

**THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT  
OF AMHARIC LITERATURE**

**A Thesis  
Presented to  
the School of Graduate Studies  
Addis Ababa University**

**In Partial Fulfilment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Literature (English)**

**by  
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May 1981**



## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

I am greatly indebted to my advisor, Dr. Hailu Araaya, for his constructive guidance and wise counsel, to which this study owes its stronger sides. I am very grateful to my wife, Asnaketch Mekonnen, for her understanding and patience in the course of the preparation of this study, for typing the first draft and cutting the stencils and proofreading the final copy. My gratitude also extends to all those who, in one way or another, shared my pains in the course of this study.

I also appreciate the financial assistance of the Swedish Agency for Research and Cooperation with Developing Countries (SAREC) extended to me through the Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission and the Addis Ababa University, and used to cover part of the expenses incurred in the preparation of this thesis.

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## ABSTRACT

A considerable number of studies of Amharic literature have been written by Ethiopian as well as foreign scholars. Studies by Ethiopians are very fragmentary and those by foreigners reveal distortions. This thesis attempts to overcome these problems of fragmentation and distortion in the study of Amharic literature. The topic is very vast and the thesis is necessarily a very condensed survey of the development of Amharic literature along with a critical analysis of epoch-making Amharic novels, plays and poetical works.

Compared to other African and even European countries, Ethiopia has a very old literary tradition. Although the masses of the people still remain illiterate, literacy and hence the art of writing has its roots in Ethiopian antiquity. Ethiopia's earliest literatures were written in Geez, a classical language that persisted until the middle of the twentieth century and still lingers around churches and monasteries. Written Amharic literature made its first appearance around 1300 but actually started to flourish only at the beginning of the present century.

The first Amharic novel, Afäwärk Gäbräyäsus's Libb Wällä Tarik was published around 1900. Since then a remarkable number of novels have been written among which Fikär Iskä Mäkäbir, Adäfräs, Yäkäy Kokäb Tärri and Ma'ibäl are critically analyzed. Fikär Iskä Mäkäbir is, a novel of shining excellence both in form and content. Its harmony of setting and characters and artistic manipulation of literary techniques along with its social significance will always secure a special place for it. Adäfräs stands out most conspicuously particularly for its originality of style and unparalleled excellence in the use of modern literary techniques. It is truly the work of a master artist and craftsman. Yäkäy Kokäb Tärri and Ma'ibäl manifest the highest level of political preoccupation in the Amharic novel thus marking a new trend of development.

Modern Amharic drama is still in its infancy. It is no more than seventy years old. The first Amharic play Fabula by

Bajrond Takla Hawariat was staged at the beginning of this century. The earliest Amharic plays, which understandably were crude in form, dealt with the Italian occupation (1928-33). Amharic drama started to be perfected only after the 1950's and 60's with the return of dramatists trained abroad. Kābādā Mikael, Girmachāw Tāklā Hawariat, Māngistu Lāmma and Şāgaye Gābrāmādhin are among the most prominent playwrights who have contributed to the development of this genre in Amharic. Amharic drama has evolved through more or less similar stages as the Amharic novel, and today manifests greater realism and enhanced political preoccupation.

Poetry is a genre deeply rooted in the Ethiopian oral tradition. It is the oldest form of literary art in the country. Throughout the ages Ethiopia has produced prominent poets. Among the earliest poets Agāñāhu Ingida, Yoftahe Nigussie and Wāldā Giorgis Wāldā Yohannis have imprinted their names with the patriotic poems they composed on the eve of the Italian occupation (1928-33). Among the moderns Kābādā Mikael, Māngistu Lāmma, Şāgaye Gābrāmādhin are the most popular and highly skilled.

Through the decades, Amharic literature in general has manifested a significant change and development both in its form and content. Whereas earlier Amharic literature was largely religious, moralistic and didactic, modern Amharic literature has shown a marked shift in intent and content achieving greater social significance and realism.

Amharic literature has faced a considerable number of obstacles among which censorship, the mass illiteracy in the country, the high cost of printing, the absolute lack of publishing houses, and most of all, the lack of professional training among its authors have been the most retarding. However, the eruption of the popular Ethiopian Revolution of 1966 has opened a brighter future for its development, and these problems will eventually be overcome.

It is indeed very difficult to forecast confidently the future trend of development in Amharic literature. Yet, considering the circumstances, it is only reasonable to assume that it will eventually overcome its crudity of form provided that creative writers are given professional training. In terms of content, Amharic literature has already revealed a tendency to become more partisan and facilitate the process of radical social, political and economic change that the country has courageously undertaken.

## Pronunciation Key

Due to the obvious problems involved in transcribing Amharic words and Ethiopian names in the Roman alphabet, it has become necessary to use an ad hoc transcription in this study. The letters b, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, u, v, w, y and z and the combinations ch and sh have been used here just like in English because the sounds they commonly represent are almost similar to those of Amharic.

The Amharic vowels have been transcribed in this study as shown below:

PRONUNCIATION SYBMBOLS	ENGLISH	AMHARIC
a as in	<u>arm</u>	<u>abba</u> / አበ
ä as in	<u>bird</u>	<u>säw</u> / ሰው
e as in	<u>face</u>	<u>wazema</u> / ዋዜማ
i as in	<u>kill</u>	Add <u>is</u> / አድደስ
ii as in		<u>dii</u> / ደደ

The following uniquely Amharic sounds have been transcribed as follows.

ḳ	as in	Ḳine	/ ቀኔ
ñ	as in	Amarinñä	/ አማርኛ
ṭ	as in	Ṭobbia	/ ጠቢያ
č	as in	Čawata	/ ጭዋታ
p	as in	Peṭors	/ ጸጥርስ
s	as in	Säbai	/ ጸቤ

## INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia is a country with a centuries old literary tradition. Most of its earliest literature, however, was written in Geez. Although the earliest piece of written Amharic literature that is extant dates back to the fourteenth century, we can safely assume that Amharic folk literature must have been much older than that. The amount of creative writing done in Amharic since the fourteenth century is indeed very vast. This study by no means claims to be exhaustive. Its modest aim is to trace the development of written Amharic literature and analyze a selection of epoch-making works in three genres - the novel, drama and poetry.

The first chapter is a general historical survey attempting to trace the development of written Amharic literature from its inception upto the present. Chapters two, three and four are brief critical analyses of selected Amharic novels, plays and poetry respectively.

No such research on Amharic literature has been published by an Ethiopian scholar before or rather, no such work by an Ethiopian has been immediately available. Studies by Ethiopians about Amharic literature that are immediately available are very scanty and fragmentary. Indeed, most of them are only brief remarks about one work or another and usually in the form of articles in newspapers, magazines and journals like Something, Dialogue, Addis Reporter, Mānān or Ethiopia Observer.

Probably the bulk of the study about Amharic literature by Ethiopians consists of the theses that have been written over the years by graduating students of the Department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature of the Addis Ababa University. Most of them, however, are biographies of certain prominent literary figures or focus mainly on special aspects like characterization and style in one or another work of Amharic literature. Their scope is limited but they could be useful sources for detailed studies of individual works.

A considerable number of works have also been written about Ethiopian literature in general by foreign historians, travellers

and literary critics since the nineteenth century, but, as is to be expected, most of them overlook many important aspects of Ethiopian literature. Forgetting that Ethiopia has its own national and historical peculiarities and that literature is inherently culture-bound, most of them use European literature as a measuring rod for Ethiopian literature. Since they were written by outsiders who know very little about Ethiopian society ( and particularly its spiritual makeup) these works overlook the social, political and economic realities in which Amharic literature has been conceived and cultivated and hence give a distorted image of it.

Generally, we observe that studies about Amharic literature either by Ethiopians or foreigners so far have the inherent defect either of fragmentation or distortion. This preliminary study is therefore born out of the conviction that a detailed study of Amharic literature by an Ethiopian is overdue and might help as a springboard for further exhaustive and more detailed studies of Amharic literature.

CHAPTER I  
THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT  
OF  
AMHARIC LITERATURE

A study of the origin of Amharic Literature necessarily starts with a study of the origin of the Amharic language itself. Amharic has been spoken in Ethiopia for centuries, but exactly how long is impossible to say. According to Wright, and Amharic not very much different from that of today had come into existence by 1300,<sup>1</sup> but was not committed to writing until about a century ago. Whereas Wright asserts that the earliest Amharic manuscripts that are extant are medical treatises dating from about 1800, Thomas Leiper Kane and many other scholars point out that the earliest Amharic writings to be found are poems or songs dating back from the fourteenth century and written in praise of Emperors Amdä Şion (1307-1337)<sup>2</sup> Yǎshak (1407-1422) and Gälawdewos (1533-1553).<sup>3</sup> Similar praise poems written in honour of Emperors Dawit (1373-1412), Zära Yaḳob (1426-1460) and Bäidä Mairam (1461-1471) have also been found.<sup>4</sup>

The earliest Amharic poem written in praise of Amdä Şion by an unknown writer, narrates the expedition of the king (Emperor) to subjugate various peoples. The language is in many ways different from Amharic as we know it today and very difficult to understand, but there is no doubt that it is Amharic as can be seen in the following lines from the poem composed in honour of Yǎshak:

አንተ ልጅ የባሰሳር  
ለዎን ጸላህ የኛን ፍቀር  
ዎሽተ ሰጥተንህ ዌዘር  
አባል ሰጥተንህ ሰመር  
ሰፊ ሰጥተንህ ሃገር  
ለዎን ጸላህ የኛን ፍቀር  
ጸላ ተመተር  
ሰላሳተህ ሃገር  
ሲጮ መሰቀል ::<sup>5</sup>

According to Dr. Sirgiw Hablä Silassie, Amharic most probably began to be spoken widely during the reign of Emperor Lalibäla (1185-1220). In the struggle for power between the two Agäw Kings of the time, the Amharas gave military assistance to Emperor Lalibäla while the Agaws remained faithful to Emperor Harbe. After victory, Lalibäla gave the Amharas the highest positions in his court and set up an entourage composed solely of Amharas. Thus there came the saying, " አገፀ ሲሰደድ፣ አጥራ ሲለጥድ" which literally means: "The Agäws immigrated and the Amharas adapted themselves". Later, the Amharic language became the language of the court and won the title of " ልሳነ ንግሥ" or "Imperial tongue".<sup>6</sup>

Like almost all other languages, Amharic grew as a literary language first in poetry and later in prose. This statement is supported by the fact that the earliest writing to be found in Amharic is the poem written in honour of Amdä Şion, though we cannot claim that it is literary by modern standards.

According to Professor Tamrat Amanuel, the stages in the development of Amharic literature in its infancy (i.e. prior to the 19th century and the ascendance to power of Emperor Tewodros) can be divided into two:

1. The Age of Amdä Şion (1344-1607)
2. The Age of Susinyos (1607-1855)<sup>7</sup>

In the first age there is very little writing in Amharic. All that is extant from the writings of this period is the praise poems to the Emperors mentioned earlier. Dr. Amsalu Aklilu has this to say of the praise songs written to Amdä Sion and Yishak:

These poems were probably composed by common people. We cannot place them alongside literary works for they are written in a manner lacking beauty or taste. They were written in the excitement of victory and do not adhere to the rules of literary aesthetics.<sup>8</sup>

It may be true that the songs (poems) were composed by ordinary people and have no flavour to a modern audience. It would, however, be unfair to apply modern literary standards in our judgement of them for the simple reason that they date back so many centuries when Amharic literature may not even be said to have been born.

The period between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries was a period of decline for Ethiopian literature in general. This decline was caused by the rise in the sixteenth century of Ahmed Gran and the beginning of the Oromo (Galla) expansion. It was a period of constant wars between the Christians and Moslems of Ethiopia, during which Gran is said to have burnt many manuscripts and books along with the churches and monasteries.

The Moslems had obtained military assistance from the Turks and the Christians were forced to ask for support from the Portugese. Thus four hundred Portugese soldiers led by Berudez arrived at the port of Massawain 1593. Along with them also came some Jesuit missionaries who immediately set about spreading their faith in the country after Gran had finally been defeated and the war had subsided.

Soon religious disagreements broke out between the Jesuits and the Ethiopian Orthodox (Coptic) clergy. The Jesuits preached and wrote religious tracts in Amharic. They also spread the tracts among the people. This activity of the Jesuits led to an important event in the development of Amharic literature. The local Coptic clergy who, up to then, had considered Amharic unfit for church services and had revered Geez, suddenly gave up the use of the latter and started to preach and write in Amharic, in their attempt to counteract the Jesuit influence. None of these Amharic tracts, however, are immediately available although Marcel Cohen asserts that they could be found in libraries abroad.<sup>9</sup>

The religious disagreement and the use of Amharic for preaching and writing religious pamphlets continued until the ascendance to the throne of Ase Fassil (1624-1660) who threw out all the Jesuits from Ethiopia in 1625. Because of the measure taken by Fassil against the Jesuits it was said "ፋሲላ ይከተላል፡ ሃይማኖት ይመለስ" meaning "Let Fassil become king and (the true) religion be restored". But immediately after the expulsion of the Jesuits, the Ethiopian clergy went back to the use of Geez, and writing in Amharic was once again suspended. This state of affairs continued until 1855 when Tewodros took power.

The period between 1769 and 1855 is what is commonly known in Ethiopian history as the Age of Princes. Ethiopia was divided into small kingdoms among the various princes. Civil wars and strife were rampant throughout the land. The period was not conducive to literary development, or to any kind of peaceful and constructive social activity. Thus, in relation to the development of Amharic literature, the ascendance to the throne of Emperor Tewodros in 1855 and the subsequent unity of the country was of paramount importance, for Amharic literature once more raised its head after two centuries of dormancy. Indeed, Amharic literature can be said to have become fully emancipated during Tewodros's reign in the second half of the nineteenth century.

As part of his general programme of unifying the country, Tewodros decreed Amharic as the official language of the government. Geez, which had formerly been more prestigious, ceased to be used in court and in international correspondence. Moreover, for the first time in Ethiopian history, Tewodros's chronicle was written in Amharic by Däbtära Aläḳa Zänäb.<sup>10</sup>

Däbtära Zänäb also wrote the Mäḣhafä Čäwata Sığawi Wämänfäsawi which Wright describes as "a little book of moral precepts" which "consists of the sort of edifying but not very effective moralizing that preoccupies all too many Ethiopian writers."<sup>11</sup>

In 1830 the Bible was translated into Amharic by an Ethiopian priest called Abu Rumi. It was published in 1840 and subsequently spread in the country. This we know from Rassam's testimony as quoted by Margery Perham,

"Oh God!" exclaimed the Emperor Theodore to the British agent Rassam, "How can we Abssi-nians forget the English who have given us so many thousand Bibles! Whereas there had been only a few in the whole country, now every village could have its own."<sup>12</sup>

In 1892 the first translation into Amharic of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress was made by Gäbrä Giorgis Täräfä. Again according to Wright,

... it is not a masterpiece of a translation - a revision was made and published in Addis Ababa in 1950 - but the book has probably had a profound influence in respect to both form and content on the formation of the new Amharic literature.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, many later Amharic writers exhibit the influence of this omnipresent literary work. The theme of a character of good morals journeying through life to face worldly trials and tribulations has been the central idea in Blatten Getta Hiruy Wäldä Silassie's Wäddaje Libbe, Mäkonin Endalkachäw's Mälkam Betäsäboch and very recently (1969) Gerawärq Agonafir's 465 pages narrative Säwnna Guzow.

Although Amharic was initially set on its feet during the reign of Emperor Tewodros, it did not actually develop as a literary language until the reign of Emperor Minilik II (1848-1906). Two main factors contributed to this development. Firstly, contact with Western civilization which had been disrupted for centuries was resumed at this time. The Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway line was built, postal service was installed and administration which was formerly conducted orally /ጠጋባ ጠለባ/ started to be conducted through writing, thus facilitating the development of writing in Amharic. The second and more important

event was the setting up of the printing press. This does not, however, mean that Amharic books were not printed before this time. For example, the first book printed in the Ethiopian alphabet was the Psalter in Geez. It was printed in Rome in 1513 by a German named John Potken. There was a printing press in Massawa that was set up by Catholic monks in 1860 and is believed to have produced the first Amharic works of devotion to be printed in Ethiopia. Another printing press was also set up in Dire Dawa in 1900 by a Fransiscan monk named Marie Bernard .<sup>15</sup>

The beginning of the publication of newspapers also facilitated the growth of Amharic literature. In 1914 the first Amharic newspaper Aimiro, initiated by a Greek named Kavadia in 1902 and formerly written by hand, started to be issued in print by the order of the Emperor.

Minilik also sent a number of young Ethiopians to study in Europe, some of which later became among the first Ethiopian creative writers in Amharic. Among these is Afäwärq Gäbräyäsus, who can rightly be called the father of the Amharic novel. He is, indeed, the first Ethiopian novelist and his Libb Wälläd Tarik, the first Ethiopian novel. This novel was first published in Rome in 1916 and marks the birth of fictional literature in Amharic. Here is Wright's observation about the novel:

It is a work of real merit. It has come to be regarded as a necessary introduction to the use of Amharic as a medium of imaginative expression, and although it may be excelled in many respects by later compositions, it showed with dramatic surprise ... that it might well be Amharic and no longer the classical Geez, that would one day supply Ethiopia's distinctive contribution to the world's literature.<sup>16</sup>

We shall discuss this first Amharic novel in greater detail in the next chapter.

Gäbrä Egziabher is probably the first Ethiopian poet writing in Amharic. He was born in Tigray in the early 1860's and died in 1914. Gäbrä Egziabher was "a kind of court satirist" and started "by trouncing the important men of state and by saying witty things at the great court banquets which Minilik held at the palace every Sunday, and later issued similar material in written form."<sup>17</sup> In form his poems are of the traditional oral literature type but they are also didactic and political. They emphasized the need for unity and modernization and aroused considerable interest in court circles.<sup>18</sup>

Not long after Libb Wälläd Tarik, a new genre - drama - made its appearance in the Amharic literary scene. This was a play by Bäjronḍ Täklä Hawariyat called Fabula: Yänsäsoch Komediy, written in 1904. This play written in verse, utilizes the fables of Aesop and La Fontaine together with Ethiopian ones as a means to point out the corruption of the members of the ruling classes.

Fabula was staged for the first time in 1914 at the Hotel Majestic and immediately banned as obscene and unorthodox. In fact, all plays were banned after this until the coronation of Ras Tafari as Emperor Haile Selassie in 1930.

The early Amharic writers felt themselves called upon to promote the modernization of Ethiopian society, and to criticize ignorance, superstition, moral and political corruption. Among the writers of this early period is Blatten Getta Hiruy Wäldä Sīlassie, a prolific writer who translated parts of the Holy Scripture into Geez and edited the traditional code of civil and ecclesiastical law, the Fitha Nägäst. A civil servant and holder of many official positions in the government, Hiruy also launched a literary journal in Amharic entitled Goha Šibah in 1917.

Hiruy, who according to Wright, "was instrumental in creating Amharic literature out of practically nothing"<sup>19</sup> was

a man of tremendous energy and almost a legendary personality.<sup>20</sup> His major creative works are Wäddaje Libbe ( 1923) Yälibb Assab: Yäbirhanena Yäsion Mogäsa Gabicha ( 1931), Addis Alam ( 1913).

Wäddaje Libbe is an allegorical story of the journey through the world of the title-hero Wäddaje Libbe and his trials and tribulations thereof. Although it follows the tradition of Geez works of "tägsaṣ" and "mikir!", Wäddaje Libbe seems to have been inspired by Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Yälibb Assab, though written in the form of a novel, is conspicuously a manual of marriage and child care and moreover an indictment of the widespread practice of child-marriage with a thin veneer of an imaginary plot.

In Addis Aläm, however, come to the fore Hiruy's reformist tendencies. In this novel, he tries to point out the need for the reform of the church and the elimination of certain traditional practices such as sorcery, arranged marriage, costly funeral banquets and divorce. Addis Aläm is probably the first treatment in Amharic of the recurrent theme of cultural conflict that abounds in much of colonial and post-colonial African creative writing. It is the story of a young Ethiopian who after returning from his studies abroad glows to reform his society but hits against the hard wall of tradition.

Both Hiruy and Afäwärk wrote non-fiction, too. Afäwärk's Dagmawi Minilik is considered not only as a work of literary value but also as a book of history. It is probably the first biography of an African ruler by an African writer. Hiruy also published a biographical account of Emperor Yohannis, a collection of funeral songs and a catalogue of books in Geez and Amharic to be found in Ethiopia. He also wrote an official account of Empress Mänän's pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Regent's visit to Europe and the Middle East in a book entitled Dästanna Kibbir on which Wright comments thus:

... this attractive book did more to shake the Ethiopian people into a realization, of how the rest of the world was living, and the part therein which Ethiopia might be called upon to play than could have done any number of cold official communiques.<sup>21</sup>

The writing and staging of plays which had been banned since Tāklä Hawariyat's Fabula resumed just before the Italian invasion. Two of these early plays, both written by Yoftahe Nēgusse, have been put into print. The first, Tikim Yalläbät Čäwata is an allegorical play, performed in 1930 as part of the coronation festivities. It describes the marriage of Faith and Fortune decreed by King Solomon. The speeches of the characters are interspersed with quotations from the Scriptures, with due references provided in the text. The play ends with a reading of the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins in Geez with an Amharic translation. In conclusion, it is revealed that the new Emperor is the husband of the first of the Wise virgins.<sup>22</sup>

The other play by Yoftahe is Yähod Amlaku Kītat, staged in 1932 to celebrate the first post-nuptial visit to the parents of Princess Zänäbä Wārķ, who had married Ras Gugsa Araya. The play is full of allusions to Ras Hailu, who had been recently deposed from his governorship of Gojjam. This early Amharic play which is largely allegorical and moralistic is judged by Ricci as follows:

In this theatrical production, the stage action was rudimentary if not nonexistent, the characters two-dimensional symbols having collective nouns designating a class or social type or ethical concepts for names, not those of real people. All the force of the play is concentrated in the vivacity of the dialogue, which in episodes of real immediacy linked with local society, brought to the stage an expression suited to the vivid and varied speech of daily life in which the comic power attained particularly effective moments.<sup>23</sup>

Moreno, who was present at the presentation of several of these plays says:

In these (plays), the young Ethiopian actors gave evidence of great self-possession and above all of a considerable sense of the comic. The plots are puerile, not so much because the works are intended for children as owing to the mentality of the authors, but they are not lacking in pleasant comic interludes as when scenes and characters of the milieu are reproduced such as drunks grouped around their beer and mead, arguments and brawls, the assemblage of greedy priests and gluttons and so on.<sup>24</sup>

Ethiopian literature had thus only started to flourish when the Italian invasion threw its ominous shadow over the country. The approach of the war, however, inspired many to produce writings of a patriotic nature. Thus it was that Wäldä Giorgis Wäldä Yohannis wrote a long poem entitled Yäwänd Lij Kurat Silä Hagär Mämot in 1935 G.C., appealing for Ethiopians to protect their centuries-old independence. This was soon followed by Jägna Säw Tägaday Läṭälatu Almot Bay written in 1936 G.E., appealing to both the Moslems and Christians of Ethiopia to defend their country in spite of their religious differences.

In the same year Yoftahe Nigusse wrote Fläketru: Gobäz Ayän, a poem intended to arouse patriotism.

After these patriotic writings on the eve of the war, literary activity was disrupted for the next six years after the Italian invasion. Soon after the expulsion of the Italians from the country, literary activities resumed. An interesting literary work of the period is a collection of poems by many different writers entitled Yaddis Zämän Mäzmur and celebrating the return of the Emperor. Among the contributors are three names that have left their mark in Amharic literature: Mäkonin Endalkachäw, Girmachäw Täklä Hawariyat and Käbädä Mikael; the last two are considered to be representatives of the modern generation of the period.

