close scrutiny, we shall see whether their portrayal is convincing and life-like and whether

their actions are consistent with the characteristics they have. Furthermore, his method in drawing the physical appearances of his characters will be considered.

Aberra, the hero of Kadmas Bashager, is drawn convincingly. He is a 'been-to' who is able neither to plant himself firmly in the traditional values of his society nor to make himself adapt to the foreign culture he has been exposed to. His carelessness towards his parents coupled with violation of other traditional values such as fasting and going to church make him the typical young man of the 1960's who clearly registered that unhealthy fusion of western education and traditional values.

Aberra from the very beginning is described as a very restless and hectic person without any committed principles. All his actions are the outcome of such a personality. His quick marriage to Lulit (after only two months) is, for example, in harmony with his characteristics of hastiness. His lack of principle and indecisiveness can easily be seen in what he does. He is unable to commit himself to Hailemariam's advice or to develop a strong will in himself.

Aberra is life-like. He has all the emotions human beings have: love, hate, compassion, jealousy and desire. It is partly his feeling of love towards his mother, brother and sister-in-law that prevents him from accepting Hailemariam's advice. The element of hate is also in him and we see him hating people

like Gedlu and Tesema. We see his compassion when he feels pity for the beggars who trouble him for coins. But it is, perhaps, the element of jealousy that he possesses which brings about his tragic end, for it drives him to commit murder.

The other characters in Kadmas Bashager are also drawn faultlessly. Thus Hailemariam is portrayed as a typical intellectual of the time. He is a bit more determined than Aberra at least theoretically. His quest to express himself and to contribute something to his society is the result of his voracious reading. His concern for his friend Aberra and Ato Abate could be ascribed to his compassionate nature and to his depth of understanding as to why people like Ato Abate would act in the way in which they do.

The other important character in this novel is Lulit Tadesse. She exemplifies how people's behaviour and attitudes can be influenced by circumstances. Her hatred of men is the result of brutality inflicted upon her when she was very young: she had been brutally deflowered. But she is not as evil as she seems to be. Thus her cruelty to Gedlu Bezabeh, who loves her very much, may irritate us. However, she immediately gets the reader's sympathy when the other side of her character, which is compassionate is brought out as when she tries to help Aberra.

The minor characters such as Ato Abate, Wzo. Bafana and Efenesh are portrayed as convincingly as any traditionalists

could be drawn: they are all against those who violate the traditional way of life.

In Yehillina Dewol Haddis Sahile, the hero, is a person full of dedication to assist in building his country. He is a dreamer who dreams not of personal success but rather for the success and well being of Ethiopian society. It is difficult and perhaps impossible to meet such a character in real life. He is a Christ-like figure. There is a pun on his name which implies that he is an unprecedented character (for Haddis in Amharic means new). He stands in total contrast to Aberra Worku of Kadmas Bashager. If Aberra is to be blamed for his lack of principle and commitment, Haddis will surely be blamed for the excess of these qualities which make him somewhat unrealistic. And the lapse lies not with his actions, for these are in harmony with what he is, but with the rather exaggerated portrayal of him as an unworldly person.

Fitawrari Teka is depicted as a graceful and a kind person. A God-fearing man, we see him quoting the Bible time and again. His dislike of people who are not punctual is bitter. Thus his opposition to his daughter's marriage to a character who does not respect an appointment is, though unexpected, nevertheless in accordance with his characteristics.

Ato Yirga and lieutenant Ashine are important characters in this novel, but they are not drawn in depth. The former is a double-faced character. He represents these officials who always have lame excuses for what they do. His motto is patience. His views are no different from Ato Abate of Kadmas Bashager in that both of them struggle for the statusquo. Ashine on the other hand, is not a developed character. All we know is that he is a corrupt police officer.

The interesting character in Yehillina Dewol is Zinash because she manages to capture the reader's sympathy. She is a woman who lives in the past. Conscious of her old age, she feels that the beauty of youth has left her. She tries to get it back by recalling the memories of it. This in a way is typical of all prostitutes of her age who mostly think of past times when they were young and beautiful.

In Yekey Kokeb Tirri, Derebe is drawn with the basic characteristics of human beings such as ambition and love. He is not always courageous and determined, but at times indecisive as is even the bravest man in real life. His love for Hirut is not a sudden one, but the result of their long stay together.

One may argue, and legitimately so, that the change in Derebe towards revolutionary zeal is too sudden. But given the love, politness and compassion that Derebe has from the very start, perhaps it is not so difficult to accept the change.

Derebe's actions spring from his characteristics that have just been mentioned. Thus it is out of compassion that Derebe saves the life of that pathetic old man who hid his arms despite the government's urge to surrender them.⁶⁸ We also see Derebe could not make up his mind as to what must be done to Hirut and her parents who are anti-revolutionaries. This is rightly so. Haven't they helped him in the days when he had nothing? After all, he had lived with them and as a human being he naturally has an attachment towards them.

In his outlook Derebe is different from Aberra of Kadmas Bashager and Haddis of Yehillina Dewol. Unlike them, he believes that change can only be brought about when a system of government changes. The uncertainty of Aberra or the haste and impatience of Haddis are not to be found in Derebe. He is an extremely patient character who is very sure of his moves. Perhaps, it is a weakness of the novelist to make Derebe so patient thereby raising him above any earthly figure that we know of.

Hirut Gulilat in Yekey Kokeb Tirri is, perhaps, a strange character in Ethiopian novels. It is not her adventurous nature nor her restless attitude that make her unique to the Ethiopian society, for these are all typical characteristics of youth. It is her extreme openness towards sex that makes an Ethiopian reader think that she does not belong to his society, where women are extremely shy about sex. She is unlike Lulit of Kadmas Bashager who never loses the reader's sympathy. Hirut in

Yekey Kokeb Tirri is portrayed as a girl with nothing good in her. We are not given to know why she has become so. We see her disliking everybody. She is even made to dislike her mother for no apparent reason. In brief, she is all an arrant girl. This is perhaps a weakness on the part of Baalu, for it seems that he forgets that there is an element of goodness, however small it may be, in every evil person. Baalu fails to bring out this when portraying Hirut.