Mäkonñin Endalkachäw, who is believed by many scholars to be a true disciple of Hiruy, is the author of a number of works tinged with a deep religious feeling and denunciation of the vanities of the world. Mäkonñin has written a number of dramas among which his Yädäm Däms (1940) is considered to be the best. Based on the patriotism of Abunä Petros, who suffered death at the hands of the Italian fascists, the play contains some very moving monologues.

Taytu Bäṭṭul, another Mäkonñin's plays is based on the story of Emperor Tewodros, whom it presents as a heartless tyrant, though it applauds his heroic death.<sup>25</sup>

Mäkonñin (born 1892) belonged to a traditional class of feudallords and was thus a member of a conservative group trying to combat the modernizing and democratic forces in the country. His works, which are mostly expressions of what was best in the dying tradition, preach benign feudalism. He reflects a false sense of responsibility towards the people and tries to justify the decadent feudal system. He even goes further to point out that the ruling class is the god-ordained secular arm of the divine will.

According to Gerard, Mäkonñin's works are characterized by three major concepts: idealization of the feudal class along with enlightened despotism, the responsibility of this class towards the people ( which he presents as its justification) and finally unquestioning adherence to Coptic Christianity.<sup>26</sup>

The concept of fate plays a great role in the Amhara mode of thinking and action although it may not be a unique feature of the Amhara mentality. Levine points out that:

The concept of fate - eddel - is invoked by Amharas to account for the various accomplishments and peripeties of their lives, Eddel is the working of divine will as it affects human purposes, and it is believed to be more important than human effort to attain any end.<sup>27</sup>

One of Mäkönnin's novels Aläm Wäratgñac (1940) intimates an obsession with the unreliability of the world, and consequently, with man's duty to earn God's rewards through humility and acceptance. The central idea of this work is that life is a source of unending pain and unhappiness, and that quietness is to be found in the detachment of monastic life. In other words it attempts to point out that unhappiness is a source of purification and many critics claim the work to be a collection of moralities.

Almotkum Biye Alwashim in the collection entitled Armuñ (1944) is an indictment of white colonialism and relates the trials and tribulations of the protagonist Ato Tämachu who suffers unbearably during the Italian Invasion. Although it is a story about the horrors of the war, its main purpose is to stress the necessity for forbearance and virtue in the face of adversity. It is interesting, however, to note that this philosophy of forbearance and virtue applies chiefly to the poor, and its main function is to convince them of their supposedly privileged spiritual status.

This philosophy of this supposedly privileged status of the poor in heaven is carried further in Yädhoch Kätäma, a criticism of the newly emerging bourgeoisie. In this novella Mäkönnin preaches openly. Abba Säw Bäkäntu is made to say, "while the poor have no freehold on earth, there awaits them freehold in the heavens for their immortal souls."<sup>28</sup> This work, like most of Mäkönnin's works, is a reflection of the most unrealistic conventions of Ethiopian Coptic Christianity, namely that crime is always punished and virtue eternally rewarded.

Although Sähai Mäsfän (1949) is primarily a love tragedy it is a moral booklet exalting charity, devotion and altruism as opposed to self-assertion based on instinct, wealth or education. It is again an addition to his moral pamphlets.

Salsawi Dawit (1942) is a historical novel based on the life of an Ethiopian king. It is an attack against absolute power, preaching otherworldliness, painting man's life on earth in very unpleasant colours and carrying on the moral that salvation can only be obtained through sorrow and suffering.

Mäkonñin's works indicate that he is a devoted Christian and the most vocal and articulate exponent of the landed aristocracy.

A contemporary of Mäkonñin and a journalist who had imprinted his name in Amharic literature was Wäldä Giorgis Wäldä Yohannis ( b. 1896 - ). The bulk of his writing consists of four volumes of poetry glorifying the Emperor, his warlike prowess and civilizing achievements along with a praise of Ethiopia itself. Apart from these poems, Wäldä Giorgis has written an only novel, Agazi, a psychological and historical story of an Ethiopian youth educated abroad. The title hero, Agazi, overcomes the entreaties of his family not to go away seeking impious knowledge in foreign lands, illustrating the need to break away from backward traditional bonds. Although Agazi is somewhat similar to Hiruy's Addis Aläm the latter does not have the vitality and urgency we find in the former. Most of the story is devoted to Agazi's experiences and impressions abroad while his country is under Italian occupation. Unlike Awäkä, in Addis Aläm, we do not find Agazi coming back to his country and fighting against backward traditional customs or the fascist invaders.

A court poet of the period who deserves attention is Yared Gäbrä Mikael, who, like Wäldä Giorgis, was an official of the Ministry of Information and wrote a number of poems in praise of the Emperor yearly from 1952 to 1956. In addition he wrote a slightly fictionalized essay on love and marriage entitled Inena Anchi (1945). This fictional work contrasts the traditional (countryside) and modern ( city) marriage custom. His philosophical poem Yäfikir Mirkoña (1950) could also be taken into consideration as a contribution to the budding Amharic literature of the period.

Among the ardent supporters of the Emperor who turned towards literature should be mentioned Mahtämä Sällassie Wäldä Mäskäl (1905-1972) whose literary activity was directed mainly towards the recording and preservation of oral literature.- Enkilt Lämmine, a collection of folk tales; Amarinña Kine and Zäläsäña, a collection of poems. His Zikrä Nägär, a voluminous manual published in 1952, provides a picture of Ethiopian institutions under Minilik and Haile gelassie. Esub Dink, on the other hand, is a religious meditation on God and nature of which the latter is little touched upon by Amharic writers.

The last representative of the post-bellum generation of Amharic writers is Imru Hailä Sällassie (1892-1972). A nobleman of exalted rank, Imru was, strangely enough, very much change-oriented as a result of which he has won the title of the "red Ras" from some foreign writers. He understood, and that quite very early, the need for reform-both social and political. As a result, he was exiled in foreign lands in the name of Ambassador.

His only novel Fitawrari Bälay,<sup>29</sup> is based on the common theme of family disruption and reunion. The story as a whole is a trite moralization, all the more conspicuous in Amharic writings of the period, and its purpose, as the author points out in the preface, is to indicate that, "Sooner or later, bad men will be punished, and good and kind-hearted men, on the other hand, shall always be protected by the grace of God."<sup>30</sup> Imru also claims that his tale has a political significance in that it indicates the fall of Ethiopia under the rule of fascism and her subsequent liberation. Critics, however, assume that the intrigues against Bälay, his downfall, and subsequent triumph refer to the experiences of the author himself.

The first author of the post-war period who still holds a preeminent position in Amharic literature is Käbädä Mikael (1915- ). He emerged as a writer when Amharic literature

was consolidated and blooming. A master of Amharic versification, his works cover a wide range-poetry, drama, history, translations. Kābādā is believed by many to be Ethiopia's first accomplished playwright and indeed he had contributed much to the development of this genre. As Gerard says:

Kabade became the founder of serious modern drama in Amharic, doing away with the farcical and more allegorical entertainments of the early thirties in favour of tragedies molded into classical form, which he constantly revises and improves upon.<sup>31</sup>

His first play Yätinbit Kätäro (1938)<sup>32</sup> deals with the theme of prophecy. Kābādā was very familiar with the masterpieces of European literature, and highly influenced by them as a study of his works will indicate.

Yäritat Maibäl ( 1941), Kābādā's second play, is an attack against materialism and atheism, whereas Hannibal (1948) is a historical play of black or African nationalism, a theme not touched upon by Amharic creative writers before.

Kābādā also tried his hand at story telling in Tarikna Misale and Yäiwkät Biliçta, collections of stories both in verse and prose.

His adaptation of Shakespeare's Romeo and Julliet, although not a masterpiece of a translation, has won him popularity. Written in flawless rhyming couplets, his plays and poems have served as inspiration for the generation of writers that followed him.

Girmachāw Täklä Hawariat ( b. 1915- ), son to the first comedian in Amharic, wrote a novel, Araaya ( 1941) and later a play Tewodros, both of which have won distinction in their respective genres.

Araaya is a novel based on the recurrent theme in

African literature - that of a young foreign-educated African, whose zeal to enhance the development of his country upon his return is frustrated by the rockhard native tradition. Araaya deserves particular attention in that it carries many radical ideas ( for instance, pointing out the need for land reform and the abolition of the landlord-tenant relationship which was firmly established at the time), which obviously would have landed him in prison, if not more, had it not been for his exalted social and political position.

Tewodros, (1950), on the other hand, is a historical play based on the story of Emperor Tewodros, who has always been an inspiring figure for Ethiopian writers. This probably is one of the best plays in Amharic on the Tewodros theme.

A genre that seems not to have developed much in the Amharic literary tradition is the short story. Many scholars ascribe different reasons as to why this is the case. This genre, however, was introduced in Amharic writing by Tadässä Libän who published Mäskäräm in 1949. He is probably the first Ethiopian writer of short stories proper as distinguished from the traditional fables and moral allegories. Mäskäräm is a collection of five stories reflecting the relationship between tradition and novelty in the Ethiopian society. Tadässä also wrote another collection of ~~short~~ stories, Laḷaw Mängäd, (1951) but has not published any more of his works ever since. Tadassa's contribution to Amharic literature lies not only in that he is the founding father of the Amharic short story but also because he exhibits greater realism and psychological insight than any of his predecessors.

The writers who appeared in the Amharic literary scene in the formative period of the fifties and sixties are many but only a few have survived the test of time. Most of the works that crowded the bookstores at this period have been termed as the "dime novels"<sup>33</sup> by Solomon Deressa. These were largely pamphlet novels with an average size of 80 pages, the shortest

as little as 45 pages and the longest 100 pages. The "dime novels" do not deal with contemporary problems and manifest poor literary execution. Their plots are a poor stringing of unrelated incidents as it suits the writers; they have mostly no sense of chronology and the characters are shallow papier-mache profiles. It is true that they have contributed to the growth of Amharic literature in bulk but there ends their significance. This does not, however, mean that all the literary works of the period belonged exclusively to this poorly-executed and mediocre class of literature. Works of real merit and great popular acclaim appeared now and then among which can be mentioned Fikär Iskä Mäkäbir and Indawatach Karach.

Kane asserts that the publication by Solomon Deressa of Läjinätt in 1963 marks the appearance of modern poetry in Amharic and that Solomon is the pioneer of modern Amharic poetry.<sup>34</sup> This assertion, however, seems to be not well-founded since we find other Amharic poets whose compositions might be considered as much modern as Solomon's, if not more modern.

It is true that most Amharic poets have been tied down by the fetters of traditional Geez versification but Şägaye Gäbrä Mädhän, Mängistu Lamma, Abbe Gubäña and a host of other writers have composed Amharic poetry that is not very strictly traditional either in its form or content. It is true that Solomon's poetry is written in free-verse, but it is very difficult to assert that he is the first poet to write free verse in Amharic.<sup>35</sup>

Mängistu Lamma's Yägäñim Gubae published in 1958, could be considered as one of the first works of Amharic poetry that is very modern. In his preface to this collection of poems, Mängistu states clearly that by exploiting "poetic licence" to its full, he has introduced new techniques and not only broken away from the traditional rules of formal grammar but also introduced new words and contractions of words as it suited him.<sup>36</sup>

Māngistu has also written Yabatoch Čawata (1959) which is a collection of traditional stories in verse. Some of the stories in this collection are of recent date and cannot be considered true folk tales. Yabatoch Čawata is full of the humour which we find in plenty in Māngistu's plays.

Māngistu Lāmma's greatest contribution to Amharic literature, however, is manifested in drama. A playwright of undeniable talent, with a firm background in traditional as well as modern education, Māngistu is among the founders of modern formal Amharic drama. His first play Tälfo Bäkisse was first performed in January 1963 G.C. Based on the theme of marriage, it attempts to point out the need for the preservation of certain traditional practices and their fusion into modern mores. It is the story of a young educated Ethiopian who abducts a girl in collaboration with his friends but finally lacks the courage to take her to bed. He is, however, rescued from this awkward position when the girl declares that she loves him and is willing to marry him. In general, Tälfo Bäkisse is an ironical criticism of educated Ethiopians who, filled with too much theoretical knowledge, not only forget the significance of their tradition but also lack courage.

His second play, Yalacha Gabicha, is again a treatment of the theme of marriage, but this time from a different angle. First staged in 1963 and later translated into English<sup>37</sup> by the playwright himself with the title The Marriage of Unequals, this play is a comedy denouncing the age-old practice of marriage arranged on the basis of social status and privilege.

Another writer who cannot be overlooked in any discussion of modern Amharic literature is Abbe Gubāña. Abbe's contribution to Amharic literature is to be found in almost all genres (poetry, novel, drama) but the short story. Māngistu Lāmma claims that Abbe "is a hardworking writer who has the distinction of having authored the first best-sellers of modern Amharic Literature."<sup>38</sup>

Abbe is a prolific writer among whose works Alwälädim (1955), a novel with a political message, has won him popular acclaim. Considered as politically unorthodox and obscene, Alwälädim was banned from circulation. Alwälädim is a sort of allegorical story of a child who, while still in his mother's womb, refuses to be born into a world of untruth, and once born into it inspite of his protests, suffers death while in search of truth.

Another of his works, Milkiam, Säifä Näbälbal, (1956) which is again considered to be quite political, concentrates on pointing out the need for social and economic development and administrative reforms. Writing about this work, Kane says, "As a literary work, the book has little value. Its style is dry and pedantic listing the number of dams and the like just as in the government-issued bulletins on economic progress."<sup>39</sup>

Yäpatris Lumumba Asazañ Amwanwat is Abbe's verse drama about the down fall and subsequent execution of the Congolese leader, Patris Lumumba. This book is not only historical but also seems to be the product of the Pan-Africanist influence on Amharic writers.

And Lännatu ( 1961) a historical novel on the popular theme of Emperor Tewodros, is the biggest volume in Amharic literature ( 588 pages). This novel is an interpretation of Tewodros from the point of view of young and educated Ethiopians who consider him a hero. The novel is well-researched and contains valuable historical facts. From the literary point of view And Lännatu is not a work of great merit, but then most of Abbe's works are not aesthetically glittering either, in spite of their popularity.

Birhanu Zärihun ( b. 1934 - ), formerly eidtor of the Amharic dalilies YäItiopia Dims and Addis Zämän, is among Ethiopian writers of the young generation who have left a lasting impression in the Amharic literary scene. Birhanu's

first book, Yä'nba Däbdabewoch ( 1961) is a novel about prostitution. Instead of denouncing prostitution and prostitutes, as almost all earlier Amharic writers who touched upon this theme had done, Bärhanu analyses this "vice" from a sociological point of view and presents the prostitute not as an image of evil but as a victim of social circumstances.

In his other novel, Däl Kämot Bähuala Bärhanu turns to the theme of apartheid and its evils. Writing about this book Kane says,

Despite the fact that, for obvious reasons, this book is not based on the author's personal experiences nor research on the spot, the story is well-written and the plot is reasonably credible.<sup>40</sup>

Bärhanu is, indeed, a competent writer writing in clear and direct Amharic and having a distinguished literary style marked by simplicity. Bärhanu did not always stick to contemporary problems as his historical play Yätewodros Inba (1966) attests. In this play, Bärhanu acknowledges Tewodros as a unifier and reformer, a tragic hero who realizes his weaknesses only after it is too late and commits suicide rather than fall into the hands of the British.

Amharic literature reached its highest level of development with the publication in 1958 of Haddis Alämayähu's Fäkärr Eskä Mäkäbir, a skillful portrayal of traditional Ethiopian society and the decadent and doomed feudal system. This novel still remains a solitary work of excellence in Amharic Literature. Its plot and characterization and various other literary techniques are superb that Kane has labelled it as the Ethiopian "Gone With the Wind."<sup>41</sup> This novel will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter on the Amharic novel.

Haddis Alämayähu, whom Täsfay Gässäsä has called "the dean of the Amharic novel"<sup>42</sup> has also written Tärät Tärät Yämäsärät (1956) a collection of folk tales composed by himself.

Believing that folk tales should and do contain good advice,<sup>43</sup> Haddis has used the tales in this book as vehicles for moral teaching.

A study of the development of Amharic literature reveals that its qualitative development can by no means be traced chronologically. It is true that no literary work has so far been produced in Amharic that can outshine or even equal Fikir Iskä Mäkäbir in any aspect and the appearance of this meritorious novel does not necessarily mean that Amharic literature thereafter improved in any way. On the contrary, we find poorly authored works in Amharic published after this masterpiece as much as they did before it. Yet, there have also been some works of note after Fikir Iskä Mäkäbir.

Dañachäw Wärfu's Adäfräs (1962) is a novel of great depth and complexity, skillfully applying various literary techniques.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, Bäalu Girma's Kadmas Bashager and Yähilina Däwäl are works that have been very popular among young people. These two novels have their strength in the literary techniques they manipulate. Indeed, Dañachäw and Bäalu can be considered as typical representatives of the new generation of Amharic writers who have done away with the moralizing that has always been a conspicuous feature of most Amharic literary works, and have attempted to manipulate modern literary techniques.

There exists a radical difference between writers of the new generation and those of the old. Earlier Amharic writers considered themselves as apostles of modernization starting with Hiruy and his Addis Aläm. They tried to promote "change" and were very normative. They also felt called upon to promote the moral development of their society and never refrained from preaching in their works. They neglected the real experience of the people and the complexities of real life. But there has been a gradual shift from this kind of

writing to a more realistic and analytical one. Modern writers are no more normative but analytical, attempting to grasp the complexities inherent in the changing Ethiopian society.

The difference is not merely one of subject and intent. There is also a radical difference in their style of writing. The modern writers have broken away from time-honoured literary techniques particularly in poetry - the one genre that has its roots in the indigenous Ethiopian literary tradition - and have attempted to be innovative.

Until very recently, Amharic creative writing has mostly been didactic, always having some kind of mission, and mostly the religious and moral mission of guiding the people away from evil. Amharic literary works have also been used to instill patriotism in the people, both during and after the Italian invasion, by extolling the nation's great past and the need for the preservation of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. This tendency of Amharic writers to teach has always been and still remains, to a large extent, to be an inherent characteristic of Amharic literature.

There have been many obstacles that have hindered the development of Amharic creative writing. By far, the greatest obstacle to this development has been censorship, which has stifled creative writing in the country to an unprecedented degree.

The other obstacle to the development of creative writing in general in Ethiopia has been the high cost of printing. It has been practically impossible for writers of lesser income to get their works printed. There have not been publishing houses in the country which could have taken the heavy burden of printing from the shoulders of writers with very little or no financial means.

Still more, the level of literacy in the country has in itself been an obstacle to the development of literary writing. In a country where more than 90 % of the people are illiterate,

the potential audience to literary works becomes insignificant. This, added to the high cost of printing, has made writing an unpaying job and hence discouraged many potential writers.

Although these problems have not yet been solved, a bright future seems to have opened for the development of creative writing in Ethiopia with the eruption of the popular Ethiopian Revolution. Recently a significant amount of creative writing has been done in Amharic. The output in poetry and drama, however, greatly outbalances the output in the novel and short stories. Whereas the novel had gone to a dead slumber until recently some very good short stories have appeared since 1966.

Today, many Ethiopian writers have realized the class nature of literature and adopted the view that literature, along with other forms of art, should be used as a means to enhance the consciousness of the people and hence not only reflect reality but also point out the right road to social and political change and development. Thus, the attempt of literary artists since February, 1966 has been geared towards the goal of arming the people with the knowledge necessary to build a new and Socialist Ethiopia.

Consequently there has been a marked shift in the themes treated in Amharic creative literature. The most conspicuous themes treated in the literature of the Revolution are equality, justice, freedom, the class struggle, the problems inherent in the arduous struggles to build a socialist nation, the need to protect national sovereignty and territorial integrity, the dignity of labour, proletarian internationalism and others of similar significance to a nation in transition.

Today, literature has changed its camp, as it ought to, and glorifies the people. Marxist writers have always pointed out the revolutionary role of literature as a means for the cultural development of the oppressed working class and peasantry. Thus literature in Ethiopia is being used to point out the need for change and to fight for justice, equality, freedom and the

abolition of the exploitation of man by man. In short, literature today has begun to contribute its part to the building of a new Ethiopia.

The amount of poetry produced and published within the past five years may be equal, if not more, in bulk to all that produced and published in earlier years. The daily newspaper Addis Zāmān, has published at least a couple of poems every week and sometimes even every day.

The output in drama in the last five years is also quite significant. A number of plays dealing with contemporary problems of the post-revolution period have been staged in the theatres of Addis and even in the Southern and Northern war fronts and the remotest regions of the country by mobile theatrical groups. Although the mobile theatre was not unknown before the revolution, it was never so frequent and far-reaching. The setting up of these mobile theatrical groups is born out of the Marxist view of literature as belonging to the people and serving for the betterment and development of the consciousness of the people.

Among the post-revolution plays dealing with the contemporary social, political and economic problems of Revolutionary Ethiopia, Sagaye Gabra Madhin's trio Ha-Hu Bāsīdīst Wār, Abugida Kāyso and Mālikṭā depict the eruption of the popular revolution, the problems it had to face as a result of the counter-revolutionary activities of internal reactionaries and the aggression of the Somali expansionist ruling cliques along with the contradictions that arose among the forces of the revolution as a result of the infiltration of counter-revolutionary elements into the ranks of the revolutionary forces. The plays are indeed highly documentary and valuable sources for a study of the courses of the Ethiopian revolution. Their documentary nature should not, however, be taken to undermine their artistic value for they are works of art as much as they are documents of the revolution.

Other plays of similar intent and significance, if not of skillful workmanship, have appeared in the course of the last five years, among which could be mentioned Ayalnäh Mulatu's Yäfit Edif and Yägätärwa Fana, Dänäkew Assaye's Bäkäy Kabba Sāwir Däbba, Täsfaye Abäbä's Tagay Sifaläm, Abbe Gubäña's Polätikana Polätikāñoch. Most of these plays, however, have not been published, thus rendering their detailed discussion here impossible.

The literary output in the form of novels, as mentioned earlier, has been quite insignificant over the last five years. This can be ascribed to a number of reasons. In the first place, the scope of the novel is very wide; its large canvas demands a thorough knowledge of the society on the part of the writer. Moreover, the post-revolutionary period has been a period of tremendous upheaval and unprecedented changes in the political, economic and cultural life of the society, requiring time for the writers to grasp the situation, assess it carefully and write about it. Particularly in the days of its infancy, the Ethiopian Revolution was very confusing and its course unpredictable.

Three Amharic novels<sup>43</sup> have recently been published for the first time since the Revolution, and have aroused a great deal of popular as well as scholarly interest. The first of these is Yäkäy Kokäb Tärri by Bäalu Gärma, the author of Kadmas Bashagär and Yähälinna Däwäl. This new book depicts the reign of the "Red Terror" - the decisive blow struck against internal counter-revolutionary elements by the true sons of the revolution.

The second of these pioneer novels of the revolution is written by Birhanu Zärihun, the author of Yätewodros Inba, Yäbädäl Fişame, and Yäfnba Däbdabewoch. His new novel Ma'äbäl: Yabiyot Wazema is the story of the tragic Wällo famine. Written in simple and clear Amharic, this novel portrays the suffering of

Wallo peasants in the grip of famine while the members of the ruling classes were wallowing in plenty. The contrast between the famine - ridden peasants of Wällo and the plump and pampered landlords and aristocrats, the agony of hunger of the Wällo peasants and the unfeeling laughter of their masters is painfully drawn in this novel.