The other characters in Yekey Kokeb Tirri are so well portrayed that the reader never forgets them. These are characters like Wzo Amsale, Ato Gulilat, Emaalaf and Finot.

Wzo Amsale and Ato Gulilat are typical feudal characters who perhaps show and tell the characteristics of the feudal class more than, say, a historical work on the subject.

Both Wzo Amsale and Ato Gulilat are drawn as obese persons. Their obesity is surely the result of doing nothing. Their surprise at the revolution makes them think that the end of the world has come. We follow them very eagerly. These are characters who fear and then become a little courageous; who hope and then immediately become desperate. They become happy and sad as anybody does in life. Their hollow pride towards the masses and their inability to accept change coupled with their belief that the poor must be despised make us look at them as the ignorant feudalists which they undoubtedly are.

Finot and Emaalaf in this novel are characters who are very much interested in literature. The latter in fact is a literary artist who believed that the purpose of a writer is to find truth and beauty. His act of suicide is the result of his feeling of guilty consciousness about his inability to live up to his principles. He shares certain views with Hailemariam of Kadmas Bashager in that both of them among other things, like to write about the beauty of the world. Both dislike marriage; both also have premature tragic ends, the difference being only in the way these ends have been brought about. Hailemariam is shot to death while Emaalaf commits suicide.

Finot in Yekey Kokeb Tirri is a humanitarian. This is symbolized by her love of birds.⁶⁹ Her effort to be helpful to Derebe, is thus, the result of her characteristics. Her highly sophisticated views such as her belief in free love is alien to most Ethiopians. Thus her attitude towards love, frankness and the relationship of the sexes must surely have come from the books she reads, since she is a woman of wide reading. Hence her openness that extends even to the showing of her private letter to Derebe, is, for instance, still in harmony with her characteristics.

The other minor characters also capture the interest of the reader. Getachew Yeshawalul and all those characters who by profession are journalists never disappear from the reader's memory.

Sirak Araaya in Derasiw is drawn as a character with no mental peace because of the situation he is in. He has qualities like courage, determination, and compassion. It is these qualities that contribute to the solution of the difficulties he faces. Thus his reaction to making a courageous and genuine criticism of a new writer's work and the unfolding of his own illegal love affair with Seble to the latter's husband testify to his sincerity and courage.

His compassion could be compared to that of Scobie in The Heart of the Matter.⁷⁰ But where Scobie fails to resolve the love and pity he had for both his wife and his lover and thus destroys himself, Sirak becomes courageous enough to remain loyal to his wife and convinces the other to live in peace with her husband.

Tsige in Derasiw is typical of the uneducated Ethiopian house wife she has become (she had been a prostitute before her marriage to Sirak). All her deeds show her lack of education. Thus her actions like that of trying to use magic in order to make Sirak stop writing are consistent with what she is. That such a conservative character like Tsige's mind comes to love literature in an instant explanation of its importance is perhaps too sudden for us.

Among the minor characters, the blind begger and the limping Mandefro whose nickname is 'Teacher' are striking. They are typical of those old people who are happy and strong despite their disabilities and poverty.

Thus with the exception of a few lapses that have been pointed out elsewhere in the discussion, Baalu succeeds well with characterization. His characters are all varied; they all have different traits that mark their individualism. These distinct marks do not only come out in their inner characteristics but in their physical appearances as well, although to a lesser degree. In fact, at times it must be admitted that the similarities in the appearances of some of Baalu's characters bore us.

Baalu Girma's technique of portraying the physical appearances of his characters as they look at themselves in mirrors is a common one that appears in almost all his novels. The method has an advantage: it avoids artificiality. It is, however, Baalu's camera-like eye which meticulously describes how his characters look like that is striking. Witness, for instance, how Baalu describes the physical appearance of Aberra, the hero of Kadmas Bashager, as as this character looks himself in the mirror:

. . . [የቀኛ ዳግ] ቢሆንም ፀጠይ ያለመ ታው
 ፊት ገርጥ ታለ:: የአበራ መልክ ቀንጂና
 ትላለቀ አይኖቹ ላይ ነው:: ፑርፑርዎ ያሉት
 ቀንደባቸው ከከፈና ችው ወጣ ወጣ ላሉት አይኖቹ
 ለ ዩ ውበት ይለገሷቸዋል። ሽጭሎቹ የተከተከከሉ
 ይመስላሉ:: በፊት በመጠኑ ገለጥ ባያደርገው
 ኖሮ የገንባሩ ማጠር ጉልተ በታየ ነበር :: ለ
 ፍንጭው ስለከከ ስሉ ይርደ ቀዳዳዎቹ በመጠኑ
 በጽ ስፋት ያሉ ፍቶቹ :: ?¹

Although his face is yekeydama /app. light-brown/ it has become pale because of lack of sunshine. It is in his large eyes that Aberra's beauty lies. His fair and well-set up eyelashes generously give their marked beauty for his big eyes that seem to bulge out of their eyelids. The eyelids seem to have been trimmed by a razor. Had his hair not been getting thinner in the front, the smallness of his forehead might have been noticeable. His nose is straight with the nostrils getting a little wider at the bottom.

This is the way Baalu describes the character's appearance bringing out every minute detail. The hero of Derasiw, Sirak,⁷² and Wzo Amsale of Yekey Kokeh Tirri,⁷³ only to mention two, are described this way.

Another favourite technique in describing physical appearances in the novels of Baalu is the use of light. Thus characters are made to put on lights, or made to come where lights are to be found. Such a technique makes the reader feel that the author is describing the character's appearance accurately. Thus Hailemariam in Kadmas Bashager puts on the lights before being described by Baalu.⁷⁴ In Yehillina Dewol the hero and Shitaye are described in the light of a lamp.⁷⁵

Semblances in appearances in the novels of Baalu make us think that he is either unable to imagine other kinds of appearances or thinks that people of the same profession, particularly artists have almost the same kind of appearance.

For instance, Hailemariam, the literary character in Kadmas Bashager has, among other things, the following description:

ጸላዎት የመሰለው ጠገኒ አድጎ ገፍሯል . . .
ጉንጃቱ ላይ ያሉት አጥገቶች አንደኛው ቁጭ
ሰው ላይ ያፈጣሉ: 76

His dark hair has grown long . . . His
cheekbones which are cocked up like
rocks stare at a person

And Sirak in Derasiw shares the above description with a
slight change as:

የተፈጥሮ ጫካ የመሰለው ጠገኒ . . .
ጠላ የጠፋው ቃለቻ አስመሰሎታል . . . የጉን
ጭቻ አጥገቶች አንደኛው አለት ተጭዋል . . . 77

His hair which looks like a natural
forest . . . has made him look like a
confused magician . . . His cheekbones
are cocked up like rocks . . .

Thus it is clear how similar the descriptions are.
Perhaps, Baalu has forgotten that he had used such specifications
for his literary character in his first novel, when he repeats
it in his fourth novel, Derasiw, which came out ten years later.

Finally, there seems to be a close connection between
a character's physical appearance and his/her behaviour in most
instances. Gedlu Bezabeh of Kadmas Bashager, for instance, is
drawn as a person with an ax-like face. Obviously this is not

a good face, and his characteristics are worse than his face. He is selfish and showy. In Yekey Kokeb Tirri the administrator of a division in the Ministry for which Derebe works is a limping person. His physical disability corresponds to his reputation for corruption and intrigue. In the same novel a one-handed character is presented as being the most cruel person that ever walked on earth.

Baalu's heroes are drawn as basically good men. They have always a good complexion and colour, to start with. They are thus teim, yakaydama or key*. Aberra of Kadmas Bashager and Derebe of Yekey Kokeb Tirri are drawn as handsome. Haddis of Yehillina Dewel or Sirak in Derasiw are not bad looking. And if they ever seem to look so, it is because of worry and discomfort. The efforts all these heroes make are essentially worthwhile to the society in which they live though in varying degrees. Thus good deeds seem to come only from lovable characters.

To sum up, Baalu, while portraying physical appearances seems to be fond of details. He tries to show that no two individuals are exactly alike outwardly in the same way that they differ inwardly. But some of his characters look so much like one another that one feels that the author is not always able to succeed in giving distinct features while portraying physical looks. In Baalu's novels physical looks are associated with deeds. Thus a physically repulsive character is mostly

* All are colours of skin most favoured by Ethiopians

drawn as having bad characteristics as well.

3.4 Dialogue

Dialogue is an important means by which a novelist moves his story along. There are certain features that contribute to the success of good dialogue. It must be natural, and to the point. Furthermore, not only should dialogue help to characterize the speaker but should be in harmony with the character.

In Baalu Girma's novels the conversations are of varied length. Some are short; others are long. In most cases Baalu seems to be successful with brief dialogue. Thus, he has that ability of making his characters say a lot in a few words.

Baaluu, however, seems a little far from success with some of the longer dialogues that are particularly apparent in Yehillina Dewol, Yekey Kokeb Tirri and Derasiw. These long dialogues not only tend to be pedantic but are lacking in exactness and relevance. Thus, some characters in these novels indulge themselves in marathon dialogues to the extent that they find it hard to come back to the point they have initially made. Thus such sentences as 'what was it that I wanted to tell you?' become common with some characters who after lengthy speeches seem to forget the point they have started to make

and ask the listening characters to remind them as to the right line of their talks. An example of such kind of lengthy dialogue where the character gets lost is the one between Sirak and Seble in Derasiw.⁷⁸

Dialogue can tell where a person comes from, what age he is and what education he has. The dialogues in Baalu's novels are no different. For instance, that Ato Gulilat and Wzo Amsale are feudal can be discovered within what they say. Thus Gulilat in a bitter indictment of the revolution wonders how, in his own words, 'the sons and daughters of soil tillers and wood-cutters could try to administer the country,' adding that 'it is only by God that an administrator is appointed.'⁷⁹ This is just an example of how feudal people used to speak of the poor peasants.

Characters who are old have their own way of speaking. Aberra's mother in Kadmas Bashager, for instance, unmistakably speaks in a way traditional Ethiopian mothers do. Thus her talk frequently refers to illness as is the case with most aged Ethiopian women. She warns her son, Aberra to get married, but all of a sudden she starts talking about her illness in this manner: "my leg swells, I run out of breath, these days I feel cold".⁸⁰ Tsige, a typical traditionalist woman in Derasiw has the following to say to an elderly character who enquires after the former's health:

“የመኛ ለ አባባቻ፡፡ ሰዎችን አዘህ ለባ
ሠር አንድ አሳት ያቃጠላል በሽታዬን ያወ
ቀለጥ የለም፡፡ ሀኪም ቤተሥ ሰለጥ፡፡
የዘመኑ ሀኪሞቻችን በሽታዬን ትተው የሚመደቡት
ሌላ ነገር ነው፡፡ ከባልሽ ጋር አንዳት
ናቸሁ . . . በተሻ ጭንቀት ይሰጣሉ
ጭንቀት ተለብሻ ጭንቀት ጭንቀት ተለብሻ፡፡
ዘር አባባቻዬ ይጥፋና አርም በየ ተቻጥሏሁ . . .” 81

"I feel ill, my well-wisher. These days I feel burning a little down below my chest. Nobody has been able to identify what my illness is. I am bored with the hospitals. Instead of giving you treatment, doctors these days ask you other questions: how do you get along with your husband? . . . Do you feel happy at home? . . . Do you feel strain? - Wonders will never cease! Let them melt into the thin air! I have already sworn not to go to them again."