Yäkäy Kokäb Tärri and Ma'ibäl are indeed monotonous because they are boring replays of the events we have been witnessing since the eruption of the revolution. The last of the three pioneer novels Läkäy Abäba by Taddälä Gäbre Hiywät, however, is more a textbook of Marxist political economy than a novel, in the strict sense of the term, although the author has attempted to veil it with a thin veneer of fiction. Its style is rather dull and its characters shallow papier-mache figures who spit out words put into their mouth by their creator. The characters are never themselves and hence very unreal. It is true and necessary that revolutionary literature should be used as a means to raise the consciousness of the people but it is by no means a text-book propounding Marxist thought. It seems that Läkäy Abäba is meant to be a text-book of Marxist thought in the form of a novel.

The Amharic novel has once again raised its head after five years of hibernation. Its content has indeed changed for the better; it has become more realistic and revolutionary but the form still suffers.

## CHAPTER II

### THE AMHARIC NOVEL

The novel as a genre manifested itself in the Ethiopian literary scene with the publication of Libb Wälläd Tarik around 1900. Since then a considerable number of novels have been written in Amharic, but the genre cannot be said to have been much perfected. Indeed, Amharic novels of considerable merit have appeared from time to time. The intent and content of the Amharic novel vary much through the decades depending partly on the levels of social development of the Ethiopian society and partly on the social awareness of the individual writers. The Amharic novel which started with a heavy religious and moralistic tinge has now matured to a remarkable degree and deals with contemporary social and political problems. This chapter is an attempt to examine from various angles a few of the epoch-making Amharic novels.

Afäwork Gäbräyäsus's Libb Wälläd Tarik is discussed here for being the very first Amharic novel. Haddis Alämayähu's Fikär Iskä Mäqabär is, so far, the best Amharic novel in all aspects. Dañachäw Wärru's Adäfräs is a novel of great perfection in the use of literary techniques. And finally Birhanu Zärihun's Ma'äbäl and Bäalu Gärma's Yäkäy Kokäb Tärri are two novels that mark the new trend of development in the Amharic novel—namely profundity of political content and a budding socialist realism in the Amharic novel.

#### LIBB WÄLLÄD TARIK

The plot in Libb Wälläd Tarik is based upon the story of the separation of the members of a family and their reunion after some trials and tribulations. In a war between Christians and pagans, a christian general is made prisoner, but soon freed when an anonymous merchant pays his ransom. Upon the general's return home, his son, Wahid, sets out in search of his father's benefactor to give him his gratitude, and is taken prisoner and sold into slavery. Upon this, the general decides to go in search of his son and agrees

that his daughter, Tobia, follow him disguised as a boy. Both father and daughter are taken prisoners by another pagan king. This king, however, treats them very kindly and makes Tobia his personal servant. A lady of the court and a relative to the king falls in love with Tobia, taking her for a lad. Pricked by jealousy at the king's partiality towards Tobia the king's servants plot to get her thrown out of the court. They accuse her of entering the tent of the king's relative who was alone and attempting to seduce her. Tobia's father was then forced to reveal his daughter's femininity to the king in secret. The king finally asks for Tobia's hand in marriage, however, she refuses to marry a pagan. Being feverishly in love with her, the king helps Tobia and her father to find Wahid. Finally, he marries her after having embraced Christianity and ordered his people to follow suit.

The intent of this almost victorian story in Libb Wäld Tarik is summarized by Afäwärk in three sentences,

ባንድ ነገዳ ሰበብ ሁሉ ዳኅ :: ባንድ እሴት ሰበብ ሁሉ  
አጠኑ :: ባንድ ንጉሥ ቃለ ኢትዮጵያ ቁጥጥ ::<sup>1</sup>

The novel reflects the fatalist attitude towards life which is common to the traditional Ethiopian thinking. However, for an audience which accepted that everything is in the hands of God, the incidents in Libb Wäldä Tarik are, indeed, quite plausible. The central theme of the novel and its primary purpose seem to remind the reader of the supermacy of the Christian religion and the true message of the Gospel as the speech of Tobia's father, in his rage at being ridiculed by one of the king's followers, illustrates:

የክርስቲያን አምላክ መጻፍት ምህረትን ለማውረድ የተራ  
 ራው ቀርቦት የሚጻፍ እርቀት ያየረ ምጥቀት የውቅ ያኖሱ  
 ጥልቀት ያበራጀው ደገነት የፀሐይ ገረት የገጥራው ብር  
 ታት የበረደው ቅዝቅዛት የጤላማው ጥቀረት የወጀበው  
 ገነት አያሰናክለውም :: . . . . ሁሉም በሱ ፊት  
 ኢምንት ነው :: . . . . በወዳላኛው አለም ገን  
 ሁሉም እንደምገባሩ እንደሃይማኖት ወይ ከሰውን ወይ  
 ፍጻሜን ይቀበላል ::<sup>2</sup>

Apart from its devotional content, this quotation is an example of Afäwork's habit of repeating the same idea by using different words. Although Afäwork introduced a new genre in Amharic literature, he also carried over the moralizing intent of traditional Geez literature into it. Thus, Libb Wälläd Tarik, seems to have been written to point out that righteousness is ultimately rewarded and that the true faith triumphs.

The only characters in Libb Wälläd Tarik that we know by name are Tobia and Wahid. Tobia is described as supernally beautiful.

ዓይኑን አስቀደው የብር አላሉ መሰሉ ከጥቢያ ስክብ  
 የተፈካከረ ነበር :: በዚህ ላይ ደገጥ ሸፋሽፍቷ እ  
 ንደበሰገ እሣር ተጠብጦ የሚታጠቅ ይመስል ነበር ::  
 አፍንጫዋ ቀጥ ያለ ከንፈሯ መፈንገት የጀመረ የጣ  
 ለጻ ጽጌረጻ ይመስል ነበር :: አጠረቻ ረዘመቻ ቀጠ  
 ነቻ ወፈረቻ የማይሉትን ያከላቷን ነገር መናገር  
 በከንቱ ነው :: እዋ ብርሌ የመሰለው አንገቱን  
 እያረፈ የወጣ ነው :: ያላጥንት የተሰራው የእጁ  
 እጣቷ እጀሰራ ከበዛበት አመልማሉ ይፈካከራል ::  
 እንደ ፈረስ ለኮ ሰብ ረገብ ያለው አጥንት የሌለ  
 በት ወገሱ ከንብ አውራው ጋር ይለካካል :: ባተ  
 ተረከተለ ይቆጠራል ያለ የተሰራ የተቀጣ ነው :: ስ  
 ተፈራ ስትቸር የምትገልጠው ጥርስና ከናፍሩክ ከዚያ  
 አተያይ ጋር ብርቱን ያዘላል :: ስነፋን ይገላል ::  
 እንዲለው እገዚአብሔር ደስ ያለው ለት ተጠቅ ተጠን

ቆ ቆ ሰር ተ ነገሰ የዘራሳት እንጂ ጸቢያ እንደሰው  
 የተፈጠረች አትመሰልም ነበር :: በከንቱ ነው ጸቢ  
 ያ ሥጋ ተሰጠሱሉ በቀር አመራና መልካ ከነኪረቢል  
 የቀርብ ዝምድና የሚቀጣጠር ይመስል ነበር ::<sup>3</sup>

The description of women and their beauty in Amharic writings is usually superfluous. Afäwärk's description of Tobia's beauty is typical example of this.

The beauty of Läbb Wälläd Tarik lies in its style. The language is vigorously attractive and the descriptions are very vivid. The effective use of figurative language, particularly of similies and metaphors as quoted above leave an unforgettable impression upon the reader.

The humour in Läbb Wälläd Tarik is artistically interwoven in the story. The description of the dwarf among the pagan king's entourage helps to elaborate this point:

. . . እንደ ደንክ ተቆቶ አፍንጫው ሳቀ ያለ  
 ተሰጋፊ ሾሮው ሰፋ ያለ ተገሩ ይልቅ አገጩ ለእን  
 ቆፋት የተሆነ ከተረከተ ቀደም ዲጡን አቃቀጣ የሚ  
 ወጋው ተሰቆና ተሰቆጦ መለዩ ያልታወቀ አብር  
 ንጉሡን ይከተል ነበር ::<sup>4</sup>

This hyperbolic description is full of vivid imagery, goadingly humorous. The description of the king's satirist is again prickingly humorous, apart from being beautifully composed.

አጤው ተራቢ ባባ ዲነት ተወዶ ቀርቦ ነው እንጂ  
 እንኳን ለቤተ ወንጌላት የተገባ ለተራብ ደብ  
 የሚአስጠይቁ ነበር :: አስቀደም ባቶና እንገ  
 ቱ የሸመሳይ አጭራ ይመስል ነበር :: ጉንጭና  
 ጉንጭም በመደባ ይህ ነገ ስለው ያጣጉት ይመስል  
 ነበር :: ዓይኑን መጉደጉና የተራብ ቁጥ ባፈ  
 የተከዘበት ይመስል ነበር :: ሲባቀጣ ሲታይ  
 ጭራሹን መልኩ ሁሉ ይወዳልና የሚሳደውን ዘን  
 ደር መልክ ያስመሰገናል :: ውቃሪ የለው ለሀይ

የለው :: ወርቁ ያለ ወርቁ ነበር :: ነብሱ መኖሯ  
 በመንቀሳቀሱና በመነጋገሩ ነው እንጂ መታወቅ በቀ  
 ረውስ ከላሊበላ ዋሻ ከሚጠራው አንዱ የጠረበው  
 ሥፍራ ታዋቅተው ከውጭ የቀረ ይመስላል ነበር ::

Instances of such attractive descriptions are plentiful in Liḅb Wälläd Tarik, adorning it with a beauty that is rare in later Amharic novels.

### FIKIR ISKÄ MÄKABIR

Fikir Iskä Mäkäbir, published in 1958, is a great novel and the first and only work of its kind in Amharic. On the surface, it is a story of two lovers, Bāzabih and Säbläwängel, whose love is obstructed by the backward feudal tradition into which they are born. Bāzabih is an only child consecrated to God by his parents due to his continuous illness in infancy. Säbläwängel is the daughter of the outspoken feudal lord, Fitawrari Māshāsha. In his search for education Bāzabih goes to Dima, where there is a famous traditional school of kine. It is here that Fitawrari Māshāsha meets the youth. Attracted by his beautiful voice while he is singing at church, the Fitawrari invites Bāzabih to a banquet and finally requests him to stay with him and teach his daughter, Säbläwnängel.

Säbläwängel is twenty-four, unmarried not because she lacks suitors, but because her parents demand the "purity of blood and bone" in anyone who wants to marry their daughter, a descendant of emperors and kings. Säbläwängel is a very sad girl who envies her married friends. In the course of their relationship as student and teacher, Säbläwängel and Bāzabih grow to love each other. Upon learning of this, Fitawrari Māshāsha, who had already promised to give Säbläwnängel in marriage to a lord, becomes enraged and puts her in confinement. Bāzabih runs away to Addis Abäbä, soon to be followed by Säbläwängel just on the eve of her wedding. Fitawrari Māshāsha mounts his horse to go in pursuit of the unfaith-

ful daughter and dies on the way from a fall. Her mother, too, dies at the stairs of the church.

Disguised as a monk, Säbläwängel continues her search for Bāzabih and finally finds him. But it was too late for Bāzabih was in his last death throes from the fatal beating that he had received from bandits. He dies and she becomes a nun.

Fikär Iskä Mākabär does not have only one plot and one story. Intertwined with and underlying this tragic love story is to be found the more prominent story of the conflict between Fitawrari Māshāsha and his tenants. Like all Ethiopian feudal lords, the Fitawrari demands his tenants to give him a large part of their agricultural produce and to provide him with butter, honey, sheep and goats on special holidays. When they fail to provide these one Easter, he goes on a campaign to punish them, in spite of the advice of his friends against it. He is taken prisoner by his tenants and taken to court, where the judgement falls in favour of the tenants.

It is here that Haddis Alāmāyāhu depicts traditional Ethiopian society with the deft hand of the artist. It is this inherent conflict between land-lords and tenants which tended to disrupt Ethiopian society and had remained a critical issue until recently. Haddis understood his society and the conflicts within it very well. His view of traditional Ethiopian society has been very well summarized in Fikär Iskä Mākabär. In the words of Gudu Kassa:<sup>6</sup>

የግንባራቸን አቀዋ የተሰሩበት ስራት ለጭቃ ወገን  
 ሕገ እንደሆደው ታዩ ስራት ግንባር ሳይሆን ሕይወት  
 እንደሌለው የድንጋይ ካብ አንድ ባንድ ላይ ተደራ  
 ርቦ የላይኛው የታቸኛውን ተጭኖ የታቸኛው የላይኛ  
 ወን ተሸክቦ እንዲኖር ሆኖ የተሰራ በመሆኑ ከጊዜ  
 በዛት የታቸኛው ግራንገጦ ስለጭቃ ይህ ሲሆን  
 ሕንጻው በጭሉ እንዳይረደስ እንደገና ተሸሰሉ ሰውን

ከድንገይ በተሻለ መልክ የጊያሳይ የሕያዋን ስቅ  
 ቁጥጥር ለገንዘብ ያስፈልጋል :: የዛሬው  
 ስራተ ግብርናን ሲሰራ በዚያን ጊዜ ለነበረው  
 ግብር ለገንዘብ ሆኖ መሰረቱ ወቅጫ ኖሮ ይህ  
 ናል :: ነገር ግን ለዛሬው ግብር ወቅጫ ስለመ  
 ሆኑ የታወቀ ነው የሆነ ሆኖ ግና ቸውም  
 ስራተ ግብር ለዚያው ለግብርናው ነገር ለገንዘብ  
 ያገለገለው ሰው የሰራው ሲሆን-ግብርን ባሪያ  
 አድርጎ ለገንዘብ ወሰኑ ጠለቅ ሰርቶ የሰረተ  
 ን ጠለቅ በፈጠራ በታ ለገንዘብ ቁጥጥር ለገንዘብ  
 ለከ ነው ::<sup>7</sup>

Here, Haddis Alāmayāhu does not only give us a symbolic rendering of the feudal system as it really is but also points out the inevitability of its downfall, a prophecy that has come to pass.

Apart from these two elements of the story, the love affair between Bāzabāh and Sāblāwāngel and the conflict between Fitawrari Māshāsha and his tenants, Fikār Iskā Mākabār also raises a number of other issues of social validity. It touches upon social evils such as superstition, ignorance and corruption among the members of the ruling class. Many writers before Haddis had, indeed, attempted to portray the evils in the Ethiopian Society, but never so articulately and so artistically as he did.

In spite of its volume (552 pages), Fikār Iskā Mākabār is very readable. This readability again emanates from the writer's style and effective manipulation of literary techniques. The descriptions in Fikār Iskā Mākabār are vivid and relevant, the characters almost real. His thorough knowledge of traditional Ethiopian society has enabled Haddis to delve deep into the Ethiopian mentality and emerge with characters that are true to nature and to their social classes.

Fitawrari Māshāsha is a true feudal aristocrat who, proud of his noble ancestry, upholds the feudal doctrine of the "purity of blood and bone" and considers his "inferiors" as dust. Being the product of the feudal system he upholds, he wants to carry over the past into the present. He attempts to live like his ancestors: ruling and commanding, whipping and imprisoning. He wants everything to remain as it was and resists all forms of change. He is a representative of the ruling feudal aristocracy and a staunch supporter of the decadent system rooted in suppression and exploitation.

Fitawrari Māshāsha is an anachronism. He lives in the past. This is exactly what Gudu Kassa points out when he says:

ፊታውራሪ እኮ የጊላዎቹ ሕግደብ ለሌሎች ለሌሎች  
 የፈጠረኝ ነኝ :: ስለዚህ በሌሎች ስለሌሎች  
 ጊዜ ልኖር አይገባኝም ፣ የኔ ስለሌሎች የኔ ጊዜ ፡  
 ደር ካለፈት ሰዎች ጋር ነጭ ጤዳ ከባላገር ጋር  
 ስዎን ልውትና ካለፈት ሰዎች ከጉዋደኞቹ ጋር ልጤ  
 ወር ነጭ :: . . . ፊታውራሪ ወሽሻ አዲስ ስጋ ለበሰው  
 ተወላጅ ነጭ እንኞ ደር ካራት ወይም ካምስት ወተ  
 ዘመን በፊት ከቆ ቀት ክፋ ሰዎች ያንዱ ወንፈስ ናቸው ::  
 ሕይወታቸውን የለውዱትን እያደረጉ በዚያን ጊዜ ይሰ  
 ሩት የነበረውን ክፋ ስራ ሁሉ ሰይቁ እየሰሩ እስ  
 ከዚህ ሰጥን ሲያሰቃዩ ኖሩ ::<sup>8</sup>

Fitawrari Māshāsha, obsessed by his pride of ancestry and the supremacy of his class attempts to stifle the youth out of Säbläwängel. He wants her to accept the norms of his obsolete world and live in it. Because of these impositions, Säbläwängel cannot do what her friends do. Realizing that she is the slave of her father's unjustifiable wishes in spite of her being born a lady, Säbläwängel is possessed by a mounting depression. Comparing herself with Habtish, she feels that she is the greater slave of the two. Habtish

could sing and laugh and even flirt with Gäbre uninhibitedly. She is free to do and act as she liked. Säbläwängel, on the other hand, fettered by the superficial norms of the nobility, is forced to say in a moment of envious depression:

..... ገደሮቹ የወጣትነት ስጦታቸውን ሲገልጹና  
የሰበ አንፋሎታቸው ሲወጣላቸው እኔም እንደነሱ  
ተነሱ ባንገተ ወይም ገጥም እየገጠምሁ በታላ  
ዘፍኝ እንዲወጣለኝ ደስሰ እንዲለኝ በጣም አፈላፊ  
ገለጻለሁ ::<sup>9</sup>

Finally, her love for Bāzabāh, gives Säbläwängel the courage to defy her father and thus the class he represents and the system he devoutly upholds. When the Fitawrari asks her about her relationship with Bāzabāh, she tells him the truth and, to his discomfiture, she refuses to marry the man he has chosen for her.

ከዚህ ጀምሮ ይወቁት ፡ ሃፍሰና ሥጋዬ አብረው እያሉ  
ለጭላላላገው ሰው ምንም ቢሆን አልሸጥም ::<sup>10</sup>

For Fitawrari Māshāsha this was a great offence not only against himself but also against his noble ancestors. He attributes this defiance to the effect of the "medicine" Bāzabāh has used upon her. The "medicine", however, was her love for Bāzabāh and Gudu Kassa's influence which is apparent in the thoughts and actions of both Bāzabāh and Säbläwängel.

Gudu Kassa understands the evils of the social system very clearly, and bitterly hates it. He does not only speak his mind about it but also challenges it in the open. Thus Fitawrari Māshāsha and his retinue consider him mad. Kassa's observations about his society are full of wisdom, but they are always considered as the ravings of a lunatic. Natural



Fikär Iskä Mäqabär, indeed, is a work of remarkable artistic merit. Its harmony of setting and characters and its artistic manipulation of literary techniques; apart from its social significance, will always secure a special place for it in the world of Amharic literature.

### ADÄFRĪS

Among the Amharic novels written so far, Dañachäw Worqu's AdäfrĪs stands out most conspicuously for its originality of style and its unparalleled excellence in the manipulation of literary techniques. The story in AdäfrĪs does not in itself hold fast our imagination or create suspense in us. There is little action in the whole book.

AdäfrĪs, the title hero, is a twenty-four years old university student doing his one-year National Service assignment, teaching Amharic and English in Däbrä Sina. City-born and city-bred, AdäfrĪs has very little knowledge of country customs. Before starting his National Service he goes to Armania, a little village where before long, we find him involved in a love triangle. He loves Roman and Şione loves him. Şione is the daughter of the feudal aristocrat widow, Woizäro Asägash, and Roman is the daughter of Wordofä, a tenant farmer and head servant to Woizäro Asägash. When Wordofä and his followers find AdäfrĪs talking to Roman by the stream where she had gone to draw water, they beat him mercilessly on the pretext that he was going to rape the girl. AdäfrĪs goes away to Däbrä Sina where Roman follows him just before her marriage. Although AdäfrĪs had given her no impression that he loved her, Şione also runs away to Däbrä Sina in search of him, again just before her marriage. Waizäro Asägash is infuriated by AdäfrĪs, thinking that he had eloped with her daughter. She takes

Adäfräs to court. Sione denies his involvement in her running away. This love triangle is finally broken and the conflict resolved when Adäfräs, hit by a stone during a student demonstration, suddenly dies and Sione treads her way to the nunnery.

The story in Adäfräs neither thrills nor arouses exalted feelings in us. The highest quality of the novel lies in its style. Dañachäw's diction is always appropriate. He chooses his words carefully. Woizäro Asägash and the peasant, Roman and Gorfu speak a language that is typical of the country. Kibrät, Ato Woldu and Adäfräs are different. Kibrät, and Ato Woldu are been-to's who throw in some French words here and there in their speech. Adäfräs, being city-bred, again uses a different level of speech.

The language in the dialogues between the various characters is a psychological revelation of their personalities. Woizäro Asägash is a typical feudal aristocrat who believes that she has God-given rights to rule over her tenants. She is proud and vengeful. She tells a tenant farmer who has come to her to beg for a loan of grain seeds:

እገዚአብሔር ከእመቤተህ ስለ ተሰጠረብህ፣ ገርግ ቀገ  
ሱን ከተከሻህ ላይ ስለገፈፈብህ፣ ማተህ ስለጌሽሽ  
ነፁ :: እርሻህ ተገፍዝሉ በዙ አጦር ተህ ቢሆን ኖሮ  
ኩራት እንደነፋህ ተኖሮ ነበር ::<sup>12</sup>

Woizäro Asägash hates to appear inferior in the eyes of anyone or to be considered so in any way. She invites Ato Tisso, the judge, to her house and before his arrival warns her daughter, Sione:

ገደለሽም ልጄ፣ የጢባይውን ስነገርሽ ስጧት...  
ከገግ ሰፊ ለሆነ ሠልጠን ሠልጠን ግለተ ለይከፋም—  
ባነጋገርሽ ባለባባሰሽ ባቋቋሽ እንኳን ባይቀር፣

ሁሉም ዘመናዊ መሆን አለበት :: -አያለን እንደ  
 ሌን፣ አያወቅን እንደሚኖርብን መሰለን መታወቅን  
 ለማን ይደላቸው ብለን ነው...? የለም ልዩ .  
 እንዲያውቀት ያሻል - - - አሰጋሽ የግዛ  
 ሰት ወይዘሮ ያለመሆን-እንደታ! ሊያውቀት  
 ያሻል ...<sup>13</sup>

The characters in Adäfräs are creations of their social circles. Moulded by their environment, they think, act and speak accordingly. Woizäro Asägash's speeches are usually interspersed with proverbs, which are considered to be a sign of wisdom by country people. When the tenant begs for a loan of grain seeds, she does not refuse him, but before everything she attempts to subdue him and put him in his proper place. She blames him for his undeserved pride, preaches obedience and submission to God and to herself. To do this she hurls at him a torrent of proverbs and wise sayings so that her words will have greater weight and her wisdom subdue him.