These are just typical words that one hears from older Ethiopian women. They bring out Tsige's lack of education. She also wonders, for instance, why modern doctors want to know about her relationship with her husband. It is beyond Tsige's comprehension that knowledge of a patient's background could be helpful to the doctor in carrying out his job.

The young in Yekey Kokeb Tirri speak like typical boys and girls of their age here in Addis Ababa. Characters like Hirut, Teferra and Tesema are no doubt city teenagers as their speech could tell us in an instant.

It would be possible to say that Baalu as a keen observer of people, is generally successful in capturing the various kinds

of speeches that come out of different people. Hence in Baalu's novels dialogues and the types of personages who speak them are in harmony. This is maintained from his highly educated artist characters who speak of life, beauty and truth down to the staunch traditionalists who argue for fasting and lavish marriages. And because almost all characters speak like they should, authenticity, for the most part, seems to be no problem.

It is, however, the dialogues that lead to unnecessary digressions that could be cited as the weakness of Baalu Girma. Such dialogues do not help in the development of the themes. This is perhaps because Baalu is unable to resist the temptation of raising various issues and making his characters give comments. But since this is done at the expense of exactness, it ought to be corrected.

Generally speaking, the dialogue in Baalu's novels conveys the sense of individual identity. It is also instrumental in drawing out his novels' underlying themes.

3.5 Language

However imaginative and observant he is, the novelist will not be able to achieve his purpose if he does not use clear, pleasant and evocative language in his work. Language, being a device by which the novelist communicates his work to others, must then, be used effectively.

Baalu's language in his novels is simple, clear and natural. Unlike the works of such prominent Ethiopian authors as Tsegaye Gebremedhin and Dagnachew Worku, the novels of Baalu, particularly the three that are set in urban Addis Ababa carefully avoid elaborateness and complexity. They are all direct and well within the comprehension of the common man. Nevertheless, they manage to come to grips with important issues in life.

It is with the figures of speech and humour that appear in his language that part of Baalu's success lies. Baalu's language employs elements such as symbolism, imagery, metaphor simile and irony.

The use of symbolism appears in all Baalu's novels. These symbols, more often than not, are vivid and add strength and clarity to what Baalu wants to get across to the reader. In Kadmas Bashager, the sky which is presented as ~~suffering~~ from its heavy rain which it has not poured into the earth yet, is a reminder of the situation that Aberra is in. The sky at the moment is suffering from its pregnancy. But when the suffering is over and it begins to rain, it starts to give life. It is so with Aberra in this novel. He is not at peace with himself, but when he is able to find a sense of purpose in life (as he did in the end) regeneration is brought both to him and by implication to the society he lives in.

There is a word Aberra is associated with in this novel: cabbage. This word as used in the Amharic language symbolizes weakness and uselessness. It symbolizes Aberra's worthlessness until the time he went to prison where he became determined to use his gifts.

His other novels also scintillate with symbolism most of which is taken from nature. Thus rain in Yehillina Dewol not only brings an end to the drought-stricken area of Supe, but is a symbol of a better life that is brought about by the building of the school. In Yekey Kokeb Tirri, Hirut, the girl who never cares for her lovers is associated with a picture of a queen bee which she hangs on a wall in at least one instance. Surely, the men who have affairs with her suffer a lot, even if they do not die instantly like male bees which are unfortunate enough to mate their queen. As far as Hirut's lovers are concerned, their fate is a little less unfortunate than such male bees, for Teferra dies because of her and Derebe only narrowly escapes death.

Perhaps it is Derasiw that is most rich in symbolism. The mekuadesha (gizzard) which is a popular symbol of oneness in the Ethiopian society is shared by Sirak and his wife Tsige as they eat dorwat (stewed chicken). Though they eat it while they are on bad terms with each other, its symbolism of peace for the eaters holds true; and all becomes well in the end. Thus the symbolism here is used as foreshadowing.

Perhaps none is more striking than the symbolism of the whining dog, Chilomader, in Derasiw. The dog's owner, Bekele, is on a mission to the war front. The dog keeps on whining until the time Bekele comes back. The whining is not only of the dog's. It is symbolic of the tears shed by the children, wives and relatives of those whose kin have gone to the battle field to give their blood. This symbolism also gets its power of effectiveness from the contrast it draws. Here Baalu Girma seems to suggest that when an animal like Chilomader feels so sad for his master, the degree of sorrow we human beings should feel to the ones who are ready to die for us must by far excel that of animals.

Finally a few things must be said of the maimed elder Mandefro and the blind beggar that we come across in this novel. We see these characters overcoming their disabilities and living in happiness. They are still strong despite the poverty they have fallen into. They are symbols of courage, vigour and determination.

One of the hallmarks of Baalu's language is the use of similes and images that make his meaning more forceful and vivid. Thus Aberra's eyes which have become red because of heavy drinking are described as 'looking like unclean ditchwater.'⁸² In Yekey Kokeb Tirri Wzo Amsale becomes as 'angry as a monkey that is unable to find a tree to climb on.'⁸³ In the same novel a bony character walks slowly as if 'afraid that his bone joints could give out a sound like that of a dry door without oil.'⁸⁴

In Derasiw the bureaucrat who is cunning and is always with the wind is described as 'slippery as a scrap of soap'.⁸⁵

There are images that are consistently used in almost all of the novels. Thus the image of a beautiful woman is used to describe nature. By using this image Baalu presents nature not only as beautiful but also as secretive. These secrets being made known only to those who are prepared to labour hard.

Another very popular image in the novels of Baalu is the bud of a rose. This is used to bring out the beauty of the fair sex. In as much as buds of roses capture the eyes of onlookers, the rose-like lips of the women in Baalu's novels attract the male. Thus Aberra in Kadmas Bashager, Baalu comments, looks at the lips of Lulit which look like 'a bud of a rose'.⁸⁶ Haddis in Yehillina Dewol compares the smell of his love's breath to the smell of a rose.⁸⁷ In Yekey Kokeb Tirri Hirut's lips are described as looking like a bud of a rose.⁸⁸ In Derasiw the imagery of a bud of a rose appears so often that one is unable to overlook it.

Baaluu's language is precise and economical for the most part. There is every reason to believe that he does not fumble with words as a beginner does. His diction though generally good, is not without weakness. The weakness comes partly out of over simplification. Some of the short sentences become so abrupt that they tend to have a metallic rhythm, monotonous to the ear. Here is an example from Yehillina Dewol where Baalu describes the

situation during the drought.

. . . አዘግሪ ቻፕ ጠሲን ቀናቻቸውን
 . . . ጠቻገት ከተሉ ቁጭተኛል፡፡
 ዘፈን የለም፡፡ ብር የለም፡፡ ጠጅ የለም... 89

. . . Azmaries have long stopped keying
 up their masinkos* . . . No song.
 No money. No tej.**

or of the behaviour of Sirak's baby, Yohannes, in Derasiw

ቤተ ጉሰጥ ጭታ የለውም፡፡ የጸጠንሰ ተንሺ
 ልጁ ሲሃሠ አገር ጦዳር ይጠበቃል፡፡ ይጭሃል፡፡
 ይቦር ቃል፡፡ እቃ ያሃላል፡፡ ያጠር ዳል፡፡ ይሰበራል፡፡
 ይሰቃል፡፡ 90

He [Sirak] does not have peace at home.
 When Yohannes, the little child gets up,
 no place is enough for him. He cries,
 frisks. He picks up things, brings down,
 breaks, laughs.

Such sentences appear significantly in all his novels.
 Instead of providing variety, they bore us. Furthermore it
 seems Baalu is not careful with the words in such sentences.
 For instance in the sentence 'He cries, frisks', crying and
 frisking are two opposite words. If a baby starts crying he
 does not stop doing this all of a sudden and becomes playful
 as the sentence suggests. Thus logic in such a sentence is
 defeated by Baalu's search for rhetoric.

Baalu also seems to be confused with the meanings of certain
 Amharic words. For instance abasaral is associated with passing
 on to the others something good and pleasant. But Baalu is in

*Traditional musical instruments.

**Native drink made of honey.

error when he comments on a repellent scene as:

. . . አየሩ . . . በየዛፋ ጡስ ምን ያለውን
ክርፋት በየቦታ በየገንጠ ሥር ያለውን ቀርፍት
ላፍንጣ ያበሰረል* : 91

. . . The air gratifies* to the nose
the stink in the trees and the stench
in and around the ditch and the wall.

Thus the smell which is offending to the nose has been considered here as a blessing because the underlined word is misused.

Such minor errors should not, however, distract us from some of the evocative language he uses either in describing scenes or characters. At times the prose becomes poetic, penetrating deep into the heart of the reader. Here is an example where Baalu describes the sky of Addis Ababa as the sun goes to set, 'to die its daily death,' to borrow his own words. He seems very much aware of the beauty and majesty of the scene. Thus Baalu proceeds with vivid images:

ገን ሰማዩ ለማንም ወበተን አይ ነፍገም :: የአዲስ
አበባ ሰማይ ጡቁር ሲያከርፍ፣ ገም አልባ ሆኖ ባህር
መስሎ ሲንጣለል ነገር መስሎ ሲዘገገገገም ወይም የጥጥ
ንደፍ በማመስሎ ስሰ ገጥቶ ተጠብ ከጠይቀ ጋር
ሲስቅ የሚያየው የለም :: ዘም በሎ በቻውን
ይቀጣል፣ ያከርፋል፣ ፈገገ ይላል፣ ይሰቃል፣ አይናፋር
ይሆንና አንድ ተጣቲም ይቀላል ያዲስ አበባ ሰማይ :: 92

* Underlining mine

But the sky never withhold its beauty from any one. And yet nobody looks at the sky of Addis ababa even as it becomes dark and angry or as it gets mistless and pellucid like the sea, or as it becomes spotted like a tiger or laughs with the sun, beautified by the thin thread-like mist. Alone and quietly, it gets angry indignant; it smiles, laughs; it becomes shy and blushes as red as tomato - the sky of Addis Ababa

Thus the sky has been personified. The simile 'pellucid like the sea', refers to the sky's majesty while the word 'tiger' refers to the strength of it. The passage, by means of these and other vivid images makes the reader understand the beauty and strength of nature.

Baalu is remarkable for capturing scenes. Here is a scene that is unforgettably stamped into the reader's mind and will make him remember the at one time most popular dancing place in Addis Ababa known as Wube Bereha. Any one who used to have a night out for a dance in that place will surely live his experience again as Baalu Girma probes into the thoughts of Zinash, a one-time famous prostitute of the place:

ዝናሽ የሀሳብ ገዛላን ቀጥላለች በጠፍ ወረቃ የጩቤ
ሰለት በላጭ ሲል . . . ገብ ገብ ተርጾስጾስ፣
ኡኡታ፣ እገታ የጩቤ በረሀው ጃገና ወዳቀ ውሀ፣
ጡሀ ሲል-የፖሊሶች ሪቨካ ረጃ ወይ ገራ ወይ ቀን
ውዜቃው ተለሰ ነፍስ ሲዘራ ወገብ ቀንጥል በሉ
እግር እስኪዘል ድረስ ዳገቢራው ሲቀጥል የደርሶ
ወልስ ፍቅር በየጊዳው ሲደራ ውስኪ እንደውሃ
ሲረስ በር እንደዋዛ ሲጠዘዝ- እይወት ፍጥነት
ቷን ስተወዎር... 93

Zinash has continued travelling with her thoughts [and recaptures the scene] when the sharp edge of a knife flashes in the moon-lit night . . . fighting, hullabaloo, hubbub, shrill cries - when the floored hero of Wube Bereha begs for water - whistle of the police-escape to the left, to the right - and again the music comes to life - the dance resumes, it goes on untill the waist almost breaks apart and the leg becomes so feeble as to let down the body- cheap sex at the back rooms start flourishing - whisky poured like water- money spent extravagantly - and when life becomes hectic . . .