የወደቅትን ቢያቡ የጠሉትን ይቀላቁሙ.. ጠጉራም  
 ውሽ አለ ሲሉት በራብ ይዋት... አጭራ ደር በየ፡፡  
 ፍን ክምር ላይ ቁቅ ይጠገላል... ፍላጻ ባየር  
 ውስጥ አልፎ ፈለግ አይተም... ለቀንዳም በረ  
 ቤት አትከለክለሁ ቀንዳ ይከለክለዋል...  
 በሰም የተጠበቀ ጥርስ ቢስቀበት አያደምቅ ቢበ  
 ሉበት አያደቅ... ሰጭ ከሰሐተት ብረት ከዘገት  
 ብረት ከላፈላ አይላላ... ደም ማልቀስ ይገንጋይ  
 መንከሰ... ወረተን እንደተቀማ ነጋዳ ግግ  
 እንደ መታጭ ስንዳ... ከዘንጀር ጋሜ ያንበሳ  
 መላጣ... ተስከር ያየ ተግሪ ሸቀጥ ያየ  
 አጣሪ... እህል ያለው ፈርዛዛ ገንዘብ ያለው  
 ቀበዘባዛ... ወደ የጥጡት ቀልጥም ከፍርምባ  
 ይጥም... ወሰፊ ቢላግም ቀቤ አይወጋም...  
 ሲርጡ የታጠቀት ሲርጡ ይፈታል<sup>14</sup>

A city-boy educated upto university level, Adäfräs is an intellectual full of book-learning that tends to divorce him from reality. His language, derived mostly from books, is abstract and difficult to grasp not only for the peasants but also for Bälay, another educated young man. Wholly absorbed in his own feelings and blinded by the conviction and the words that gush out of him, Adäfräs speaks to the peasants assembled in court. They understand none of his high-flown and abstract oration or his new-fangled thoughts.

“... እስኪ ለመ ነገ ያህል የቤተሰብን አቋም  
ያፋለሱትን አንጻገው መሠረታዊ ጥያቄዎች እንጠ  
ይቀ:-... በከተማና በገጠር ሸርጫዎች ለምን  
በዙ - - - ?

“ ቀላል ኑሮ ስላገኙ ነዋ .” ይለዋል አንዱ ነገ  
ረተኛ አደፍርስ ነገሩን ሳይጨርሱ - - -  
አይደለም! አይደለም መልሱ እሱ አይደለም - - -  
መልሱን በኋላ እንሰጣለን -

እንደተሰ ለመ ቀነስ ይቻላል? ሁለተኛው ጥያቄ  
. . . “ወንጌራ ቸው በመመለስ - - - ሥራ  
ቤት በማቋቋም” ይለዋል ሌላ ነገረተኛ

- - - ለመልሱ አትጠይቁ መልሱን እኔ እስጣ  
ቸኋለሁ፣ አትቸኩሉ:- የሸማገሌና የአርጊት  
ፊት ለምን እየበዛ ይሄላል?

“ሳይጠጣው እየቀረ. ” በዘገታ ነገረተኛ:-

“ የወንጌ ወይም የሲቲ የዘመተ ፍላጎት ባለ  
መብረቶ” በዘገታ ሌላ ነገረተኛ:-

“ ሲቲ ወንጌ ወጣት እየፈለጉ” በዘገታ ሌላ  
ሌላ ነገረተኛ:-

Adäfräs and the peasants are worlds apart; they go on mis-  
understanding each other, separated by the barrier of their  
differing backgrounds and hence their modes of thought.

Amharic has a considerable number of onomatopoeic words but the ones used in Adäfräs are quite original and indicate the author's conscious creative effort in his diction. Instead of telling us in his own words about the sounds created by the cockroaches, housflies, frogs and bees, he makes us listen to them.

የፈንጣው ሰርሰር ታ፣ የዘንቡ ዘዘ ታ፣ የንቦቹ  
አምቶ ታ፣ በተሪያ ገብታው ያስተጋባል ። አውራ  
ደፀ አልፍ አልፍ ይኮኩላል ።<sup>16</sup>

Adäfräs is also full of beautifully constructed descriptive passages which create vivid images in the reader's mind. The technique of description is so skillfully manipulated in Adäfräs that it makes the reader literally see the object of description. Adäfräs sitting by the pond and throwing pebbles into it is described thus:

አህያዎ አጉዳባ ተገባና ጠጥታ ተመለሰለቸ፡- ።  
ጠጠር አያነሳ ወደ ከረፀ መፀርፀር  
ይጀምራል ። . . . አያረፈ - - - አያረፈ - - -  
ዘዎ ብሉ ይወረውራል - - - ጠብታ ተገሽ  
ክብ፡- ተልቅ ክብ - - - ተልልቅ ክብ - - -  
ተልልልቅ ክብ - - - ተልልልልቅ ክብ - - -  
ተልልልልልቅ ክቦች አየፈጠረ ይጠፋል ።

Or let us look at the powerful description of the heat in Robi, which makes us almost feel it, experiencing it vicariously while reading the passage:

የሮቢ ፀሐይ ያለፀተሮው ያንገባገባል፣ አራሰን  
ፈጥር ቀ አየገባ ።- በየመዓዘኑ ሲንተገተገ፣  
ርገባገባገባገባገባ ሲል ሲያውት አየሩ ሳይ  
ረገተ ሲያበጃ አየተቀረሰ በመውረድ ሳይ ያለ  
ኑው የሚመሰለፀው ።- አየተገረገረገ ። ዙሪያ

መረቱም እንዲሁ በረዎቹ በሱፋንና በባላጭት ይር  
 ገበገባል :: - እገርን በመዋል ቀቀ እየሰነጠረ ገ  
 ብተ ርገብገቢት ደረሰ ሲያጠኝ ያው የሚሰማው ::-  
 በረገጡት ቀጥር ::<sup>18</sup>

It is observed by many that the Amharic in Adäfräs is difficult to understand even for people with a considerable knowledge of the language. This is indeed true; but it should not be taken as a flaw in the writer or a shadow of demerit on the work. The language in Adäfräs is determined by its setting - the region around Däbrä Sina, in Shäwa. The Amharic used in the novel is a distinctive dialect of the region and therefore appropriate. The characters, shaped by their environment, reflect its impact upon them in their use of language as much as they do in their thoughts and actions. If they did not, they would not be true to nature and to their social circles, and therefore they would not be convincing.

It is to be observed that most Amharic novels ( including Fikär Iskä Makäbir) start with a narration of the marriage of the hero's parents and his birth or have somewhat similar beginnings. Events and incidents are chronological, dragging slowly and lacking suspense. In Adäfräs, however, the use of flashbacks has rendered this kind of narration unnecessary. Relevant details from the past which have a direct bearing on the story are drawn into it in the form of flashbacks. The novel has an abrupt beginning and we are taken back to the past whenever necessary. This is how we are told briefly of the early life of Woizäro Akälat, Adäfräs's mother:

ወይዘሮ አከሳት በዘመናቸው ብዙ ጀገናና መኳንንት  
 ያሰረገዱ ናቸው :: አምስት ጊዜ አገብተዋል :: ከአ  
 ምስቱ የተለያዩ ልጆች ወልደዋል :: አምስቱም  
 ባሉቻቸው በሕይወት የሉም፣ ዋተዋል ::... ለባል  
 ነት የሚረዱት ሰው ገን ከሰድሳ አመት በላይ መሆን  
 አለበት ባይ ናቸው :: የምን አጠባቂ ለባሽ ጉረምሳ፣

የምን ቤተክርስቲያን የማይሰምጥ፣ ጾም የማይጾም  
 የእንጨት ሸበት፡- ምራቅን የዋጠ፡- ራሱን የቻለ  
 ሰው - ሳይባባይ የሚሆነኝ ነው የምፈልገው  
 ይሳሉ በገሃድ ሲያወሩ ማዕረግ ያለው ወይስ የሌ  
 ለው ባል እንደሆነ የሚፈልጉት ሲጠየቁ መልባቸው፡-  
 ማዕረግ ማጠቃለያ ነው፣ ማዕረግ ገንዘብ ነው። አማራጭ፣  
 ጉጉ፣ ወሳኞች፣ ጋሳ፣ ተገራ፣ አጻል ቢሆን ገደሳ  
 ቸውም።- ሁሉም አንድ ነው፣ ዋናው ነገር መገባባት  
 በቻ ነው ይሳሉ እንደረሲጥ አርገውት፡- ስለዚህ  
 የማይወዷቸው አንጻንድ ሲተቸ " ባል አይመርጩ።"  
 የሚል ቀጽል አውጥተውላቸዋል ። 19

This flashback does not only introduce us to the early life of the lady but also to her far-from-conventional mode of thought. It is a brief but pertinent introduction to a new acquaintance.

The element of stream of consciousness, lacking in most Amharic creative works, is used conspicuously and skillfully in Adäfräs to reveal the inner personalities, desires and ambitions of characters. We know Adäfräs not only through his words and actions but also through his internal and secret thoughts. Attracted by Roman's natural beauty and simplicity, he walks to the stream to see her and talk to her if possible. While waiting for her to come back and draw water from the stream, he contemplates how she would react if he touched her, took hold of her, embraced her...

አሁን ለምሳሌ እኛዋን ያዘ ባደርገው፡- ጡቷን ጠበቅ፡-  
 ተከሻዋን አቁና እንደማድረግ - ሄሄ - ወሽቷን  
 ነው፣ ተከፋለች ። ደርሳ መከፋት ለባታት - - ስት  
 ሮጥ ሄጻ ነው የምትናገረው ለቤተሰቡ ሁሉ ። - በተለይ  
 ደቆ ለጸወኔ - - - ምን ትል እንዲህ እንዲህ አረገኝ  
 ጠትላት? እሷን እንኳን ገና አስከዘህ አልተጠጋጋትም - - -  
 በዚያ ላይ ደቆ የወርዶፋ ልጅ - - - በሷ ቤት እሷ  
 ያሰጋሽ ልጅ ስለሆነኝ የምትበልጥብኝ መሰረታል፡- - -

አሁን ለምሳሌ የተኛ ዋን ተመርጦለሁ ብባል ለሚሰ  
 ተነት — — — አላገባም እንጂ፣ እኔ — — —  
 እውነት ነፁ የተኛ ዋን እመርጣለሁ — — — ?  
 ርግን ይንገጥ ነቸ :: — — — ይንገጥ ነገር እኔ  
 እጠጋለሁ ::<sup>20</sup>

This internal monologue is a revelation of the real Adäfräs and his most intimate desires. He considers the simplest physical contacts with Roman very seriously, very feelingly. He intellectualizes everything. When he asks her if he could touch her breasts, after she returned to the stream, Roman is simplicity itself. She innocently uncovers her breasts and beckons him to touch them.

ምንጥገረገ ታይያ፣ — — — ይንኩት — — — አላስ  
 ርፍም ይኸፀላያ ይንኩት — — — አይዘያ ይንኩት<sup>21</sup> — —  
 አያመገምክ እስከዚህ — — — ይንኩት — — —

Adäfräs is indeed a remarkable work of art in which are concentrated various literary techniques; in fact, so many of them that the conscious reader wonders at the skill of its creator. Dañachäw knows his art form and knowing it, strives to perfect it carefully. This cannot be said of most Amharic writers. The originality of his style is the result of a conscious and presumably hard intellectual and imaginative labour.

NOVELS OF THE NEW ETHIOPIA

At present the Amharic novel has achieved a higher level of development particularly in its political content. Earlier Amharic novels touched upon social and political problems only tangentially. Even Fikir Iskä Mäkäbir, which is considered to be a novel of great social and political significance does not hit the core of the problem in Ethiopian society explicitly. This state of affairs was the direct result of the socio-economic and political conditions that prevailed in the country. Criticism of the government in any way was considered high treason and thus absolutely forbidden. All forms of literary creativity were stifled by censorship unless they pandered to the tastes of the ruling class. This should not, however, be taken literally to signify a complete abolition of the problem of censorship today. We still have problems in censorship not because of government policy to that effect but, because of the limitations of the people who do the actual censoring.

Today, the peoples of Ethiopia are engaged in a determined struggle to build a new Ethiopia, firmly established upon the principles of justice, equality and freedom from oppression and exploitation. Literature has become an instrument to enhance the political consciousness of the people, and effective weapon in the class struggle. In this section, we will attempt to discuss two novels of great political significance that were published recently by the Ethiopia Book Centre.

MA'IBÄL: YABIYOT WAZEMA

The background for Birhanu Zärihun's Ma'ibäl: Yabiyot Wazema is the period just prior to the eruption of the popular Ethiopian Revolution of February, 1974. The novel is primarily an exposition of the great imbalance in the life style of the aristocracy and members of the ruling

class, on the one hand, and the masses of the oppressed peoples of Ethiopia on the other. It is a gloomy painting of the social and political ulcers that were eating into the Ethiopian society. In the Ethiopia of those days famine had swept over the whole country but its effects were conspicuously felt in Wallo, where hundreds of the peasants were dying of starvation every day. While the toiling masses of the Wällo peasantry, deprived of even the bare necessities of life, were turned into mere scavengers, made so by hunger and starvation, the aristocrats were wallowing in wealth and exuberant pleasure.

It was a period of turmoil that witnessed unprecedented brutality and fiendishness on the part of the ruling class to keep the oppressed masses in subjugation. The shooting of the Wällo peasants at Zīgba Meda <sup>22</sup> and the beating and imprisonment of students demonstrating in the streets of Addis Abäba are manifestations of the final and desperate struggles for survival by the ruling class.

Ma'ibäl is a documentary novel. It is subtitled ታሪክ ጥንታዊ and in its preface, the author states that it is a historical novel based on actual events and admits that he has included some reports and explanations because of the difficulty in presenting some of these events artistically. Although the excerpts from the reports of various committees that we find at the beginning of each chapter are included to highlight certain historical events, they have undeniably thrown shadows on the artistic value of the work in general.

The greatest quality of Ma'ibäl is its partisanship. It is written from the point of view of the oppressed and stands on their side in their struggle against oppression and exploitation. It is the cry of the Wallo peasantry, and all suffering peoples, by implication, for bread, for

justice and for equality. This is what gives Ma'ibäl a special place of honour in Amharic literature.

Bärhanu admits that he has no formal training in the art of writing.<sup>24</sup> But through sheer hard work, born out of his love for literature, he has proved himself a writer of remarkable talent and capability. Apart from its documentary nature, the novel, as a whole, is well-constructed, the characters are well-portrayed and the dialogue form is well-manipulated. Bärhanu has also retained the simplicity of language manifested in his earlier works.

The gloom of the Wallo famine permeates all the pages of Ma'ibäl. It is a vast picture of suffering-suffering from hunger, suffering from merciless oppressions, suffering from bullets and tear gas, suffering from imprisonment and insecurity. The story in Ma'ibäl stops at the decisive point of the eruption of the Ethiopian Revolution, giving us only a brief glimpse of the turmoil in which the oppressed masses of the Ethiopian people declare a fierce war of retaliation against their brutal masters. The sequel to this novel Ma'ibäl 2: Yabot Mäbacha which will deal with the eruption and further progress of the Revolution as its setting is expected to be published soon.

### YÄKÄY KOKÄB TIRRI

Whereas Bärhanu's Ma'ibäl has the period just prior to the eruption of the Ethiopian Revolution as its setting, Bäalu Gärma's Yäkäy Kokäb Tirri is a novel of the revolution itself. So far, it is the only Amharic novel written with the Ethiopian Revolution as its setting. Based upon the fierce struggle waged by the masses of the Ethiopian people against their class enemies - the feudal aristocracy and its sympathizers - Yäkäy Kokäb Tirri depicts the period of the "Red Terror" during which, the people struck the decisive blow against internal reactionary elements. It reflects the intricate and bitter nature of the class struggle,

Like Ma'ibäl, Yäkäy Kokäb Tärri is partisan. Apart from its revolutionary content, it is a well-executed novel. The characters are portrayed realistically except for Hirut and Īma'älaf as we shall see later. The plot is skillfully constructed and various other literary techniques like dialogues and descriptions are remarkably manipulated.

Däräbe is the pivot around which the story is set in motion. As chairman of the Revolutionary Guard in his Käbäle, Daribe is torn between his loyalty to his former master and mistress and his love for their daughter, Hirut, on the one hand, and his duty as a revolutionary on the other. He vacillates but only for a short spell. His former master and mistress had unwittingly made him share their secret. He had helped them bury their rifle and he knew it was unlawful. He loves Hirut passionately and he knows that she is a member of the reactionary underground group EPRP. After a raking internal struggle with himself, he finally resolves to answer the "call of the Red Star".

Däräbe's sacrifice of everything he cherished for the sake of the revolution is a symbolization of the victory of the revolution itself and his suffering an illustration of the bitter sacrifices demanded by the revolution and which genuine revolutionaries paid for in blood and life. Yäkäy Kokäb Tärri indicates that the struggle on the part of reactionaries, to foil the Ethiopian Revolution was carried out in various forms. They waged open and underground armed struggle and killed revolutionaries in the streets. They spread false and malicious rumours against the revolution. Yäkäy Kokäb Tärri touches upon all these and similar problems of the Revolution, and portrays the class struggle in all its aspects. It indicates that the class struggle is a boundless battle permeating all spheres of life. It is not fought only in battle fields and political forums but also in streets, homes, offices and bars.

Yäkäy Kokäb Tärri probes so suggestively into some of the radical paradoxes of a society undergoing a radical change in all spheres of life. Perhaps the most significant feature of the novel is its harmonious wedding of form and content. Apart from its political significance, Yäkäy Kokäb Tärri is a literary work of real merit, a masterpiece in its own right. The appropriateness of the language, the vivid descriptions and most of all the realness of the characters, are qualities that deserve to be applauded.

Among the characters in Yäkäy Kokäb Tärri, Hirut and Im'a'ilaf seem to be unreal and unconvincing. Hirut, like the heroines in Bäalu's earlier novels, is too lusty and passionate for an Ethiopian girl. She is too dominating and vengeful, a sadist out to torture men and destroy them.

Im'a'ilaf also defies our conventional conception of the artist. He is an ascetic living in the jungle of society. He is shown to lead a simple life, but his simplicity is reflected in the shabbiness of his clothes and the bareness of his room which is strewn with books and papers. He is shown standing at a bar, chewing "çhat" and sipping his hot tea while his play is being shown in the theatre; he is an idealist who hates marriage and preaches free-love. He is neither a typical Ethiopian nor a typical writer, and therefore not convincing.

CHAPTER III  
AMHARIC DRAMA

Albert X Gerard, Stephen Wright and other scholars contended that drama is a genre completely lacking in roots in the native Ethiopian tradition and believe that the original inspiration for the young Ethiopian drama came from foreign and particularly western sources. Drama, in its modern and highly developed form, of course, could not have existed in traditional culture. However, for those acquainted with the Ethiopian traditional marriage and hunting songs and dances, the traditional funeral dirges and work songs, the patriotic "shiläla" and "kärärto" or even the songs and dances of the clergy of the Ethiopian Orthodox church with their colourful costumes, it is impossible to conclude that drama had completely no root in the indigenous Ethiopian tradition.

Serious and modern Amharic drama is still in its infancy. It is no more than seventy years old. The first Amharic play Fabula (Yänsäshoch Komedi) by Bäjrond Täklä' Hawariat was staged at the beginning of this century. Its political content and scathing satire, however, put an end to all theatrical performances until 1930. Then plays resumed to be produced and staged on a larger scale with the introduction of modern education into the country and the opening of Minilik II and Täfäri Makonnin schools.

The major sign that points to the fact that the art of drama is developing in any country is the preparation of a special place of performance. The Greek amphitheatres for theatrical performances that were built about 2000 years ago and the Roman stadiums for gladiatorial shows are instances of this. Similarly it was the founding of the Hagär Fikär Theatre in 1927 that laid the foundation for modern theatre in Ethiopia.

The Hagär Fikär Theatre was initially meant to be a place where patriotic feeling was fostered, unity glorified

and loyalty to the king emphasized. It was a forum for the exchange of ideas. Later, traditional music and dances were introduced as parts of its activities. These activities were, however, immediately disrupted by the Italian invansion.

After the fascist Italian invansion, the Hagär Fikir Theatre was set up again as an institution for the preservation of culture and as a house of music and plays. This theatre alone was not sufficient to run the theatrical activities of the country and the more modern National Theatre was set up in 1948. The new stage was at first monopolized by writers from the upper class like Mäkonñin Indalkachäw and Käbädä Mikael who presented expensive productions of their moralistic and historical works. It was much later that young and forward-looking dramatists like Mängistu Lämna, Şägaye Gäbära Mädhin and Täsfaye Gässässä took over the stage and presented their modern plays of social value.

The earliest Amharic plays dealt mainly with the Italian invasion and the exploits of the Ethiopian patriots during the war. Naturally, we can assume that the stage performances were rather primitive and that the stage decorations and scenes were crude. Play scripts were poorly constructed and usually the text of the play and the stage directions were mixed as could be seen in the scripts of some of the plays that have survived.

The playwrights and actors were not acquainted with modern theatrical techniques. They lacked the know-how but possessed such a strong love of the art that they persisted in their awkward efforts. It was only with the return of professional dramatists trained abroad like Täsfaye Gässässä, Wägayähu Nägatu, Däbäbä Ishätu and Şägaye Gäbrä Medhın that Amharic drama started to be perfected.

The founding of the creative Arts Centre in 1953 by Dr. Philip Kaplan has contributed a great deal to the development of theatre in Ethiopia. The Creative Arts Centre inspired many young actors and dramatists.

Many plays have been written since Bajrond Takla Hawariat's Fabula and the art has undergone a qualitative change both in form and content. Amharic drama has gone through a similar process of evolution as has the Amharic novel. Originally it inclined to be rather moralistic and didactic but gradually acquired the mature treatment of social and political matters.

During the post-revolution period drama has shown greater fecundity compared with any other literary medium. Today plays based on burning social issues are being produced and staged all over the country not only by professionals but also by the multitude of "Kinat Guads" that have mushroomed in the Kābāles.

Amharic drama has reached its present stage of development predominately through the persistent effort of individual dramatists. Yoftahe Nigussie, Mākonnin Endalkachāw, Kābādā Mikael, Šāgaye Gābrā Mādhin, Tesfaye Gāssāssā and Mengistu Lāmma are only some of the most prominent Ethiopian playwrights who have made great contributions to the development of drama in Ethiopia. This chapter will discuss from various angles representative dramatic works of the most prominent Ethiopian Playwrights.

#### FABULA: YÄNSÄSOCH KOMEDI

Bäjrond Täklä Hawariat's Fabula (1904) the first Amharic play, is a four-act allegorical play satirizing the corruption and injustice of the feudal ruling classes. In his preface to the play, the Bäjrond states that he wrote the play as an advice and a warning to Lij Iyasu. He further explains that

after the death of Emperor Minilik, Lij Iyassu who was only fifteen, completely abandoned his responsibilities and indulged himself in reckless bouts of drinking and adultery. Surrounded by irresponsible counselors, he committed deeds that increased his unpopularity. The Bäjron, saddened by this state of Affairs, decided to write this play with a profound conviction in its corrective value.

Täklä Hawariat understood the educative value of drama and composed his comedy to serve as an instructive entertainment. Concerning the nature of plays, Täklä Hawariat makes the following figurative statement in verse in his preface to the play,

ከሶና ቁጭ ነገር ይመሰሰሳሉ።  
 ያለጣባፈጣ ስጅግ ይመራሉ ::  
 ከሶን ለልጅ መስጠት በጣር ጠቅሉ ነፁ።  
 ጣሩ ስ የጠፈጠው ከሶው ስንዲያድነው ::<sup>1</sup>

Fabula has no plot or story as such, It is a collection of dialogues between sheep, a wolf, a lamb, a fox, a crow, a snake, a goat and a shepherd, organized systematically. It lacks action and therefore is likely to be rather monotonous in a stage presentation. Since the Bäjron had travelled abroad and was acquainted with Western literature, it is only logical to assume that this play was inspired by the fables of Aesop and La Fontaine.

One early morning, a lamb is overpowered by sleep and left behind when the flock had gone grazing. Being rather thirsty, it decides to go down to the stream. There it is met by a wolf which accuses it of disturbing the water and making it impure for him to drink. Here is a part of the dialogue between the two:

ገለገለ፣

እረ ከቡር ገታ እገዛር ያሳይ ያ  
 እርሰ ያን ሲጠቁ ከፀደሳይ አየሁ  
 እኔ የነበርኩት ከፀደታቸዎ  
 እስቲ እንዳት አባቲ አደፈርሳለሁ ::

ተኩላ፣

ሀሀይ ደዋ ተጥጥፋ ተ የጣስ ተባባሉ  
 እንዲህ ያለ ጥጋብ አሁን እስቲ በሉ፣  
 እንዲያፀሰ አንተላ አዎና አልሰደብኩኝም<sup>2</sup>

The poor lamb argues the impossibility of the charge since the wolf was upstream and it was downstream, but intent upon destroying the lamb the wolf piles up his false accusations and finally jumps on its helpless victim.

This anecdote is a symbolic presentation of the abuse of power by members of the ruling class who victimize the people to satisfy their own selfish desires. Whereas the earliest Amharic novels were largely religious and moralistic, this first play in Amharic is conspicuously political. Its central theme is the misfeasance and corruption of members of the ruling class.

Here is another telling anecdote in the comedy. A cat goes to the kingdom of rats where it stealthily kills and devours them. Frightened out of their wits by this ferocious and powerful enemy, the rats sit in council in an attempt to find a means of killing it. Some of them, however, reject the plans for fear of the consequences of being discovered by the cat. Finally, one of the rats suggests that they tie a small bell around the cat's neck instead of killing it. Everyone applauds the wisdom of the new plan but none dares to put it into practice.

This is an indirect reference to Lij Iyassu's growing unpopularity and the fear of the people to do anything about it for fear that they would be punished. This is only one

example of the scathing satire in the play. The following lines, one can observe, are a rather direct criticism of the corruption, inefficiency and injustice that prevailed in the country.

ጥንተ አባ ተቻቸን የሸሙሉን ወንበር  
 በደላኛው ታይ ተ እንዲቀጣ ነበር  
 ኋላ ገን እያደር ዘዳ እየተራባ  
 የጠጣ ዳኝነት ባገራቸን ገባ  
 ሁለት ባላገርቸ በተከሰሰሰሉት  
 ዳኛው ለሁሉ ቆይ ኃጢአት ፈላገ  
 ለዙያም ለዙያም ቢሆን ፍርድን ሳያይሉት  
 ተሁሉ ቆይ ወገን ይቀበላል ገቦ ::<sup>3</sup>

The play in general is full of piercing remarks about the injustice of the ruling classes.

ደርሶ ተኃይለኛ ላናገኝ ጠዳኛ  
 በከንቱ እየገገን እንደከጥለን እኛ ::<sup>4</sup>

The political intent of this play did not pass unnoticed by some members of the ruling class. Although its first performance was a success, it deeply wounded many powerful feudal aristocrats, as a result of which all theatrical performances were banned until 1930.

### AFAJÄSHIN

Yoftahe Nigussie's Afajäshin was written in 1929. It is a play about the fall of Ethiopia due to the greed and selfishness of its children. In the course of the play Afajäshin (symbolizing Ethiopia) is sold away to her enemies by her traitorous children and finally rescued by Hailä Liul (symbolizing Hailä Selassie).

In the first scene, Afajäshin is very ill and it is a long time since she has taken to bed. Hailä Liul, her warder,

is disturbed by her continuous illness and tries to procure her some medicine. Before he has succeeded in doing so, some outsiders come with the claim that they can cure Afajashin and approach her in the guise of friendship. While the family is deliberating on the proposal of these outsiders, a hot discussion ensues during which Hailä Liul strongly advises Afajäshin's children to stand in unity.

በገሰ ጉዳይ ሆኖ አንድነታቸውን አታይኩሙት :: መቀናናት  
የአንድነትን ገደል ያፋሰሳል፣ መተባበር የአንድነትን  
ገደል ያደባሰ ::<sup>5</sup>

Since this play was written just prior to the Italian invasion, Hailä Liul's speech seems to have been topical. Afajäshin's children applaud the advice but apparently forget it only too soon. Afajäshin is stolen, actually sold away. Hailä Liul becomes sad to desperation and goes on an expedition in search of her and finally rescues her.

The play in general is an expression of the traditional conception of the prominent role played by Hailä Slassie during the Italian invasion and in the subsequent independence of Ethiopia.

Technically Afajäshin is rather crude, but it is a representative example of the earliest Amharic plays. It lacks detailed descriptions of scene. Let us look at an example.

ዳቦ ተቀረሰ ጠዲቅ ታደለ፣ ባንደኛው ገደብን ከተቀመጡት  
አርሰ በርሳቸው ሲጠይቁ ይቀዳና በድንገት አንዱ ያከሰ  
ቱን ዋት ይሰጣል ::<sup>6</sup>

There is no detailed information as to how the bread is to be cut into pieces and distributed. We are not informed which group of persons carries on the discussion, what they are discussing and how the man who has heard about his aunt's death responds.

There is no logical or theatrical justification for the entry into and disappearance from the stage of the various characters. Most of the scenes begin with Afajäshigñ on the stage, rendering the play rather monotonous. This is how three of the scenes are described:

አፋጀሽን ታጣ  
 አፋጀሽን ተቀጣጣ  
 አፋጀሽን ስተጸላይ?

One of the most important features of a good play is that it should resemble life. The plot and characters have to be convincing. We do not know how Afajäshigñ suddenly disappears. The incident becomes even more ridiculous when we find her replaced by a mummy. This is in no way convincing to an adult audience.

One of the unique features of Afajäshigñ, however, is the intermingling of two incompatible conditions in the same scene. Sorrow and happiness, mourning and festivity are artistically interwoven in the play. While the family and friends are celebrating "Kidänä Mährät" in Afajäshigñ's house, just before her disappearance, a man learns of the death of his aunt. Immediately after he starts crying, a group of young people come in singing the Christmas song whereupon mourning and festivity become intermingled. The mourner cries to the tune of the song.

አልቃሽ፣    ሸረጦ ዩ፣    አረጦ ዩ፣    አረጦ ዩ፣  
ተቀባይ፣    አሃሃ  
አልቃሽ፣    አሰይ  
ተቀባይ፣    አሃሃ ሸረጦ ዩ አጦ ዩ  
አልቃሽ፣    ሸረጦ ዩ፣    አረጦ ዩ፣    ሸረ አጣጣ ሆ፤  
ተቀባይ፣    አሃሃ ሸረ አና ተ ሆ፤<sup>8</sup>

This scene has a humorous impact on the surface but it is also a symbolic rendering of life as two-faced: sorrow and happiness. It is also a foreshadowing of the sorrow that is to follow Afajāshīñ's disappearance and the joy at her subsequent rescue.

Yoftahe is a very gifted poet whose musical verse has won him great renown. Although Afajāshīñ is written in a prose that lacks flavour, Yoftahe's poetic ability comes to the fore in those parts of the play where we find some lines of verse. The poem's musicality, as we shall see makes it more suitable for singing than speaking or reading..

አፀራጅ፣ አፋጀሽን አፋጀሽን አለም ያለፀ ዳር ነፀ  
ንቸ  
አፋጀሽን አፋጀሽን መቼም አለታፀ ቀ መጠጃ  
መምጫሽ

በይ ተላላሽ ::

ተቀባይ፣ - - - - -  
አፀራጅ፣ አፋጀሽን ዛሬም ቀደምም አፋጀሽን አፋጀሽን  
አፋጀሽን አፋጀሽን  
መቸ አነሰ ነበር በፊት የሠራሽን አፋጀሽን  
አፋጀሽን  
አለም ያለፀ ዳር ነፀ ያንቸጣ ልብሽ  
አፋጀሽን አፋጀሽን  
አፋጀሽን መቼም አለታፀ ቀ መጠጃ መምጫሽ  
በይ ተላላሽ ::

ተቀባይ፣ - - - - -  
አፀራጅ፣ አፋጀሽን አንቺ ልጅ አንቺ ልጅ አኔ ፀየፀ  
ላንቺ አንቺም ፀየፀ ለኔ አፋጀሽን አፋጀሽን  
የሠራሽን ሥራ ጸድቀና ኩነኔ አፋጀሽን አፋጀሽን  
አፋጀሽን አፋጀሽን  
አለም ያለፀ ዳር ነፀ - - - - -

ተቀባይ፣ - - - - -

አጭር፣ አፋጀሽ ሰሠራሽ ሥራ ባደረገሽ ነገር  
 አፋጀሽ  
 ቀይ እኔ ሰመጣ ሲደላይላ አገር አፋጀሽ  
 አፋጀሽ  
 አለም ያለፀ ቶር ነፀ - - - - 9

We shall deal with Yoftahe's poetical works in the chapter on Amharic poetry.

YÄDÄM DÄMS

The Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1928 and the five years of subsequent strife and bloodshed have inspired a number of Ethiopian writers. Yädäm Däms which was written in 1939 is a play based upon this gloomy period of Ethiopian history and extolling the martyrdom of Abuna Petros, the then head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The purely political problem of Ethiopia's invasion by fascist Italians is used in this play as a means for magnifying the Christian virtues of selflessness and forbearance.

It is true that Yädäm Däms includes some indictment of white colonialism, but its emphasis is more on the duty of the people towards their Emperor. In a way, it is an attempt to justify the feudal system that prevailed in the country. When one of the turn-coat prison guards who had gone over to the Italian side asks Abunä Petros what the Emperor and the nobility had done for the people, the Abun answers:

የቀደም ነገሥታትና መሣፍንት ባላባት የኢትዮጵያን ነጻነት  
 በደግግ ተፀውቶ የመሠረተ/ና ተፀው/10

Here is Mäkönnän's misrepresentation of history, portraying it up-side-down; presenting the kings and the nobility as the makers of history. Written Ethiopian history is generally the history of kings, princes and the nobility. The masses of the people, the actual makers of history, are forgotten, left in the background or only given secondary importance.

Since Mäkonnin was not only a feudal aristocrat himself but also a staunch supporter of the system and its most articulate spokesman, it is no wonder that he reflects the values of the feudal ruling classes in this play as well as in his other works.

In the last part of the play, a dialogue between Ethiopians of varying ethnic origins and religions is presented after the execution of Abunä Petros. Shaken by the Abun's forbearance and martyrdom, they all take an oath to take to the jungles and fight against the fascist invaders and defend their country to the last. Even the Moslem woman, who arrives last and whom the others fear lest she should inform on them, is moved by the Abun's patriotic fervour and declares:

When I say this monk die with patriotism, as though he knew it was a jihad, I honoured the christian faith. (She falls on her knees) what mighty strength! What glorious, fate! What pride of motherland! To die in a jihad for his faith, for his motherland, for his Emperor's honour! Petros! Petros! Petros! If thou doest die, thy fame eternal shall not die!

This is an attempt on the part of the playwright to inspire patriotism in the people and emphasize the need for unity among all Ethiopians against the common enemy, irrespective of difference of tribe or creed. It capitalizes on the need for absolute loyalty to the Emperor as well.

The central theme of the play as contained in the title which means "the voice of blood", is power of sacrifice. The blood of the true and the innocent cries out for vengeance and is in due course avenged.

The play in general manifests some technical defects primarily in its scene descriptions. The descriptions lack essential details which would have facilitated the stage presentation of the play. Here is such a scene description at the beginning of the play.

ከቡር አዎክቡራን ገራዚያኒ፣ ማርቫል ገራዚያኒ ::  
 ገራዚያኒ ደወለ ይደውላል፣ አሸከር ይገባል ::  
 ገራዚያኒ መኳንንቱን ጥራ ይላል :: አሸከር መኳንን  
 ቱን ይጠራል :: መኳንንቱ ይመጣሉ ::<sup>12</sup>

This description lacks the essential information about the setting, the looks and costumes of the characters, the actual words in the conversations, the movement and entry or exit . Otherwise the play in general is quite well constructed.

### YÄTINBIT KÄTÄRO

Familiar with the masterpieces of the European dramatic tradition and a great admirer of Shakespeare<sup>13</sup>, Käbädä Mikael is considered by many to be the founder of serious and modern Amharic drama. Yätinbit Kätäro,<sup>14</sup> Käbädä's first play, was published in 1939. It is a religious piece dealing with the theme of prophecy reasserting the fatalist belief that none can hinder the Divine will.

In the first act of the play, we see a pagan astrologer whose wife is suffering from the pangs of childbirth, praying for the child to be born at a particular moment. The king of the country suddenly appears and requests the astrologer for an explanation. Not knowing that he was talking to the king, the poor astrologer declares that the infant would some day marry the king's daughter and eventually convert the people to Christianity. Angered beyond measure and shaken by the prophecy, the king gets the infant stolen by his soldier, slits its stomach with a knife and has it thrown away in the forest.

Act two brings us to events twenty years later. During one of the king's visits to the country, a Christian priest comes to him with a protest about the persecution of the Christians in the land. The old priest was accompanied by a blooming

and handsome lad carrying a gift to the king. Upon enquiry, the king learns that this was the same lad he had tried to kill in his infancy. The king wills that the lad be kept behind and later sends him with a written message to the palace.

The message read that its carrier he killed immediately on arrival at the palace. Exhausted by the long journey, the lad rests in the palace garden where he is soon overpowered by sleep. While taking her habitual walk in the garden, the king's daughter finds him sound asleep with the king's letter in his bosom. In her eagerness to get news of her father she stealthily takes the letter and reads it and greatly grieved by its contents, she immediately tears it and replaces it with another letter signed with a duplicate of the king's signature stamp which she always carried with her.

When the king finally arrives at his palace, he finds himself in the midst of much singing and merriment. He demands for an explanation and learns that the lad he had sent to be killed has paradoxically married his daughter. The daughter confesses her deeds and asks for forgiveness but her father tells her that it was none of her fault for it was the will of God.

It is easy to observe traces of Western literature in Kabada's plays.<sup>15</sup> In this particular play the theme of prophecy that we find in the Sophoclean tragedies is conspicuous. Yätinbit Kätäro, being an expression of the omniscient power of God and the ultimate victory of the true faith, overlooks concrete reality. It is a continuation of traditional Amharic literature which is replete with preaching and moralizing, religious and otherworldly.

From the technical aspect the play is quite well-constructed. The plot is rather simple but not altogether very convincing. The play is written in a flawless verse that is characteristic of Kabada's works. But his verse, in spite of its perfect metre, is rather dull.

It is true that Yätinbit Käjäro has certain major flaws. The story of the lad, for instance, is repeatedly told by his astrologer father, by the priest and then by the king himself, making the play rather redundant and hence monotonous.

#### TEWODROS

None of the Ethiopian Emperors has inspired so many Ethiopian writers as has Tewodros, a controversial figure applauded by many as an innovator and unifier and considered by others as a blood-thirsty tyrant. A considerable number of novels and plays have been written about Tewodros among which is here discussed Girmachaw Täklä Hawariat's play, Tewodros.

Tewodros, published in 1948, is a verse drama in six acts. Faithful to history, it traces in detail the life of Tewodros from his "outlaw" days to the tragic hour of his heroic death. Tewodros is history in the form of drama rather than drama based upon history. In fact, a number of footnotes are attached to the text for the clarification of certain historical events.

The central theme of the play is the political problem of modernization. Tewodros is intent not only upon unifying his country which had been divided into petty kingdoms among petty kings and princes but also upon leading it to modernization. His noble ambition, however, is shattered for various reasons. His genuinely tragic fate is the outcome of two conditions. First, his attempt to set up a modern centralized state was premature, when we consider the socio-historical conditions that prevailed at the time.

He had to fight against a whole nation that was shackled by backward tradition. On the other hand he was impatient and firm in his resolutions. He hated to bend. As a result

most of his followers, except for his few true friends deserted him and scattered his path with thorns.

The second and probably most important cause for Tewodros's tragic fate was his violence. He was driven to desperation when his ambition fell short of its mark and resorted to violence, as a result of which he increased the number of his enemies. He lacked the tact and diplomacy that a great leader like himself needed in times of strife and popular discontent.

The intent of this play is to instill a feeling of patriotism in the people and extoll the love of the motherland and emphasize the need for unity. It is an attempt to point out the danger of force carried beyond limit and the necessity for tact and diplomacy.

The most significant feature of this play is the writer's attitude towards Tewodros. Here Tewodros is not portrayed as a blood-thirsty tyrant but as an innovater, a unifier and a reformer whose love for his country transcends everything. Just before committing suicide, standing on the verge of death, Tewodros does not pray for himself or show any self-pity, but is profoundly concerned for his country. Here is his soliloquy:-

ካፋሩ ላይ ቀጣ አገራን ል የፀ  
 በቃ ተለያየን ልሰናበተው :: ...  
 /ከፍ ካለ በታ ላይ ጭፍ ያስተፀላሉ/  
 ይኸን ሁሉ አገር ስንተ ረገጥኩት  
 አንድ አንዲህን ነበር እኔ የደከሁኩት ::  
 የታለ የበቀለፀ የዘረሁት ሁሉ?  
 ምድረ በዓ መስሏል ሰጃቸው የሌሉ ::  
 አስቢላሽ ነበር በጣሙን ከሰቤ  
 አንሰጣጣም አሉ ልጆቸሽ ካሳቤ ::  
 ምኞቱን ሰላረጸም ዕድሉ አምቤ ካለ  
 ይገዛሽ ኢት ዩጵያ ከኔ የተሻለ ::

እኔን እዋ ታላሁ ክብራን ሰላሰ ነካ  
 እድላውን ይሰጥሽ በኔ የሚተካ ::  
 ከክፋ ያደገሽ እስከ ዘላለሙ  
 ተራራ ሸለቆሽ ሁሌ ይለምልሙ ::  
 ዘላለም ልጆቻሽ ተከብረው ይኑ  
 ዘላለም ተከብረው ዘላለም ይፈሩ ::  
 ከም ቁኛ ጠላት እገዢ ይጠብቅሽ  
 ከመለያየትም ሁልጊዜ ያደገሽ ::  
 ኢትዮጵያ አገራ ነሽ ምድረ ገነት  
 ግንም አይደፍርሽም የወንዶቹ እናት ::  
 ደህና ሁኚ ኢትዮጵያ ሃገረ ሰላም  
 ኑሪ በነጻነት እስከ ዘላለም ::<sup>16</sup>

Girmachäw's view of Tewodros is radically different from that of Mäkönnin Indalkachäw as depicted in Taitu Bitṭul, where Tewodros is presented as a despicable adulterer and merciless despot; indeed as a messenger of doom. Girmachaw's conception of Tewodros conforms with that of young educated Ethiopians of our day who look upon Tewodros as a symbol of progress and unity.

#### YALACHA GABICHA

The play Yalacha Gabicha,<sup>17</sup> first published in 1957 is a comedy about marriage and generation conflict. Bahiru, a young man educated in England and lately returned to Ethiopia, settles in a small village near Kulubi, the famous shrine of St. Gäbriel. He turns his house into a school where he teaches the village children. One day, Lady Alganäsh Dubida, his aunt, pays him a visit on her way to make a pilgrimage to Kulubi Gäbriel and informs him of her intention to get him married to Bibita, an educated girl of good social standing with a line of illustrious ancestors including Emperor Galawdics. She had already consulted the village diviner, Abba Mammito and the professional astrologer Aya Lizibu to find out if Bibita was the right girl for Bahiru.

Bahiru loves his life in the village and does not want to abandon it and go back to the city. Moreover, he is already married to Bäläte, his maid and does not intend to leave her. On the other hand, he is afraid of his dominating aunt and cannot transgress her wish. When Lady Alganäsh finally learns of his clandestine marriage to Bäläte, she becomes wild with anger. She assumes that Bäläte had used some evil charm on Bahiru to make him marry her. With this optimistic conviction, she orders Aya Lizibu to prepare the antidote to Bäläte's evil charm and free Bahiru from the tangles of love that he had fallen into.

Aya Lizibu manipulates Bäläte's supersititious mentality and warns her that she would die unless she immediately left Bahiru. Bäläte, frightened out of her wits, leaves Bahiru but returns to him before long. The diviner Abba Mamito had told her that Lizibu's warnings were absolute lies.

In this comedy about the traditional practice of marriage arranged on the basis of ancestry and social class along with the conflict of values of the old and the new generations, Mängistu's profound knowledge of both the traditional and modern ways of life has provided him with a unique opportunity to portray the situation effectively.

The character portrayal in Yalacha Gabicha reveals a high level of artistry and skill. Bahiru is a typical representative of the young Ethiopian been-to's of the period with their markedly strong desire to bring about change and introduce western civilization in the country. Thus he selflessly buries himself in the country where he becomes a school teacher. To the horror of his traditionalist aunt, he sits at the table with his cook, and later his maid-wife, Bäläte. This liberal and human gesture of Bahiru's draws only a scathing ridicule from Lady Alganäsh.

አሸከርና ጌታ የጢባላው ነገር ያረጃ የጠረጠሶ ጊዜው  
 ያለፈ የነፈሰበት ያገር ልጣድ ስለሆነ መሻር አለበት ::  
 ወይዘሮ አሳጋነሽ ጥባባም ካበረረ ወጥቤት ጋር ቀርባ  
 በተበላ ምናለ? ገደለም፣ ምንም አይደለም፣ ሰው ሰው  
 ነው፣ ፈይባም ሰው ነው፣ አረረም ሰው ነው፣ እኔም ሰው  
 ነኝ፣ ባሕረም ሰው ነው፣— ሁላችንም ሰው ነን፣ ያውላ  
 ቸሁ አረረት ::<sup>18</sup>

Lady Alganash contrasts directly with Bahiru. She is a conservative and a traditionalist such that she considers Bahiru's enlightened gestures as the outcome of sheer lunacy.

ሰው ሰው ነው ብሎ ከአሸከር ጋር አብሮ ገበታ መቀረብ  
 የእብድ ነው እንጂ የጠነኛ ስራ ነው?<sup>19</sup>

The major technique that Mängistu has used to lighten the humour in Yalacha Gabicha is the creation of characters that contrast with and compliment each other. We have already observed this in relation to Bahiru and Lady Alganash. The pebble diviner Abba Mamito and the astrologer Aya Lizibu are jealous of each other. They try to discredit each other whenever they get the chance and Lady Alagnash is tired of their unending bickerings. To Lizibu, Abba Mamito is a

bead-riden pebble diviner.... a trafficker with demi-human devils... goes to the dumping ground of all the refuse of the village, the dregs from tella breweries, the ashes from the kitchens, to pass the day prowling there in the company of the demi-human, gallivanting around hand-in-hand with them, kicking in the manner of donkeys.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand Mamito reports Lizibu as follows:

Beware of Lizibu, the slippery one. He is as slippery as the water-serpent... the moment he will be at his old game again! To confide in him is like storing water in a sieve... The entire village is praying - praying for deliverance from this poisonous, sneaking liar of an astrologer... this prophet of doom, this cleric.<sup>21</sup>

The two other contrasting and complimenting characters in the comedy are Aläka, the Christian priest, and Haji, the Moslem Sheikh, whose unending arguments are a source of great humour.

So far, Mängistu is the only modern comedian we have. Well acquainted with the western theatrical tradition, he has succeeded in writing this truly modern Amharic play.

### YÄHOH AKLIL

Şägaye Gäbrä Mädhin is the most prominent of modern Ethiopian playwrights in addition to being an outstanding poet. Şägaye is a biligual, writing both in Amharic and English,<sup>22</sup> and he has translated Shakespear's Othello, Macbeth, Hamlet and King Lear into Amharic.