Such was Wube Bereha. This could have been a typical scene of a night at a place like that which was a no man's land. The passage brings out the drunkenness, fighting and the dissipated life the young had fallen into. Baalu manages to keep his eye on every detail of the scene: from the actual fighting and the fall of the hero to the resumption of the dance. The language is simple and clear. The overall effect is that Baalu makes us relive this particular episode as we read the passage.

One of the strongest points of Baalu's language is its use of irony. These are at times bitter and biting. In Yehillina Dewol there is a character nicknamed 'Mao'. This became his nickname, Baalu tells us, after this character once led a peaceful demonstration of the masses in the metropolis. The irony becomes superb when such a person who claims to stand for the poor speaks the following while he is on temporary duty in the rural area:

ሰደተ ላይ ነኝ - ለገደ ዓመት የገዘባዎ
ኑር አድገት ጫኒሰ ቴር ቀጥሮኝ ነው የመጣሁት::
በአዲስ አበባ ጭጭ ኑር ሰደተ ነው . . .
ሄደህ የግትደሰተበት ቦታ የለም . . . 94

I am in exile-for a year. I came here because the Ministry of Community Development employed me-for research. Life out of Addis Ababa is exile . . . There is no place you go to relax . . .

The character is speaking to Haddis in Illubabor region. The irony here is unmistakable. Baalu implies that such a character who has been given the name of 'Mao' does not live up to it. Put to a place where theory must be transferred to practice, pseudo- revolutionaries who are represented by this character lack courage and determination. Here Baalu laughs at such people.

In Yekey Kokeb Tirri Baalu's irony has a sharp cutting edge. Typical of an ironist's fashion, Baalu utilizes the device of naivety. Thus some characters are deliberately made to be naive and the reader cannot help smiling at their follies. The naive waiter character named Melkamu in this novel is a case in point. Such irony admirably shows the effectiveness of the use of the naive waiter's mind as the reflector of events. Much of the excellence of the irony depends on the ability of Baalu Girma to penetrate the waiter's innocent but ignorant thinking. Baalu uses the same technique in Derasiw where Tsige, the wife of the protagonist, Sirak, is portrayed as uneducated

and innocent woman whose naivety helps the author to bring out the erroneous attitude of such persons towards reading novels.

Baalu Girma like most African writers uses extensive proverbs in his novels. The proverbs are particularly used with older people. This is aptly so because it is the older people who often use proverbs in real life. The young, it seems do not usually acquire the enormous wealth of proverbs. It is through these proverbs that the old express their appreciation or hatred of certain social values.

In Kasmas Bashager the ~~minister~~ who is presumably old advises Aberra to be patient saying 'trousers put on while running come off soon in time of haste.'⁹⁵ A priest in Yehillina Dewol advances his argument that the youth is not farsighted with the proverb, 'dough kneaded by the youth does not last for supper.'⁹⁶ In Yekey Kokeb Tirri Wzo Amsale warns her husband not to have faith in man saying, 'a fox says do not believe a man unless he is burried.'⁹⁷ In fact both Atጋ Gulilat and Amsale use a number of proverbs in this novel. The proverbs in Baalu's novels not only incorporate vivid images but contribute to the colour of his style.

Of all Ethiopian authors none is as humorous as Baalu Girma. Humour in Baalu's novels appears with the physical portrayal of characters, with their actions and dialogues. Wzo Amsale in Yekey Kokeb Tirri, for instance, is described as a

barrel-like woman with big behind that seems to have unusually swollen upwards and an exaggerated paunch in the front. One cannot help laughing as he watches her trying to put on trousers.⁹⁸ The very physical appearance of such a character, thus, makes us laugh. A character in Derasiy is described as a person who does not have much control over his saliva and who thus sprinkles it at whomever he talks to as if it is holy water.⁹⁹ Aberra's violation of the traffic lights as he drives Lulit to his home is caused by so much haste to make love to her in Kadmas Bashager.¹⁰⁰ The action is humorous and we are made to laugh.

The most humorous scenes in Baalu's novels are perhaps best found in Yekey Kokeb Tirri. Two episodes are particularly striking. These are the episodes where the aged Ato Gulilat becomes happy and frisks like a child at the sight of the cat that caught the bird and the Horaye Bar Scene where characters, most of whom are portrayed as loyal slaves to drink crack jokes under the influence of liquor, absolutely unaware of the shootings outside.

Humour does not only lie in how characters act or in what they say. The author's comments on certain characters are also occasionally humorous. The slovenly character, Balcha Wako in Kadmas Bashager is easily identified, Baalu tells us, because 'the stink of the character's armpit, and shoes are always in the front.'¹⁰¹ In general, humour in Baalu's novels

creates a relaxed atmosphere. Furthermore, the author uses it to deride backward attitudes. Thus humour for Baalu is a powerful device for commentary.

Baalu's language achieves its purposes. The device he uses like metaphors, irony, and humour all make his novels clear and intelligible. Furthermore the frequent use of the present tense gives the reader a sense of immediacy, a feeling that the action is taking place at the moment of reading. Despite all these, there are weaknesses. But these should never be exaggerated, for if they are weighed against the strength, the latter will surely outweigh them. But it is legitimate to point out some of his weaknesses and this chapter may be brought to a close with a brief mention of them.

First the use of excessive cliches in the novels bores the reader. Thus almost all women characters in all the novels are described as having round faces. Almost all the young women characters let down their lower lips as they talk or move their necks as in eskesta*. Characters in Baalu's novels always wonder how a shrill voice comes out of a fat person. Stale figures or speech like 'the sun looked like a glaring ball of fire' or 'her breast looks like a peeled onion' are common. All these occur again and again so that the reader feels the author has exhausted all his means of expression. Furthermore, Baalu's comments on certain scenes in a novel reappear without any change and the

*A type of traditional Amhara dance which is done by the rhythmical movement of the neck and the shoulders.

reader feels that the author had forgotten what he said of the same scene earlier. An instance of this could be found on page 86 of Yekey Kokeb Tirri where Baalu almost exactly repeats the description of 'the floor board that looks like a face left with the marks of small pox,' that appeared earlier on page 66 of the same novel.

There are also a few instances where Baalu fails to evoke his reader's emotions. For example, when the hero of Kadmas Bashager suddenly hears of the unexpected death of his best friend, he simply says 'too much worry makes you laugh!'¹⁰² This obviously does not move us. It seems Baalu, here, is unable to bring out the feelings of a man who has lost a dear friend.

Despite such limitations of Baalu Girma's language, a few essential points must be emphasized. First it is geared to the development of narrative. Furthermore, simplicity, clarity and directness lie at the core of his language. The sprinkle of humour which is rare in Amharic novels adds a distinctive flavour to his works.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

My intention in this study has been to concentrate on the meanings of the themes of Baalu's novels to his society and humanity as well as on the validity of his techniques.

The theme of self-evaluation is the first concern of Baalu Girma. He urges the need to evaluate oneself so as to discover one's ability and talent so that these may properly be utilized by the community. His criticism of those who despite their education have not been able to find purpose in life is justifiable for life has a goal and it is the task of the living to know and aim at the correct mark.

Like many other novelists of developing countries, Baalu's preoccupation with change and progress appears in his works. For him education and hard work are the main catalytic agents that bring about progress. His urgings for an individual effort towards building the nation had been a distinctive feature of his early novels written before the revolution. In his later novels, he has, however, been convinced that significant change could only be attained by means of organized struggle. Put another way, individual efforts must be supplemented by mass efforts.

The theme of the problems of the Ethiopian writer is unique to Baalu Girma's works, since no other Amharic novel has this theme as a preoccupation. In his discussion of this subject, Baalu mentions such major obstacles as lack of sufficient publishing houses, illiteracy and other inimical circumstances that curtail the efforts of the Ethiopian writer. These are problems whose solution may not come soon. These also partly explain why there is not much literary activity in Ethiopia nowadays. Baalu's contribution here is that not only does he forcefully bring out the sad position of the Ethiopian author to everybody's attention but also struggles hard to write despite all the inconveniences.

Apart from presenting a realistic treatment of the theme of modernism and traditionalism, Baalu touches on ever growing social evils such as corruption, prostitution, and points out the need for change in such an environment.

It is perhaps the theme of life that gives Baalu's novels a touch of universality. This theme has rarely been a concern of other Ethiopian novelists and where it is, it is always treated as meaningless and absurd whose final mark is only death. In Baalu's novels life is not only discussed more widely and persuasively than it is discussed in all contemporary Amharic novels, but is looked at optimistically as something that is cheerfull and man's dearest possession.

Baalu also puts the purpose of life in clear words: human life must devote itself to the struggle of making every man happy and free. Although Baalu has always been optimistic about the future of human life ever since his early novels, such a view seems to be heightened in his later works. This could probably be ascribed to the influence of Marxism.

The relation between the sexes, a theme central to all Baalu's novels in varying degree, is examined in detail. That sex is an important factor in human life and there is nothing bad about it, is clearly shown in almost all his works. Baalu's courage to deal with such subject is not only mere novelty in his novels but a great blow to the age old social taboo that looks upon sex as sinful and shameful.

All these are thus important themes because they are meaningful and relevant to the Ethiopian society; some are also pertinent to society anywhere. As Baalu has shown a concern for such realities, he has also taken care how these could be communicated best to others by means of apt literary devices.

First Baalu narrates his story in the third person. This method, among others, has enabled him to probe into his characters' inner thoughts or to detach himself and present the scene objectively. The epistolary method is also a feature of Baalu's novels.

The plots in Baalu's novels not only proceed out of logical conflicts, but also use such essentials as suspense, surprise, foreshadowing and flashback. The cramming of unnecessary events that occasionally appear in some of the stories of his novels, however, hinder the development of some of the plots.

Perhaps what distinguishes Baalu and places him higher than most Ethiopian authors is his technique of characterization. His efforts to go deep into the behaviour of his characters and the causes that influence their actions are surely marks of excellent craftsmanship.

Although some of the conversations in Baalu's novels are a bit lengthy and tend to digress from the pertinent themes, most of them are however short and well-suited to the characters speaking them. Thus plausibility seems to be no problem.

Baalu's language uses similes, metaphors, symbolism and irony. Some of the figures of speech, however, are used repeatedly in his novels to the extent that they lack freshness. The prose generally avoids long winding sentences that are customary in most Amharic novels. Instead simple, clear and short sentences are used for the most part. It is also fair to point out that Baalu must guard against excessive colloquialisms that have already crept into his works.

Whatever the weaknesses of Baalu's novels may be the fact is tht all his works not only make interesting reading but aid in the struggle to better the milieu we live in. Thus they all display compansion for the poor, and a concern for social problems. Above all they celebrate life by indicating the intense joys which it is capable of giving.