His first Amharic play, Yäshoh Aklil, is a profound investigation into the nature of human passion. Harägäwäin is the daughter of Fitawrari Yälma, a rich land lord. Ayalew, who grew up with Harägäwäin is the son of Baldäras Imru, Fitawrari Yälma's tenant. Kinfä, thirty three, is the son of Fitawrari Tariku and rich from the wealth that he has inherited from his father. Kinfä is a sad and rather philosophic young man with a conspicuous lack of self-confidence because it is rumoured that his father begot him from a slave-concubine. There is also Lieutenant Tözära, a dandy and lady-killer who believes in the symbolic virtue of the bee that moves from flower to flower and sucks the sweet honey therefrom.

All the three-Ayalew, Kinfä and Tözära - love Harägäwäin, each in his own way. Ayalew's love is rather platonic. He adores Harägäwäin; she is the altar of his faith, the reason for his being, his hope and his ambition. He prostrates himself under her feet, a helpless victim lacking the courage to reject her even when she has rejected him.

አልቸልጦና ነፁ :: አንፀ ልጅ ብተፀሽ ነጻ ነተን አንገረ  
 ግገጥ አፀቃላሁ :: ለግገጥትም አጥራላሁ፣ ገገ አልቸ  
 ልጦ :: ጡከራ ዩ የገጦብ ቢት ሠብራ ለግጦለጥ አንገረጦት  
 ጥከር ተገጥ ዐይ ነት ይህናል ::<sup>23</sup>

Täzära's love for Harägäwäin is initially a simple lust of the flesh. He only intends to add her to the number of his conquests but finally he breaks away from his antimatrimonial convictions and decides to marry her.

Kinfä loves Harägäwäin to the point of distraction but being a sworn introvert discloses his love neither to her nor to anybody else until the last moment. He is a man of sacrifice; he suppresses his love for Haragawain because of his friendship to Ayalew and Täzära. He prefers the agony of hidden love to an offence against his friends.

When Lieutenant Täzära, who had gone to the war in Korea, finally dies and Ayalew, driven insane from a rejected love, ends in a mental hospital, Harägäwäin is eaten by remorse and desperation. She considers herself as the cause of the former's death and the latter's lunacy. In a moment of utter despair she turns to Kinfä for consolation and he, in turn, confesses his long-hidden love for her.

Although it has some technical flaws, Yäshoh Aklil in general is a commendable first play revealing an uncommon talent in its creator. It is very difficult to name the central character of the play. All three- Harägäwäin, Kinfä and Ayalew - seem to have equal significance. We are made to follow their fate and feel along with them throughout the play. It might be argued that Harägäwäin is the central character since she determines the fate of the others. But our sympathy does not lie with her as much as it does with Ayalew or Kinfä. Harägäwäin, indeed, is a major character but definitely not the central character.

It seems that the division of the play into the four acts is done at random. Act one and two, for instance, could have been comfortably wedded and the minor characters in Acts three and four done away with.

The characterization in Yäshoh Aklil in general, is rather shallow. Among the fifteen characters found in the play, only three- Harägäwäin, Kinfä and Ayalew - are well portrayed. The others are rather obscure and our memory of them remains very fuzzy after completing a reading of the play.

Although Yäshoh Aklil is primarily the story of the intricate love web discussed earlier, it is also a play of social significance touching upon the hypocritical sense of superiority of the rich and its ominous psychological impact upon the poor. Ayalew's psychological problems which finally drive him mad are mainly rooted in the sense of inferiority that assails him as a result of his poverty.

Finally, an important feature of this play is the construction of its dramatic verse. Şägaye brought into Amharic dramatic verse the quality of being spoken with ease on the stage. The seriously measured nature of traditional Amharic versification chopped up the language for the sake of rhyme and rhythm, making its stage presentation rather laboured and unnatural. Şägaye's long and flowing verse, much developed in his later plays, lent Amharic poetry a naturalness in speech.

CHAPTER IV  
AMHARIC POETRY

I. Amharic Poetry Prior to the Italian Occupation  
1928 - 1933

The Ethiopian people have won an international renown for their staunch struggle against colonialist, imperialist and expansionist forces. Through bitter sacrifices they have been able to preserve their independence and national sovereignty. Ethiopia is the only African country that has successfully repelled a powerful colonialist nation with the help of the uncontested courage of its people.

Genuine freedom is the result of firm struggles and bitter sacrifices. The Ethiopian people have repeatedly succeeded in humiliating the fascist Italian invaders at Dogale in 1887, at Adowa in 189 and later at Maichaw in 1933 after five years resistance. These successes were not gained through the use of sophisticated weapons of war; on the contrary, the Ethiopian peoples were armed with primitive spears, swords, axes and the crudest of rifles. The secret behind their successive victories has always been in their profound love of their country and their heroism.

Just prior to the Italian occupation ( 1928 - 33) a number of poets raised their pen against the invaders, aroused patriotism and instilled courage in the people. The most prominent among these were the painter-poet Agäñähu Ingida, the playwright-poet Yoftahe Nägussie and Wäldä Giorgis Wäldä Yohannis. Apart from these, Nägadräs Tässäma Ishäte, Aläka Märsha, Ato Habtämariam, Woizäro Yäshinäbet Gänäme and a host of other poets are known to have produced anti-colonial works of poetry.<sup>1</sup> Nägadräs Tässäma Ishäte is widely known for his "wax and gold" poetry.<sup>2</sup> He wrote a poem in 1927, extolling freedom and inciting the people to defend their country. He understood that a life of slavery was tantamount to death and expressed this view in the following beautifully composed lines.

ም ነፁ ያገረ ሰፁ ነፁር መሰለፁ  
 ጥንተም መመከተ ነፁ የገሻ ሥራፁ  
 ገጥም የሚደም ቀፁ ልብሰም የሚደም ቀፁ  
 ዓለም የሚያደን ቀፁ ጥርስም የሚስ ቀፁ  
 ነጻ ነት ሲኖር ነፁ ሕዝባችን ይፀ ቀፁ ::<sup>3</sup>

Like other poets of the period, Nägadräs Tässäma re-  
 calls the earlier victories scored by Ethiopian patriots  
 and explains their exemplary value. Here are some lines from  
 his Yämäskäl Inkuṭaṭash, written in 1928.

ጥ ቂተ ጌረ አፁሩላኝ ዝገኖቹ አባባቸሁ  
 ሰተጌረጭሩት በሸተላ ገብታቸሁ  
 ሰተሸከሸኩት በሰገንጃ ገጥሞቸሁ  
 ሰተመዘገዙት እንደገብ ከባቸሁ  
 ጋዙን ሰታሰፈዱት ማእሰከላከላቸሁ ::<sup>4</sup>

ተፈታተኖት ነበር ጥንተም አባተህን፣  
 እንደምንም ታገላህ ጣላ ያን ጠላተህን፣  
 አባተ ያቀየንን አድርጉ አድ ከፍንዳ  
 ዋቢ አናሳሳፍም አኖፁ አንፍዱ አንድ ::<sup>5</sup>

In the following lines he depicts the Italians figurative-  
 ly as weeds which have to be uprooted and cast away before they  
 have infested the whole garden, i.e., Ethiopia.

እናንተ ገበረያቸ በፊት ተግከሩ  
 እረጣዎ እንክርዳድ ሲኖር እንጻትዘሩ ::  
 ገና በሸፍኑ ፍረ ሳያፈሩ  
 ጩፍጭፍ ቀራርጦ መጣሳ ነፁ ላዎራ ::  
 ይህን የመጥፍ ዘር የባሕር ማሸላ፣  
 ነቃቀሎ ማጥፋት ነፁ ተቀርጦ አይበላ ::<sup>6</sup>

Aläka Märsha's short poem entitled ኢትዮጵያ ባሕር ቀጽጊ ደዎ ደንበሯ ስለሆነች is also an expression of the natural beauty and fertility of the country along with a strong warning to those who have the ambition to cross her borders and defile her.

ኢትዮጵያ የአደዎ ገነት፣  
 መገረ ለዎላጫ ዳርቻዋ አሳት፣  
 አትገጥም መቼም አሻገር ቢያይዋት፣  
 ዋና ተላላ ሀይ አትበል ሰተት፣  
 ያሳሰብከው ናዳ ይመጣል ደንገት ::<sup>7</sup>

Most of the poems composed at this period were nationalistic and patriotic in content. Those discussed above are only meant to serve as representative examples. Now we shall discuss the major poets of the period whose works have a place of honour in Amharic literature.

#### AGÄNÄHU ENGİDA

Agänähu Engida is popularly known as a painter but he has also been a poet of undeniable talent and artistry. He wrote a 16-page poem entitled ስለ ኢትዮጵያ የተገጠመ in 1928. This poem is written in the form of a dialogue (dramatic poetry) between Ethiopia and her children. Agänähu calls upon Ethiopia to get ready for the war.

ተነሽ ኢትዮጵያ ጦርቸሽን ሳይ  
 ተነሽ ኢትዮጵያ ጋሻሽን ወለጩ  
 ከፍ አርገሽ ታጠቁ ወንድነትሽን ይይ ::<sup>8</sup>

He refers to the Battle of Adowa at which the Italians had been beaten and shamed by the Ethiopian army and wonders how they dare come back within less than forty years of their humiliation.

ሰዎሽ የሰት ቢሆን መሰለሽው ወይ ሳት፣  
ከዎን ጊዜ ረባው ሳይሆን አርባ አመት፣  
የተቀረጠው ዛፍ ሳይበቀል አይ ትት ::<sup>9</sup>

It is generally believed that the Ethiopian landscape is very suitable for defensive warfare and many attribute the country's centuries of independence partly to the rugged nature of its landscape. Agäñāhu also propounds the same view in this poem.

ጋራቸን ተሰቀ ነፃ መነጥር አንሻ  
ዱንኪንም አንተከል አለን ብዙ ዋሻ  
ሥጋም እንዳያምረን ፊር ሁሉ ሥጋ ነፃ  
ጠፎም እንዳያምረን ጭካፄ ሁሉ ማር ነፃ  
ይራባሉ ብለሽ እንዳትጠነቁ  
እጅሽን ዘርገተሽ ካምላክ ፊት ጭደቁ ::<sup>10</sup>

He also extolls the heroism of the Ethiopian forefathers, the courage they have passed over to the new generation, and takes an oath of loyalty.

ኢት ዩኦያ እናት አንቸን ደስ ይበልሽ ጠላትሽ ይዘን  
ዱንበርሽ አይጠብም ልጆቸስ ሳለን  
ምንም ጦር ቢከበን ዙሪያ ገባጭን  
ወደኋላም አንቀር ልማዴም የለን  
ካባ ተቻቸንም ፍርሃት አልቀየን ::<sup>11</sup>

In her advice to her children, Ethiopia reminds them of her fallen heroes and extolls their valour. She remembers her past heroes not with sorrow or regret but with a mother's happiness at the outstanding success of her children.

ደገዎ አንድ ጊዜ ሥሙን ልብ እያረጋቸሁ  
ታላቆቹ ልጆቹ እንዳይሰቁባቸሁ  
አብረጭን ነፃ ያሉ ዋቱ አይምሰላቸሁ  
ገና ሳስባቸው ልቤን ጨነቀው  
እስኪ ሰማቸውን በተራ ሳንሰው ::<sup>12</sup>

Then she calls the names of those heroes who were the terror of their enemies and the pride of their people - Tewodros, Yohannis, Allula Aba Näga, Mängäsha Yohannis, Mini-lik, Ras Mäkonin, Bäshah Aboye, Ras Darge and Ras Gobbäna. Finally she beckons her children to gather around her and protect her in a tone full of gratitude.

በሉኑ ልዩቹ አቀፋችሁ ሁላችሁ  
 ነፋሰዎ አይገባችሁ እናንተ አያላችሁ  
 ወለታችሁ በዚያ ጋንዲን ልከረላችሁ :: 13

In reply to their mother's call for help, the children explain that their lives are intertwined with the fate of their country.

ደግቻን ደምሽ ነፁ ዐፀግቻን ዐፀምሽ  
 ነፋሳችን ነፋሰሽ ነፁ ሥጋችን ሥጋሽ  
 ካንቺ ያልተገኘ ምኑን ዋልንሰሽ :: 14

Agänähü's topical poem is an oath of allegiance on the part of the patriots, for whom it was addressed, to protect their country at the expense of their life and blood.

#### WÄLDÄ GIORGIS WÄLDÄ YOHANNES

Wäldä Giorgis also wrote a 16-page poem entitled የዐንደ  
ልዩ ኩራት ስለሃገር መዋት. As the title indicates it is a poem about the honour of dying for the motherland. In this poem Wäldä Giorgis calls upon the people to rise in unison and defend the motherland, explaining the impossibility of remaining as onlookers while the country is being invaded by foreign aggressors. He explains this figuratively asserting that anyone who fails to act at such a time of crisis is like an ass who cannot save his spouse from the jaws of a hyena.

ወንድ ልጅ ወንድ ልጅ የጣይረራ ዋ ተን  
 ለጠላት አይለቅም ጫስ ተንና ርስ ተን  
 አገረን አገረን እንበል ሁላቸን  
 ገፉ በዘቷልና በየወሰናቸን ::  
 ይኸን እየሰማ የጫያስቸለጹ ሰጹ  
 ከዠብ የጫያዱን ያህያ ባል ነጹ :: 15

He also compares a people without freedom to a body with the head and neck severed.

ባለመጠንከሩ ነጻነት ያጣ ሰጹ 16  
 አንገቱን ተቀርጦ የወደቀ አካል ነጹ ::

The refrain to the poem is a moving stanza that immediately incites one to raise arms against the enemy.

ጠላት በዋናው ላይ ተርፍ አገኛለሁ ሲል  
 እኛስ ዋናቸንን ስለሆን እናገዛለን ::  
 ተጋዳይ ተጋዳይ ተጋዳይ አርበኛ  
 አንዲት ያመልጥሁል ያገርህ ደመኛ :: 17

In the following lines, Wäldä Giorgis voices his contempt for the cowards who betray their country and are selfish.

እሞቢኝ አሻረረኝ እኔ አልወደም ፊሪ  
 ጠላቱ ሲመጣ አገር አስደፋሪ :: 18

Then he tells the story of a coward who runs away from the battlefield and hides himself in a cave where he finds his ears nibbled at by a rat. In an attempt to escape from this new horror, he hides himself by a stream where he dies of a snake bite.

ፊሪ ሰጹ ነበር ልቡናው የባባ  
 ጦርነት ፊሪና ቢሸሸገ ከጉዳባ

አይጥ አስጠጥቶ ይሮውን ቀንጥባ  
 ደገዎም ከዚያው ወጥ ቶ ቢሸሸግ ከወንዝ  
 አባብ ነደረና ገደለው በመርዘ ::<sup>19</sup>

This is a humourous rendering of the inevitability of death. Walda Giorgis continues with another anecdote of a man who runs away in the heat of battle to protect his "belly" from being pierced by a spear but in his flight accidentally gets that same belly slashed by thorns.

ከአንድ ሰው ታሪክ አስኪ ጥቂት ላይጋ  
 ከጦር ነት ሄዶ ሲደምር ሊቀጋ  
 አኳኑን አይ ቶ የጠረገ አደጋ  
 ሆኖን እንዳይወጋው ጠረገ ስለሠጋ ::

ወደ ግላው ቢሸሸ የውር የጭፍ ኑን  
 ጋራጣ ቀደደው የሰሰላት ሆኖን ::<sup>20</sup>

The central theme of the poem comes repeatedly in the following refrain, in which Wäldä Giorgis compares dying for the motherland to a wedding, implying that a person who dies for a noble cause is wedded to glory forever.

ሰላገር መዋትንጥ ነጭ ዋት ያለው  
 ምንም ዋት አይባላ አሱስ ሰርገ ነጭ ::  
 ጡሽራ በሰርገ ደስ ደስ እንዲለው  
 ሰላገርም መዋት እንደዚያ ያለ ነጭ ::<sup>21</sup>

Like Agäññähu Engida, Wäldä Giorgis understood the difficulty of facing the Italian invaders whose weapons were sophisticated. However, he had great confidence in the ancestral courage of the people.

መደፍና መተረ የሰ ታገክ አይርገላን  
 ሊያስክቶን አይቸሎም አገራቸንን፤

መትረ የሰ ቢንጣጣ መድፍ ቢደ ነፋ  
 ለዘገኛቸ ይመሰላል አሀያ ያናፋ  
 የገብዛዘ ተቸ እርቫና አዝመራ  
 ነጻነት ያፈራል ደም እየተዘራ ::  
 ልባም ነት ባለ አናጣም መሃሪ ያየሚሆን ለሠልፍ  
 ወንድነት ከድተት ሲለ ዘርፈፍ ዘርፈፍ  
 በዘንግ ይሚረከል ፈሪ ባለመድፍ :: 22

Wäldä Giorgis also recalls the pride-worthy victories  
 of the forefathers and magnifies their valour.

እስኪ እና ነሳሳው የጥንቱን ታሪክ  
 ተጋራ አጋፍ ተ አገሩን ቢያውክ  
 ተእግስተኛው ገንጃ ዲገው ም ኒልክ  
 ጠንክር ቢገጥመው ሳይብረከረክ  
 ገሩን በተጋፈው አዘረው አምላክ :: 23

The poem, in general, is a call for the defence of  
 Ethiopia and its independence with a strong tone of agita-  
 tion and propaganda.

አገረን አገረን እያልሁ አገረን  
 ሥጋዬን ገብረ ላፍሰ ደሜን  
 ሥጋሞ አጥንቷም ደሜም የኔ እንዳይሆን  
 ላገረ አጭርቻለሁ የሠራ አከላቱን  
 ተሠራበተ በደሜ የንጻነት ቤቷን :: 24

#### YOFTAHE NEGUSSIE

A contemporary of the poets just discussed, Yoftahe was  
 a play-wright and poet of renown who raised his pen in the de-  
 fence of his country's independence. Yoftahe's poems Fläketru  
Gobäz Ayän and Säläjägnoch Mätasabia were published in 1923

Fläketru is an allegorical poem whose real meaning is  
 hidden in the manner of "Käine" poetry. However, Yoftahe's  
 preface to the poem helps to clear any misunderstanding of

the intent and message of the poem. Fläketru is a creature with the body of a man and four bird's heads. Armed with a pen and sword, he jealously protects the gälagltu tree so that other birds will not eat of its fruit. An understanding of Yoftahe's symbolization is essential to get the meaning of the poem. Fläketru symbolizes Hailä Sälassie, Yägänät Zaf represents Ethiopia, Yämīdrāfaid Wofoch are the Italian invaders and Yägänät Wofoch are the Ethiopian people.

The poem in general, expresses the invasion of Ethiopia and magnifies the traditional belief in the role played by Hailä Sälassie in emancipating the country from colonial rule. Here is Yoftahe's hyperbolic portrayal of Hailä Silassie as invincible.

አራት ራስ ያለው አራት ራስ ናላ  
 ለገነት አዕዋፍ ፍራውን ሊያበላ  
 ሰይፍን ይዞ ቋሚ ለመከላከል ሌላ  
 ሰይፍን ወዞ ቁፍ የሚጠባባቀው  
 በአዋራነት ጠባይ ብናጠይይ ቀው  
 ኪሩብነት አለው መርምሮ ላው ቀው :: 25

The poem is so full of figurative allusions that it requires repeated reading and profound knowledge of the duality of meaning in the words and expressions used.

የተራቡ አዋሮቹ ጤን ውለው ያደሩ  
 ምድረ ፋይዳን አሳፈው ወጥተው ከድንበሩ  
 የዚያን ስንጦት ፍራ ለመልቀም ሲጥሩ  
 ስለት ሰይፍን ይዞ ፍቱን አለቁጥሩ  
 ቁፍ ይጠባባቃል ዙሪያውን ለበሩ :: 26

In these lines the fascist Italians are presented as hunger-ridden birds which leave their barren land and come to eat of the fruits of this tree (Ethiopia) but Fläketru (Hailä Sälassie) stands by the tree vigilantly with his sword drawn to strike at the enemy.

Yoftahe's other poem in this small booklet is entitled Siläjägnoch Mätasäbia. By contrast it is easily understandable and more straight forward than Fläketru. It is also written to incite the Ethiopian people into action in the face of the Italian invasion.

Whereas Fläketru is generally suited to people who have a considerable knowledge of "kine", Siläjägnoch Mätasäbia is simple and directed to the ordinary people who cannot grasp the subtleties of "kine". It starts in the form of the traditional fukära.

ተወኘ ጠላቱ ተፀ ተወኘ ራቅ  
 ስንተዋወቅ አንተና ነቅ  
 በዙ ወናገር ሰፀ ያናንቃል  
 እፀነት ከሆነ አንቶ ይበቃል ::  
 ያገረግ ሂገና ቀለበለቡ  
 ያገረ ፀታይር ቀለበለቡ  
 አንደአንበሳ ሥጋ ነፀ ቀለቡ :: 27

This is a strong warning against the naive invaders who know little about the valour of the Ethiopian warriors. Hereafter, the poem suddenly changes its metre and explains the glory of dying for the independence of one's country.

ለሃገር ወዋትን ግንነፀ ዋት የሚለፀ  
 ለአገረ ልጅ ሕይወት ለጠላቱ ዋት ነፀ :: 28

The poem proceeds to address the Ethiopian public at large and pints out their responsibility to defend their freedom and ends with a note of warning, demanding greater vigilance in a figurative language appealing to the farmers, who comprise the majority of the Ethiopian people.

ፀታይር ገበረ ወጠን ቀቅህ የታል  
 በመልካሙ ስንጻህ አይጥ ይገባበታል  
 ፍለገላም ይገፋል አፈር ይገላታል :: 29

The themes of patriotism, courage and loyalty to the Emperor were central in Amharic poetry prior to and particularly on the eve of the Italian invasion. The poets of the period were forced to focus on these themes because of the historical reality; the very existence of their country was threatened and its survival depended solely on the unity and patriotism of the people. It was only after the Italian invasion that Amharic poets started to deal with a multiplicity of themes.

## II. Amharic Poetry After the Italian Occupation 193 $\frac{1}{2}$ - 1972

After the patriotic poems discussed above, literary production was disrupted in the country for about half a decade as a result of the Italian invasion. The very first book printed in Addis Abäbä after liberation was Yaddis Zämän Mäzmur, an anthology compiled by Yälmä Deressa, and containing some fifty poems celebrating independence and glorifying the Emperor and prominent patriots.

Amharic poetry of the pre-Italian invasion and post-independence period differ in two major aspects. In the first place, the former is smaller in bulk compared to the latter. It is only after liberation that we find poetry written and published in larger volumes and greater quantities. In the earlier period we do not find works of Amharic poetry that exceed twenty pages. Secondly, earlier Amharic poetry tended to be rather metaphysical, religious and moralistic, or was composed in praise of kings, princes and the nobility. On the other hand modern Amharic poetry has shown a marked shift both in its content and form; it is largely concerned

with social problems and, to a large extent, attempts to depict the contradictions inherent in the society. Since most of the modern Amharic poets are acquainted with the Western literary traditions, they have done away with the traditional versification of Geez poetry and its strictly measured quality.

Amharic poetry has undergone a remarkable progress. This section is an attempt to discuss the works of some of the most prominent modern Amharic poets, particularly those of Kābādā Mikael, Māngistu Lāmma, Şāgaye Gäbrä Mādhin and Solomon Deressa whom the writer considers as representative. Poets like Alāmayāhu Mogās, Sāifu Mātafāria, Mākibib Gäbäyāhu, Abbe Gubāña and Afāwork Yohannis have also contributed significantly to the development of this genre in Amharic.