NOTES

1. Mesfin Habtemariam, "Yekey Kokeb Tirri," Yekatit III year No. 5 (May, 1972) pp. 26-27.
2. See Bisrat Gabriel Franswa, "Aberra Worku Ye-Kadmas Bashager wanna getsebahiri" (unpublished B. A. thesis, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, June 1972)
3. Girma Zenebe, "Yeamarigna Redgim Liboled Abeit Chibetoch" (unpublished B. A. thesis, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, 1973) pp 46-64
4. Fekade Azeze, "Libolled Bedhire Abioyt Ethiopia" (paper presented at the Seminar on Fine Arts, Addis Ababa, August 1974) pp. 14-36.
5. Zemenay Lake, "A comparative study of Kadmas Bashager and Derasiw" (unpublished B. A. disseratation, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, 1981)
6. Akilil Michel, "Ye-Faalu Girma Direset Atsasaf Silt" (unpublished B. A. thesis Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, 1974)
7. R.K. Molvaer, Traditions and Change in Ethiopia (The Netherlands: E. J. Brill Leiden, 1980) passim.
8. Albert S. Gerard, Four African Literatures: Xhosa, Sotho, Zulu, Amharic (Berkley: University of California press, 1971) p. 282
9. Ibid., P. 331
10. Baalu Girma, "Occupational Therapy," News and views, vol IV No. 5 (November, 1960) pp. 4-5.
11. Baalu Girma, "Men of Two Worlds," Menen Vol. XI No. 3 (Feburary, 1967) pp. 38-40.
12. Baalu Girma, "Beyebirow Yemibaknew Gize," Menen, 13th year No. 16 (Nehassie, 1961) pp. 6-9
13. Baalu Girma, Kadmas Bashager (second edition, Addis Ababa: A. P. P., 1964) p. 8
14. Ibid., p. 129.

15. Baalu Girma, Yehillina Dewol (Addis Ababa: A. P. P., 1966) pp. 11-12.
16. Ibid., p. 62
17. See also Berhanu Zerhun, Mabel (Addis Ababa: E.B.C. 1972). This work uses historical facts in showing the condition of the early 1960's, the period in which the rich from the metropolis went to the rural area and started commercial farming thereby displacing the peasants.
18. Baalu Girma, Derasiw (Addis Ababa: E. B. C., 1972) p. 95
19. Berhanu Zerihun, Chereka Sitweta (B. S. P. P., n.d.) p. 16.
20. That Henry James was highly concerned with the problems of artists in such works as Roderick Hudson, The Tragic Muse and The Real Thing is discussed by Georges Markow - Totevy in his study entitled: Henry James (U.S.A: Merlin press Ltd., 1969) pp. 95-103. Achebe is also concerned with the role of the writer. See C. L. Lines, Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe (London: Heinemann 1978) p. 37.
21. William K. Wimsatt, "Essays in criticism" Alexander Pope selected poetry and prose (U. S. A: Rinehart & Winston Inc., 1951) p. 64
22. Kadmas Bashager p. 49
23. Ibid., p. 129
24. Baalu Girma, Yekey Kokeb Tirri (Addis Ababa E. B. C., 1972) p. 91
25. Henry James, P. 89
26. Kadmas Bashager, p. 127
27. Yekey Kokeb Tirri, p. 82
28. Derasiw, pp. 54-55
29. Kadmas Bashager, p. 95
30. Yehillina Dewol, p. 15

31. Yekey Kokeb Tirri, p. 210
32. Kadmas Bashager, p. 82
33. Idid., p. 135
34. Derasiw, p. 22
35. Yekey Kokeb Tirri, p. 76
36. Ibid., pp. 234-240
37. Kadmas Bashager, p. 49
38. Yehillina Dewol, p. 170
39. Yekey Kokeb Tirri, p. 229
40. Kadmas Bashager, p. 46
41. Yekey Kokeb Tirri, p. 69
42. Ibid., p. 178
43. Yehillina Dewol, p. 10
44. Yehillina Dewol, p. 58
45. Idid., p. 92
46. Yekey Kokeb Tirri, p. 116
47. Derasiw, p. 60
48. Kadmas Bashager, pp. 127-128
49. Yehillina Dewol, pp. 231-232
50. Kadmas Bashager, p. 100
51. Yehillina Dewol, p. 177
52. Derasiw, p. 75
53. Ibid., p. 146
54. Derasiw p. 137
55. Yekey Kokeb Tirri p. 16

56. Yehillina Dewol p. 209
57. Ibid., p. 237
58. Yekey Kokeb Tirri p. 141
59. Derasiw p. 14
60. Ibid., p. 48
61. Kadmas Bashager, p. 41
62. Ibid.,
63. Ibid., p. 108
64. Yehillina Dewol, p. 162
65. Yekey Kokeb Tirri, pp 80-81
66. Ibid., p. 45
67. Derasiw, p. 66
68. Yekey Kokeb Tirri, p. 139
69. Ibid., p. 85
70. The partial similarity between these characters could perhaps be taken as an evidence how Mr. Greene's work has influenced Baalu. It is of interest to note that Mr. Greene is one of the authors admired by Baalu, according to the interview included in Zamenay Lake's B. A. thesis.
71. Kadmas Bashager, p. 11
72. Derasiw, p. 66
73. Yekey Kokeb Tirri, p. 139
74. Kadmas Bashager, p. 16
75. Yehillina Dewol, p. 20
76. Kadmas Bashager, pp. 16-17
77. Derasiw, p. 6
78. Ibid., pp. 120-122

79. Yekey Kokeb Tirri, pp. 16-17
80. Kadmas Bashager, p. 32
81. Derasiw, p. 43
82. Kadmas Bashager, p. 132
83. Yekey Kokeb Tirri, p. 9
84. Ibid. p. 97
85. Derasiw, pp. 145 - 146
86. Kadmas Bashager, p. 37
87. Yehillina Dewol, p. 212
88. Yekey Kokeb Tirri, p. 37
89. Yehillina Dewol, p. 83
90. Derasiw, p. 32
91. Kadmas Bashager, p. 115
92. Yekey Kokeb Tirri, p. 178
93. Yehillina Dewol, p. 160
94. Ibid., p. 177
95. Kadmas Bashager, p. 74
96. Yehillina Dewol, p. 34
97. Yekey Kokeb Tirri, p. 114
98. Ibid., p. 17
99. Derasiw, p. 48
100. Kadmas Bashager, p. 45
101. Ibid., p. 69
102. Ibid., p. 102

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D E C L A R A T I O N

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

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