Moreover, the poetry reading sessions at the Cultural Centre of the Addis Ababa University in the 50's and 60's stand out conspicuously in our memory. The poems read at these sessions were largely political and have contributed much to the struggle of the Ethiopian people against the feudal oppressors and exploiters. Hailu Gäbrä Yohannis and Abäbä Wārkie are two poets of the period whom we can never forget.

The state of Amharic poetry after the Revolution is quite different. A considerable amount of good poetry has been produced now and then, depicting progressive intent and content but the form still remains rather crude. The post-Revolution period has witnessed a vast production of poems published mostly in the Amharic daily Addis Zāmān and the weekly Yāzareyitu Itiopia and the now defunct magazines like Goh, Şādāi and Kum Nāgār.

The Ethiopian Revolution has also released poetry that had been arrested earlier by censorship. Among these Hailu Gäbrä Yohannis's Bārākātā Mārgām and Fīndāta, Dañschāw Worku's Embua Bāllu Sāwoch, Māngistu Lāmma's Basha Ashābir

Bamerika, Abärra Lämna's Kul Woys Tlashät, Säifu Mätafäria's Yätäsfa Igir Birät, Afäwork Yohannis's Yäsümet Giṭimoch have been published since 1966.

A conspicuous feature of Amharic poetry after 1966 and particularly those published in Goh, Ṣädäi, Addis Fana, Abiyotawit Ethiopia is the subtle difference in political outlook and the polemics that arises therefrom. The different political groups that emerged in the course of the Revolution carried out the ideological struggle amongst themselves in many ways, including the publication of poems with subtle ideological colourings.

The poems published in Addis Zämän and Yäzareyitu Itiopia are mostly rather crude, lacking in skill and profundity. They are usually written upon spontaneous inspiration and depict unbridled political passion.

#### KÄBÄDÄ MIKAEL

Käbädä Mikael is one of the most prolific Amharic writers most of whose works are verse compositions. He considers poetry as the highest form of literary art. He believes that a few pages of poetry are superior to a voluminous work of prose and elaborates this assertion by pointing out that poetry is more compact and concentrated and therefore its composition demands greater skill.<sup>30</sup> It is probably this elevated view of poetry which had induced him to write most of his works in verse.

Käbädä again expresses his elevated view of poetry in

#### Yäkine Wubät:

ሰዎች የፈጠሩት ተገባርና ሥራ  
 ክብር ተገዥ ተሰፍሮ ሲጠራ  
 ግዕዝ ሲሰጠው ሲደለደል በታ  
 ቀኔ ተቀጠጠች አክሊል ተቀዳጅታ ::  
 በጥበብ አዳራሽ በዕውቀት መኖሪያ ቤት  
 ሁሉን የዎታሰገቀ ቀኔ ነች አመቤት ::<sup>31</sup>

The major themes of Kābādā Mikael's verse and poetic works are nationalism, religion, modernization, the Italian invasion, the fickleness of the world and Man, and a praise of the feudal values of the time.

Poetry cannot be separated from the poet's attitude towards life and the latter greatly owes its shape and colour to his experiences and surroundings. Kābādā's experience during the Italian invasion has inspired him to write much about the inhumanity of the colonial system. The love of the motherland and the bitterness of slavery is powerfully drawn in his popular narrative poem Errorro.

Errorro is written in the form of a dialogue between an Ethiopian and an Italian named Culli. In this poem Kabada expresses the view that slavery is the direct outcome of a lower level of civilization and that uncivilized people are never free. Culli addresses his Ethiopian counterpart.

የምትመኩበት ምንይህን ከብራቸሁ?  
 ባቡር ስ ትምቢላ ስልክስ ፈጠራቸሁ?  
 ከመንፈስስ ጥበብ ምን ፈለሰፋቸሁ  
 እስኪ የሚጠቅም ምን ነገር ሠራቸሁ?  
 ቀዳሞ አባ ትቻቸን እንደሚኖሩት?  
 ትንሽ ጌዶ መሥራት መቀጥ በከበት  
 የጥበብ ምልክት ባገራቸሁ የለ?  
 ለምለሙ ምድራቸሁ ዳር እ የመሰለ — — — — 32

Culli states tangible facts in a rather satiric vein. He unveils the reality of the Ethiopian society, setting it stark naked. It is through this poem that Kabada expresses his personal view that freedom and dignity are only illusions unless complimented by "civilization" (which for Kābādā means technological development). Here is how he demolishes long-honoured traditional values, again using Culli as his spokesman:

የምትኩረበት እንግዲህ እናንተ  
 እኔ እዚህ ተወለድኩ አባቴ እዚህ ቀተ  
 ካያት ከቀዳሙ አያት የመጣው ርሰተ፣  
 የሠራሁት ገዢ ያቆሙት ገብረተ  
 ለምን ተነክቶብኝ በማለት ብቻ ነው፣  
 ነገር ገን አስተውላህ ብታዘዝ ነው  
 ኃይለኛ እየሰደ ያስገብራል የትም  
 መረት የሁሉ ነቸ ባለቤት የላትም :: 33

This dreadful truth coming from the mouth of an alien  
 and an enemy at that burns and humiliates his Ethiopian list-  
 ener.

እያንገበገበ እንደ ተን ሲያጠሰጠ  
 እርሮ አታሰማኝ ይላል ያገረ ሰው፣  
 መብት ባጣ ጊዜ እኩል መመለስ  
 ይህን መሳይ ሰደብ ከጠላት መላስ  
 በደርጅ ሲሰማ ማነው የማይጠስ?  
 እንደዚህ ያለውን ክፉ ንግግር  
 ከሳት የሚያቃጥል ከረት የሚመር  
 አዳምጦ ጨርሶ ከየጠ በኋላ፣  
 ምን በድን ይገኛል ደው የማይፈላ ?  
 ደግሞስ መፈጠሩን ማነው የማይጠላ ? 34

The last lined here are a cry of despair and defiance  
 against a life of ignorance and slavery - a piteous lamenta-  
 tion against the miseries created by technological backward-  
 ness - which catch the imagination of the Ethiopian reader  
 and ignite his anger.

This dynamic and intensely moving poem, however, is  
 marred in its concluding lines by Kābādā's moralizing that  
 is manifest in most of his works.

ሰጥናኤል በሰቡ አብሪት በሰይረ  
 የዘላለም ወርደት ተቀብሎ ቀረ  
 የሰው ልጅ በሥራው ለውካ በከገቱ  
 አንደሰናኮር ገንብ ይረርሳል ጠልሃቱ  
 ተአቢት ተመጣለኝ ወርደት አስከዳላ  
 የተውካ ሁሉ ይጠፋል በኋላ :: 35

A closer examination of this poem reveals a very disquieting contradiction. Kābādā does not consider the Italian invasion from its major political aspect. For him the Italian fascist invaders are merely sinners who have trespassed the laws of God and will inevitably suffer Divine punishment.

The first half of the poem creates in us a feeling of anguish and anger but the last half sprinkles ice on our warming rage.

Most of Kābādā's works are religious. Some of them like Tānbitā Yonas, Yākīristos Balāmual<sup>36</sup> are based upon Biblical stories. His works are an attempt at religious preaching and particularly Christian morals in the form of literature.

The poem entitled Yānba Tābita is an expression of God's infinite mercy even to the vilest of sinners as long as they give up their ungodly ways and embrace christian morals.

ኃጢአት ተቆቆ ይሸው ዛረ ገና  
 ሰው ከላለ ቀስ ስር የት የለምና  
 ምህረት ለጣ ግላቱ ለአገዛዥ ሰጥኛ :: 37

Kābādā is truly a religious writer and sworn idealist. He focuses on the dark aspects of life, the unreliability of the world and the inevitability of death. Here is his gloomy view of the world as expressed in Sāwna Tarik:



Since Kābādā was a firm supporter of the feudal system that prevailed in the country, his belief in the necessity to respect working people is not the result of a conviction in equality. Workers should be respected simply because they are the source of the wealth in which their rulers wallow. His respect for workers is in no way different from the respect he has for a certain tool or machine because of its productive value.

To conclude, Kābādā's poems are heavily religious and moralistic. He is, however, a master craftsman whose verse is strictly measured. He reveals perfect adherence to form but this concentration on form renders his poetry rather dull. It also limits his choice of words since he is necessarily forced to forego highly expressive words for the sake of rhythm and rhyme.

#### MÄNGĪSTU LÄMMA

Among the modern Ethiopian poets who have helped to develop Amharic literature in the formative period of the 50's and 60's, Mängĭstu Läm̄ma undoubtedly stands out more conspicuously. Mängĭstu has published three volumes of poetry apart from his dramatic works. A product of the traditional Ethiopian school of Geēz "Kīne" and western education, Mängĭstu has a wide scope. Having freed Amharic literature from its predominantly religious and moralizing intent, Mängĭstu deals with the objective day-to-day experiences of the people - and particularly of the educated people.

Mängĭstu's poems differ from those of earlier writers not only in content and the use of a wider canvas but also in form. It is true that his poems reflect (in form) the influence of traditional versification but are nonetheless very innovative. Writing about Mängĭstu's Yägĭtim Gubae, Kane

points out the unique qualities of this work as compared to those of earlier works of Amharic poetry.

Mengistu Lemma's Yagitim Gubae, while following largely traditional metric patterns, is strictly modern in spirit dealing as it does with love, homesickness and humour, subjects outside the range and mode of expression of the traditional type which generally deal with grief (the hazen engurguro) celebration of war-like deeds (shilela and fukera) or are didactic-moralistic in nature.<sup>42</sup>

Mängistu's first work of poetry, Yabatoch Chäwata, written some thirty years ago, contains about twenty-six poems. Yabatoch Chäwata, a collection of folk tales in verse form, has helped Mängistu as a springboard for his later purely creative and original works.

His best poetical work Yägätim Gubae was first published in 1950 in a mimeographed form and later properly printed with the inclusion of a collection of poems entitled Händäke, that Mangistu had written during his stay in India as a diplomat. Yägätim Gubae, too, contains twenty-six poems. The central theme of the poetry in Yägätim Gubae is love. In fact the volume is dedicated "to all those who exchange love for nothing whatsoever".<sup>43</sup>

Mängistu's love poetry is unique and intensely moving. The following lines from his poem Wuha Imayatäfaw are a cry for reciprocity in love.

ወጋ ግጾፋፀ አባተ ነፀ ፍቀርሽ  
ነደደኩኝ ቢሳ አሳኩ ተቃጠልኩልሽ  
ወደደኩሽ፣ ወደደኩህ በይኝ አባከሽ ::<sup>44</sup>

Here, he figuratively expresses love as a flame that cannot be quenched with water.

Mängistu also deals with philosophical themes. He has an acutely sharp power of observation that enables him to

raise insightful questions about natural phenomena and human nature. His short poem Häywot raises disquieting questions that have remained unanswered for centuries.

ምንድነው ሰበቡ  
ለምንድነው አልኩኝ በምን ምክንያት  
ይህ ዓለም መኖሩን አጅግ-ሕይወት  
ሕጻን መውለቱ ስርጅት ሊሞት ::

ለምንድነው አልኩኝ  
ለምን ምክንያት :: 45

Indeed, this poem has an idealist touch and mystic quality. This is again observed in the following lines from the same poem.

ግን ያውቃል እንዳለው ሊቋቋም ሆኖ ቋንቋ  
ዚህ ለግብረሰብ ዚህ እንዳይቀም ጠበቃ  
ግን ያውቃል  
የመስቀል ወፍና የዐይይ አበባ  
ቀጠሮ እንዳላቸው መስከረም ሲጠባ  
ግን ያውቃል  
ግን ይፈተሳለታል ልብሱን ለድንገይ  
ከንቱ ነው ወዳጄ መብርግም ግተት  
ይህ ቢሆን ይህ ነው ስለዚህ ግለት  
መልሳችን ዘም ሊሆን ላናውቀው አንላፋ  
ከዘም ለበለጠው ራሳችን ይደፋ :: 46

After having raised a string of mysterious questions Mängistu concludes that much in nature supersedes human knowledge and preaches passive submission to the Supreme /ከዘም ለበለጠው/ in his concluding line.

Mängistu is a much-travelled man with wide experience in different lands and climates. His poem Tizita clearly indicates that he truly understood what homesickness actually is. The poem narrates the nostalgic daydream of an Ethiopian passenger whose mind goes back to sweet memories of his country while he is travelling in a London train.

" ገባ ቤተ ለእንግዳ " አለኝ ባለቤቱ  
 ጭቅ ጭሃ አቀረብኸ ቢቀረ ጫብተቱ  
 ደስ ደስ እያላት ተገባርባ ፊት  
 እገረን አጠባቸኝ " አትገደርደረ አት! "

ለንቃዎ ባረከጭ ያን የጉጃዎ ጠላ  
 ገባታ ቀረብ የሆኑ ቋት ዋላ ::<sup>47</sup>

The Ethiopian passenger is then aroused from his soothing reverie by the entrance into his compartment of a white passenger. He bounces again with the harsh reality of being an alien here.

So far, the last of Mangistu's poetical works is Basha Ashäbär Bamerika, a collection of eleven poems published after the Revolution. The poet claims that these poems had been banned earlier by the defunct Hailä Silassie government. Basha Ashäbär Bamerika, compared to Yägäñim Gubae has greater and far-reaching social and political implication.

Basha Ashäbär Bamerika, the title-poem in the collection, exposes the reactionary racist policy of U.S.A. and the feudal Amhara belief in racial superiority. It narrates the story of Basha Ashäbir Kälkay, an Ethiopian diplomat in the USA. A typical Amhara feudal aristocrat, Basha Ashabir believes in the supermacy of the Amhara tribe and his descent from the Solomonic dynasty. He demands the respect due to him, in spite of being in a foreign and racist society and as a result is involved in some brawls in which he loses his teeth. Finally he is imprisoned and meets another black prisoner. In his discussions with his cell-mate, Basha Ashabir denies being a "shankälla"<sup>48</sup> and declares his pure blood and high prestige and social status as a "mojja".<sup>49</sup> He is bitterly humiliated by this "undeserved" treatment like a "common negro". His misconception about not being a negro, however, is finally cleared when his black cell-mate explains matters and Basha Ashäbär accepts the fact that he is black and even learns to identify himself as such.

Basha Ashäbir Bamerika is a blow at the racist policies of the United States and feudal Ethiopia. The poem is replete with humour underlying its enlightening content. Basha Ashäbir is presented not merely as a naive feudal aristocrat but also as a humourously ridiculous and pompous figure. The following is a part of his dialogue with his black prison mate.

አጭረሁ ከጥንተም ነጭ ሻንቅላ  
 በቂ እንደኖረ ሲሞገ ሲጠላ  
 እኔ ገን አበሻው ምን ወገን ልለይ  
 በግይ ነገኝ ነገር ለምን ልሰቃይ  
 እንካ ጠገረን እየው ሸገሌ አይደለሁ  
 ፊትን ተሰልከተው እንዳንተ አልጠቁሁ ::  
 ቁይ ዳጣ ነገ እየኝ ይሁን ጠይም ለባል  
 እኔን መቀጠሪያ ራስ የሚለኝ ሰው አባይአል :: 50

Basha Ashäbir uses the terms "ሻንቅላ" and "ሸገሌ" instead of "black". These terms imply not only blackness but also slavery. His use of these terms is intentional on the poet's part and indicates his contempt for other Ethiopian tribes except the Amharas.

The overall intent of this humorous poem is to indicate that the claim of the ruling Amhara feudal class as being of Jewish descent and the sense of superiority that arises therefrom is in no way different from the cruel anti-human legacy of the American capitalist system. The poem is an indictment of narrow nationalism and racism in general. It is also a call for black solidarity irrespective of tribal, linguistic and geographical differences.

A central theme in Mängistu's poems is the conflict of generations created by modern education, with particular reference to the marriage custom. He presents the problem in a satiric vein, ridiculing "modernization".

አይጉድ ሥልጣኔ ባሕር መሻገር  
 ሱሪ ያጠለቀ ወንድ ይጥፋ ባገር  
 አወይ ሥልጣኔ የገሳሊጠኑ  
 ሱቱ ሱራ አጥልቀ ወንዶቹ ሲሸኑ...

አባዮን ማን አለ ከኛ የጠለፈ  
 ራሱ ማያርራ ጊዜው ያሳለፈ  
 ሸበተ ያልጠራው ጥርሱ ያልረገፈ  
 የለም፣ ከእኛ መሃል፣ የለም የጠለፈ  
 የጠለፈ የለም ከድግስ ያረፈ :: 51

These lines from የወንድ ልዩ ያለህ in Yägitiim Gubae satirize the lack of courage and decisiveness in the young and educated people. Moreover, they indicate Mängistu's male-chauvnistic attitude.

Another interesting poem in Basha Ashäbär Bamerika is Märfe. It is a profound narrative poem indicating the failure of the young and educated Ethiopians to satisfy the simple expectations of the people at whose expense they had gone abroad to learn the art of the whiteman. In this particular poem the popular question levelled at the educated young man is whether he is able to make a needle or not. The reply, of course, is negative. This inability to satisfy the simple needs of the people disturbs the young man and deprives him of peaceful sleep. Here is his dream:

አሴድ ይመስለኛል ባውቅሁል አገር  
 ዓገመኛ አጋጠመኝ ሌላ ባለገር ::  
 መለመሳውን ነው ራቀቱን ጭሽሽ  
 እኛይ ልቤ አረፈ - የለውም ልብስ  
 የማይመራመር የማይካሰስ  
 ቢሆንልኝ አልሁኝ ይህ ወ ለገዢ በገ፣  
 ተሸልተ አማይጬህ የየህ ገሩ ደገ  
 " የየህ ገሩ ደገ" - ገን ይናገራል፣ ይጠይቃል ::

ይህ ባሕር ሲጠባ ወረደ ድንጋጤ  
 መርፈ ተሠራለህ" አለኝ  
 ወደቀ ዐጤ :: 52

Divorced from the real life of the people, and not knowing that the needle serves purposes other than sewing, the young man rejoices at meeting a naked peasant, assuming that having no clothes the peasant would not need a needle. The peasant, however, needed a needle, not for sewing but for removing the chigger that infested his toes. The request for a needle from this naked peasant astounds the young man; he becomes very despondent and sleeps no longer:

ነቃሁ ሁለተኛ  
 ዳግመኛ ስለተኛ :: 53

These two lines carry a concentrated summary of the central theme of the whole poem, namely the need for young educated Ethiopians to come closer to the people, understand them and help them solve their problems.

The longest poem in Basha Ashäbir Bamerika is Yämäbräku Ra'iy. Its scathing humour and narrative technique have much in common with Lord Byron's The Vision of Judgement. Its fusion of spiritual and secular matters also brings it closer to Aläka Zänäb's Mäḡḡhafä Čhäwata Sḡgawi Wämänfäsawi.

The poem criticizes both spiritual and secular values equally. Here mäḡḡstu defies both earthly and heavenly powers. Indeed, it is in this very poem that he expresses the poet's full right to voice his opinions uninhibitedly.

ወ ቼሰ ባለቅኔን ይፈታተኑታል  
 እንዳሻጭ ሊናገር ስለጣኝ ተሰጥቶታል  
 ሁሉንም አጣፍቶ ሊያሰጣን አፍ አለጭ  
 ሲያጣጥ ሰጭ ይቀርና እግዚረኞ አይተርፈጭ :: 54

The central character in this narrative poem, Mäbräku, is presented before the throne of judgement in heaven. When faced by the devil, Mäbräku admits that he had committed various

sins - he had killed, lied and robbed. He is not afraid of being condemned. On the other hand, he presents his strong defence as follows:

እርግጥ ገዳያሉሁ ነፍስ ገዳዩን  
የሰጠ ሕይወት ከዘገብ የጣይ ቀጥረውን ::  
ወር ቀንና ብረን የሚያመልከውን  
በአዳም ልጅ ገንባር ወዘ ጤጣ የሚቀርጥ  
ለደሀቹ "ጭጭት" ቤሳ የሚሰጥ  
ለሱ ጉራ ወንዙ ደሀቹ እንዲኖሩ  
አት ባሪያው ብዙ አሸከሩ ገባሩ፣  
እኛ ከጣይዎሉ ወሰሉቹ ጋራ  
ያለውን ኃጢአት ሠርቶ የሚያሠራ  
እርግጥ ገዳያሉሁ ወንፈስ ገዳዩን  
ቀጥታሁ ከብቱን ሃብቱን ርስቱን  
ዳርጭን የሱ ወቹ ሆነና ሃብቱ  
የሰበሰበው ነጭ በቀጣኛ ነቱ :: 55

It is a viciously strong defence denouncing the exploitation of man by man and justifying the destruction of oppressors and exploiters.

Mängistu also considers this purely political theme from a religious point of view.

አንድ አለም ተሰጦ ለአዳም ለሴዋን  
ለሁለቱ፣ ተረቱ እንደሚነገረን  
አንዳት ለገገገው ቢረቡስ ቢራቡ  
ጥቂቶቹ ይዘዙ ብዘቹ ይታዘዙ  
ጥቂቶቹ ይገዙ ብዘቹ ይገዙ  
ጥቂቶቹ ያጩገዙ ብዘቹ ይጩገዙ  
ጥቂቶቹ ቢያምራቸው ያንሱ ጦር ነት  
ብዘቹም ይሴዱ ለመዋት ለእሳቂት  
ጥቂቶቹ ይጣሩ ለጥቂቶቹ ያሰቡ፣  
ብዘቹ ሳይጣሩ እንደላም ይሰቡ  
ጦን እንደሚያሰቡ በጦን እንደሚያምኑ  
ለብዘቹ ነጋሪ ጥቂቶቹ ይሁኑ  
አንዳት ተላላፊ በሽታ ሲመጣ  
ሁለት ወቶ ሺ ሰጭ ድሃ ገዳሉ ይጩጣ ? 56

Here Māngistu harshly denounces the supremacy of the few and their dominance over the many. He arouses in us a strong anger and resentment against these vile social conditions. He finally points out the cause of this discrepancy in life.

የዚህ ሁሉ ሥረ ጥናት መሠረት ተ  
 ታወቋል ለገደቦች ደህንነት መብት ተ:: 57

This is an anti-climax, an irremediable splinter in the poets pen. Poverty is not the root cause of the problem as Mangistu points out; it is rather the outcome. The root cause is the division of society into classes of exploiters and exploited. His thoroughly dynamic and progressive poem, therefore concludes with a false assertion, a blemish on his work.

### SÄGAYE GÄBRÄ MÄDHEN

Ṣägaye undoubtedly is the most productive of the modern Amharic poets and dramatists. The number of plays he has written and the poems he has composed after the Revolution marking various national holidays and celebrations suffice to prove this.

In spite of the large quantity of poems that he has written, Ṣägaye has so far published only one volume of poetry - Issatt Wäy Abäba. This volume, published in 1966, contains fifty-two poems that are representative of his poetical works.

Ṣägaye's poetry, in general, is rather gloomy and lacks humour. His world is a world of sorrow, suffering, regret and despondence that grips our soul and forces us to cringe under its tremendous force.

Ṣägaye is a devout nationalist. Many of his poems in Issat Wäy Abäba are about Ethiopian towns, villages, rivers and mountains, Ethiopian patriots and battlefields of historical significance. His treatment of these purely Ethiopian themes is very hyperbolic - a sign probably of his extreme nationalist sentiment.

አባይ—አባይ አባይ ገዳን  
 ከምንጭ የጥበብ ሰሎን  
 ገሪክ ፋርስና ባቢሎን  
 አባይ የአማልክት አንቀልባ  
 የቤተ ግብርት አምባ  
 ሰሃራን እንደምሁር ተልም  
 ያለመለምሽ በወዘሽ ደም  
 የቀደመ ጠቢባን አዋይ አባይ የምድር ዓለም ሲሳይ ::<sup>58</sup>

This poem is a loving tribute to the Blue Nile. ሻጳጳይ also pays similar tribute to the Awash River,<sup>59</sup> to the Limalimo chain of mountains,<sup>60</sup> the towns of Ankobär<sup>61</sup> and Harrär,<sup>62</sup> battlefields like Dogale,<sup>63</sup> Maiçhāw.<sup>64</sup>

In Yidräs Lävändime Länalawkih, ሻጳጳይ portrays the life of the Ethiopian peoples of varying ethnic origins and nationalities, who were deprived of their basic human rights and downtrodden during Hailä Silassie's feudo-bougeois regime. This poem, however, is merely a beautiful camera picture of the mode of life of the various Ethiopian ethnic groups. It does not point out the cause of their miseries or the solutions to their problems. In his attempt to avoid a direct clash with the feudal state, ሻጳጳይ simply mirrors the world of misery the people live in.

... ይደረስ ለክቡር ወንድሜ፣ ሕመምክን ለማታዋዋጥ  
 በጸጥታ ለምትወቅሰኝ  
 ጎረራህን እንደአባተህ፣ እንደዎ ያህ አገፍረህ  
 በወለባ አንቀጥቀጠህ  
 ሌቲ አጥልቀህ ጦር እንግበህ  
 በመኪና አገር አማልፍህ  
 የማትጠራኝ የማላጭቀህ፣  
 ማህህ<sup>65</sup>

Instead of directly blaming the true enemies of the people, instead of accusing the feudal state which is the direct cause of the sufferings of the people, Šägaye chooses to direct his arrow at himself and his likes, the petty-bourgeoisie and the intellectuals.

እኮ ማኅተም ወንጀል ጭን ደረሲ የሚቀጥብህ  
 ሠዓሊ የሚነደፍህ  
 ቀሲስ የሚቀስሱህ  
 የቱሪስት የገዢዎች ገራሪ እሚገብዘብህ  
 የሚተኛ የሚተረጎሙ የሚነደፍህ የሚገም አጭ  
 የማኅተም ደም የማኅተም ቀጭ ...  
 አገተ የሚሞላ ኢትዮጵያ ልጅ  
 እኔም ሆኑህ ረረገጃ ... 66

In this poem the petty-bourgeois intellectuals are made recipients of the blow that should have been levelled at the oppressing feudo-capitalist state and its adherents. This indicates that Šägaye's nationalism lacks political radicalism and revolutionary fervour, an intent which he might have, but still remains strongly veiled in his works. It is true that Šägaye's poems have always been directed at social problems. His social and political outlook, however, is rather dim. Indeed, he believes in the nobleness of being a poet of the people, in depicting their miseries, their dreams and ambitions in life.

Šägaye's poems focus on national rather than personal experience. Thus his themes are varied. His poems are sometimes highly emotional as the following lines from Säkoja Wä Petros indicate:

ሕጻን ሆኜ የእርገብ ጭቅ አንጻንዬ ራብ ሲያጻክሞት  
 ቸገር ከገደደህ ገፍቶ እዛሬ ገርገ ሲሆላት  
 እናቷ በርራ ደርሳላት  
 በእኩል ጭቅ ታቀፋት

እፍ እያለቸ ገንባሯ ላይ፣ ሕይወት ስተተነፍሶባት  
 ወዲያው ነፍስ ተዘራለቸ  
 ሸር— ብር— ተር እያለቸ  
 ባከሸ አንቺም አተራ ቋብኝ  
 እመብር ሃን እና ተ፣ ተንፋሽሽን እፍ በይብኝ  
 ፀናተሽን እፍ በይብኝ  
 ወይም ያቸን የዋት ጸዋ፣ ጥላዋ ነፍሴን ካፈናት  
 እንዳልመጣት አሳልፈ ያት  
 መራራ ከንቂን ገንጥላሽ፣ ቀጠር ቃል ዋን ገደፈ ያት...

ፍር ሃት ቢያረብብኝም አንቺ ካለሽ አልሰጋም  
 ከርተም ብዬ እቸሰበት፣ እሸሸገበት አላጣም  
 የገጣይ መስቀሉን ጌጥ ፣ እታገሰበት አላጣም  
 አላዚያጣ ብቻዬን ነ፣ ኢት ዩጵያም አላንቺ የላት  
 አንቺ አፀጊኝ እንደጸናላት :: 67

This expression of Abunä Petros's intimate feelings just prior to his heroic death is powerfully touching and intensely emotional.

ጳጳጳጳ's imagination focuses more on the dreary than the bright aspects of life. In a society like Ethiopia where the griefs outweigh the joys of life, ጳጳጳጳ's poetry has a large potential audience. The strength of ጳጳጳጳ's poetry lies in its ability to portray dreary realities in a beautiful language. The images that ጳጳጳጳ creates make us cringe and shudder but also titillate us in their "beautiful ugliness."

ጳጳጳጳ's poetry is devoid of the humour that is replete in Mangistu Lamma's works. Even his love poems are despondent as the following lines from Gera show:

ገራ የመከራ መከር  
 የቅንጅና ራዕይ በር  
 ሕልም አይቻለሁ ልናገር ::  
 አንቺ ስተሰቁ እኛ ስንበር  
 ስንቀርብሽ እ የሸሸሽን ሸሸተሽ በጣታው ቁፁ አገር  
 ስንርቅሽ ተገ እያልሽብን ረገጡን ከጣናው ቀፁ ጠፈር  
 አንቺ ታደብሽ ስተበሪ የኛ ክንፍ ሲሰባበር

አንቺ አንድ ያሽን ስትር ቋ አኛ ስንጠይቅ አኛ ስንቀር .  
 ፍቺህን ገራ ፍቺህን፣ ሰጭ አይከርምም ጌላም ገርሶ  
 በቀዘተ ጠረንሽን ዳሰሶ  
 በሸጭታ ተስፋ ደርሶ  
 ቀን በቁጭ ስላለላየ ገራ ያንቺን ኪራራይሶ<sup>68</sup>

Gera is an expression of the bitter experience of unfulfilled love that remains only a dream; a nightmare that can never be grasped.

The title-poem Issat Wäy Abäba could be interpreted in many ways primarily because of its intensely figurative nature. Its overall message is similar to Gera. Both relate a Platonic, dream-like and hypnotic love for a woman; a love that is unquenchable. The image is dark and the illusions are sad.

አኛ፣ አንድ ነኛ አንዳንቺው የጭበት ዓይኑን የታወረ  
 አንረ ሕሊናው የከረረ፣  
 ባሕሪ ሃሣቡን ያልታደለ  
 የጭበት ዓይኑ የሰለለ  
 ሰማይ ጠለማ ነው አንቺ አበባ አኮ አይደለም አለ ::  
 ያልታደለ ::<sup>69</sup>

After elaborating the same idea of unfulfilled love using different figures of speech and drawing various agonizing images, the lover addresses his sweetheart directly and explains the wall that stands between them and stifles their love.

ይቅር ብቻ አንናገርም  
 እኔ አንቺ አንጠይቃለሁ  
 ለጭጭት አልታደለንም  
 አንዲያው ዘም አንቺ፣ ዘም . . . ዘም  
 አበባ አንሆን ጭም አሳት  
 ተጠምደን በምኛት ቀጣት  
 ሰጠን በጭረው መካት  
 ዕድሜአቸንን አንዳጣጥናት . . .

እሳት እንሆን አበባ  
 በሐቅ እንቅ ስንባባ  
 ባስነቸ ልጅነታችን እየታተን ሰናነባ :: . . .  
 ፈረን ፣ አያን ፍቅር ፈረን  
 የነፍሱን እንደበተ ዘገን፣ 70

The barrier between the two lovers is an overwhelming fear born out of a strong feeling of love but the object of their fear is abstract. Is it because they focus their attention on the pains of love and overlook its beauty and joy? It is impossible to comprehend. Their separation, we learn from the poem, is only physical; spiritually they still cling to each other.

እንኞ ከሌላ ጋር ብተጫ እኔም ከሌላ ጋር ብጫ  
 ባምሳያ እንጂ ሳንኙ ስዕል  
 የኔ ልኬ ባንጅ ሳያልፍ  
 በሌላ አካል እንጅን ለግቀፍ፣  
 የሥጋ ምሴን ልጣጣ፣ ያንጅን ሕመም በሲ ሳሲያ . . . 71

The concluding lines of the poem are the heart-rending cries of frustrated love; a lamentation of wasted youth.

ሳንፈጠር በዋትንባት  
 ሳናብብ በረገፍንባት  
 ሳንጠና ባረጀንባት  
 አበባ ወይም እሳት፣ መሆኑን ብቻ አጠንባት :: 72

The beauty of language and the melody in this poem warms us; its gloomy atmosphere depresses us through a vicarious imaginative experience of the sorrows of love that is extinguished in its budding. Şägaye's poetry is not simple and differs much from the conventional type of Amharic verse that lacks the compactness which is an essential quality of good poetry.

Ṣägaye is a poet endowed with an outstanding power of imagination and uses words figuratively assigning them with values that differ from their ordinary meaning. The words of poetry differ from those of prose primarily because they are selected for their emotive and symbolic value. This is precisely the quality we find in Ṣägaye's poetry.

#### SOLOMON DERESSA

Solomon Deressa has so far published only one volume of poetry, Läjinät (1963) which caused much controversy among the reading public. Many criticized it bitterly and some applauded it. Solomon's verses have an originality never before observed in any work of Amharic poetry. He seems to have had a premonition of the feelings that his work would arouse in his readers. This is probably why he replies certain inevitable questions in the preface to Läjinät entitled Ishkidimdim,<sup>73</sup> Here, he points out that some readers might ask why he wrote his poems in the first place. His answer is an unsatisfactory argument in a circle: "because they had to be written."<sup>74</sup>

Solomon further explains that his poems are an attempt to create beauty of form and that content, for him, is secondary. There is a clear contradiction in his statement. What is form? Is it not an expression of content? Can there ever be a form without content? The form in poetry is the words which express the thought which is the content, and their arrangement in a certain systematic sequence. The composition of lines of poetry is an arrangement in carefully selected words of the thoughts that crowd the poet's mind. Thus, even though Solomon asserts that he writes poetry for the sake of its form, his poems are not at all devoid of content. His conception of poetry primarily as form does not enable him to escape from content either.

An artist who claims that his major concern is the form of his work is necessarily individualistic and alienated from society,

avoiding the contradictions and struggles that are inherent in it. In other words, he lacks the artisanship that is an essential quality of a good poetry. His pen portrays an imaginary world unaffected by the social, economic and political contradictions that exist around him. He becomes an introvert, shut off from the world of reality. This is exactly what Solomon is, as we know him through his work.

Solomon's poetry is based on his own personal experience in life and his scope is stiflingly narrow. An understanding of his poetry requires a background knowledge of his life for it is replete with personal references.

ለቤ ደቤ ይሁን ተጠጥሮ አረሀ  
 በከረምት ገገት በተሰላነው ስለት  
 የጭታው ሕጻን ለቀሶ ይሰቀጥጥ ወጪህ  
 ይገገላ ይለገግ ሀገሽን ጣብረኛ  
 ተጠጥሮ አወቤት ስለት ለገጣ ገገኛ :: 75

The references in the second and third lines quoted above can be meaningful only to the poet himself or to those who know him well. Personal references such as these create a barrier between the poet and his audience.

The messages in Solomon's poetry are vague but he has the least concern about it. Solomon's use of figures of speech is very unique. He draws together far separated thoughts and images together, confounding his readers all the more. If we consider the poem Koktel Gibza, there seems to be no relationship whatsoever between the title and the poem. Repeated reading and profound analysis, however, throws some light on its intent. A cocktail party is characterized by a mixture of varieties of drinks and of people. The poem is similarly an expression of a varied mixture of impressions.

በደመና በፀሐይ  
 በጨረቃ በቀትር  
 በሃሃብ ገርጥተን  
 ቢጥር ጨረር ተጨናብሰን  
 ልጅነትም አልፎ ሳይበቃን ተጠቅተን  
 አያሜረን ጣጋደም ተጋደመን  
 መርቱ መበታተን  
 ነደን በተሰያት ንጻድ . . . 76

Solomon does not adhere to traditional Amharic versification, which is strictly measured and rhyming. His poems are written in the form of free verse. He is reputed as the founder of truly modern Amharic poetry.<sup>77</sup> The first stanza of Arba Takul is a typical example of Solomon's free verse.

ፀጻጅነት  
 ሳቅ ነፀ  
 ከገርር  
 ሲሀን ካንገት  
 ከሰብ ወረድ ብሎ  
 አምብርት ላይ ሰፍሮ  
 አንሰፍሰፍ  
 ሃፍረትን ለ ነፀር አሳላፍ ጥሎ  
 አሸንጻጻ ለምሳጭ ከራጫ ተጠሳሰቦ :: 78

Solomon has a clear contempt for the adherents of traditional versification. He had been the object of violent attacks from poets of the traditional school such as Alämayähu Mogäs. Guma Lalo is Solomon's expression of his views about such poets.

ቅኔ ነፀ ተባለ መሰረቱ  
 በብራና ቃላት ወታሰረኛ  
 አየተፍጠረጠረኛ ዝምብስ ይዋት የለ  
 አላባት ወሃከላኛ  
 ጉጭ ሳይከፈላ !

ቅኔ ነፁ አላቸሁ መሰረ ቱ  
 ሰጣኦ ታት ከሰጣት እንዳል ተፀላዱ፤  
 ቤትና ቤት፣ ጣጥ ታታቱ፤

ቡሄ በሉ ልጆቹ ሁሉ  
የቡሄን አደራ አንቸ አጭራ. . . . 79

After thus ridiculing conservative attitudes towards poetry, Solomon concludes his poem in a devil-may-care tone.

ብ ታቀጣጣ ባ ታቀጣጣ  
 አተል ገጥሞ አይደል  
 ዱዳ ከልሀንክ የጣትሰጣ፤

ድንጋይ ሰላ ቀጥር  
 ቃላት ሰላ ቋጥር  
 ሰንገ ሰላ ዘፀር  
 ገጥሞ ነፁ ቋንቋ ነገ  
 ምን ታረገገ :: 80

Solomon writes poetry not only in Amharic but also in English and French and his Amharic works indicate influences of English and French poetry.

## CONCLUSION

Since its inception in the fourteenth century Amharic literature has undergone tremendous changes both in its form and content. The development of the literature of any society cannot be considered apart from the overall economic, political and social development of the society. Thus the levels of development attained by Amharic literature in its various stages are related to and shaped by the various levels of development in Ethiopian society. Throughout the ages, Amharic literature has reflected the nature of Ethiopian society. Written Amharic literature has mostly been rather conformist. It rarely challenged the Status quo in the Ethiopian society. Even when it did attempt to challenge the status quo, of which there are only very few instances, it did so only very tangentially.

The earliest works of Amharic literature were largely religious, moralistic and didactic. Prescriptiveness is a trend manifested in the course of development not only of Amharic literature but also most other literatures. Modern Amharic literature through the decades has shown a marked shift from its purely prescriptive intent and has gradually achieved a mature treatment of secular problems, dealing as it does with prominent and contemporary social and political issues. Recent works of Amharic literature, and particularly the post-Revolution Amharic novels, manifest an unprecedented seriousness of intent and content marked by greater preoccupation with political issues of paramount importance to Ethiopian society.

In terms of form much of Amharic literature has little to be proud of. Probably, one of the most important factors that has contributed to the mediocrity in the form of much of Amharic literature is the lack of profound knowledge in the art of creative writing among most of its writers. The problem was even more aggravated by the lack of professional training in and commitment to literature among many writers. For most of the Ethiopian writers, writing has been only a peripheral activity, a sort of

leisure-time engagement or hobby. We cannot mention even one Ethiopian writer who could be considered a professional.

Writing is a full-time engagement, demanding ample time and immeasurable patience on the part of the writer. In today's Ethiopia, where much is expected of the writer, it is essential to create a conducive atmosphere for aspiring as well as established writers. And heading the list of factors necessary to facilitate creative writing in Ethiopia should be professional training and the exemption of writers from other duties.

In the course of its development, Amharic literature has faced a considerable number of obstacles, apart from the major retarding factors mentioned earlier. The high cost of printing and the absolute lack of publishing houses has discouraged a remarkable number of potential writers from executing their talent. Recently, however, two publishing houses, The Ethiopia Book Centre and Kuraz (the former private and the latter governmental) have emerged and might hopefully satisfy the long-lived and dire need for publishers in the country. This is indeed a great leap and may create a conducive atmosphere for the development of Amharic literature provided that the efforts of the publishing houses materialize.

Censorship has always been a great hurdle to the development of Amharic literature. The nature of the Amharic language is such that it lends itself to varied interpretations because of the duality of meaning manifested in many of its words and expressions. Particularly during the overthrown feudal regime, it was practically impossible (although we might find exceptions to the general rule like Girmachäw Täklä Hawariyat's Araaya and Haddis Alämyähu's Fikir Iskä Makabir) to challenge the status quo even tangentially. This was ensured by the slashing hands of censorship which mutilated or completely banned unorthodox and progressive works of literature. Most

of the time the censorship officials become overzealous in their task that they attribute far-fetched meanings to literary works, thus reading into the text and implying messages that the author never intended. The problem of censorship still prevails to a certain degree but not because of government policy but rather due to the overzealousness and possibly the ignorance of the censors about the nature of literary writing.

The high rate of illiteracy has also been a hindrance in its own rights to the development of creative writing. In a society where the vast majority of the population is illiterate, the potential audience to works of literature is minimal and the cost of printing very high, the writer is stuck in a painful position and his talent is let to atrophy. Today, however, the tune has changed. The peoples of Ethiopia are gradually being emancipated from their grim heritage of illiteracy. The potential audience to works of literature, although slowly and painfully, is clearly on the ascent. This newly literate potential audience, however, has to develop the culture of reading and gradually the art of literary appreciation for the ability to read alone does not indicate a high level of culture.

Any literature can achieve aesthetic refinement and greater social significance only when the art of literary criticism flourishes alongside creative writing. Literary criticism in Ethiopia is still rudimentary if not non-existent. Many conceive of it in the negative sense as being a fault-finding art and overlook its constructive value. There is a tendency to take any criticism as personal. Hence many writers hate to be criticized and potential critics refrain from expounding their views about works of literature for fear of offending the authors. This attitude has to be eradicated and the value of literary criticism properly explained and the art developed. The training of personnel both in the art of creative writing and literary criticism is imperative in today's Ethiopia.

It is essential that the setting up of creative workshops on various levels be considered earnestly. The Ethiopian writers' Association in cooperation with the Institute of Language Studies of the Addis Ababa University and the Language Academy could do much in this regard.

The Ethiopian Revolution has created a fertile ground for the development of Amharic literature but this fertile ground has to be skillfully manipulated if it is to bear fruit. Institutions of higher education in the country have to break away from the time-honored misconception and restriction of the study of literature to European or American literature. A radical shift of outlook in this regard is necessary. It is true that we have much to learn from Western literature. Although we should by no means overlook the significance of European and American literature, we must give greater emphasis to the study of Ethiopian literature. The implications of the former are remote while the latter has immediate and pertinent significance to contemporary Ethiopian society.

Literature, like all social phenomena, develops dialectically. The literature of the past has its peculiar social and historical context and therefore reflects the values of the past which may be backward and even reactionary. It must be remembered, however, that it has a lasting impact on the literature of the present. Its complete rejection on the ground that it is reactionary is tantamount to severing the umbilical cord connecting a premature foetus to the nourishing mother. Amharic literature is an important part of the nation's cultural heritage and that is why it has to be studied in spite of its unscientific and reactionary views about society. It is only vulgar Marxists who tend to assert that all the art and literature of the past should be abolished.

In a period of revolutionary turmoil and transition like the one Ethiopia is passing through, literature has a prominent role as an instrument to enhance the politicization of the people. To fulfill this noble task of paving the way to a better and more promising future for the toiling masses, the literary artist necessarily has to be partisan. This should not, however, be taken to signify that literature has to be a mere echo of contemporary political slogans or propound dry ideological views behind a thin veneer of fiction, a weakness possibly born out of an overzealous social and political intent as manifested in Taddälä Gäbrä Hiwat's Läkäy Abäba.

It is indeed very difficult to forecast the path along which Amharic literature will travel henceforth. However, it is hoped that Amharic writers in the times ahead will strain in their collective or individual effort towards the major progressive task of quickening the pulse of life in the society and creating a violent desire in their readers to change the way of life. This can be achieved categorically only if they realize that the literary artist should also be a thinker, for there can be no form of art that is devoid of thought. Moreover, the merit or demerit of any literary work primarily depends on the progressive or retrogressive nature of its content. It is not just enough to present to the readers photographic accounts of the life that they know only too well. The goal of the writers should be to illuminate life and arouse their readers to constructively engage in the effort to change life for the better. At the present historical juncture Ethiopia needs such writers - thinkers who facilitate the process of radical social change that it has courageously undertaken.

As can be observed from this study, Amharic literature has reached its present stage of development mainly through the persistent effort and devotion of individual writers. Although individual writers have much to do to enhance its future progress, governmental support and encouragement of individual writers as well as the professional guidance of higher institutions of education like the Addis Ababa University, the Ethiopian Writers' Association and the Ethiopian Language Academy are indispensable to ensure its further development.

NOTES  
CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>Stephen G. Wright, "Amharic Literature", Something, No.1. (Haile Silassie I University, 1963)p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Unless Otherwise indicated all dates are given according to to the Ethiopian calendar.

<sup>3</sup>ተክለአገሪቅ መኮሪያ፣ የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ፣ ከአጼ ደኩኖ አምላክ እስከ አጼ ልብነ ድንገል፣ /አዲስ አበባ፣ ተስፋ ጥተሚያ ቤት፣ 1951 ዓ.ም./ ገጽ 100 - 102

<sup>4</sup>የኢትዮጵያ ቋንቋዎችና ሥነ ጽሑፍ ክፍል፣ አማርኛ፣ ለጉላጼ ደረጃ የተዘጋጀ፣ /አዲስ አበባ የህግና ፍትህ ቤት፣ 1966 ዓ.ም./ ገጽ 27

<sup>5</sup>አማርኛ 101 ለአገሪኛ ዓመት አማርኛ መግሪያ የተዘጋጀ ቀንሥ የህግና ፍትህ ቤት፣ የኢትዮጵያ ቋንቋዎችና ሥነ ጽሑፍ ክፍል፣ /አዲስ አበባ፣ 1964 ዓ.ም./ ገጽ 13

<sup>6</sup>Särgiw Häblä Silassie, Amharic as a Literary Language Prior to the 19th Century, (mimographed)

<sup>7</sup>ታሪክ አማኑኤል/ፕሮፌሰር/፣ ሰለኢት ዮጵያ ደራሲያን/ያል ታተሙ/ ገጽ 5

<sup>8</sup>አምሳሉ አክሊሉ፣ "የአማርኛ ሥነ ጽሑፍ ልደትና ባህሪ የኢትዮጵያ የጥተሚያ ቤት ታሪክ" ጭይይት፣ ቀጽ 1/አዲስ አበባ፣ ጥቅምት 1960 ዓ.ም./ ገጽ 62

"እነዚህ ግጥሞች ምናልባት ከተራው ዝብ የተገጠሙ ሰይህት አይቀረም። ግጥሞች ከሥነ ጽሑፍ ደረጃ ልናሰላፋቸው የማይቻል ለዚህ ጣዕም በሌለው አካሄድ ላይ የተጻፉ ናቸው። በጣሽነና ሰሜት የፈለቀ አገጃ የሥነ ጽሑፍ ጭብት የሚጠብቅ አይደለም።"

<sup>9</sup>Marcel Cohen, The Amharic Language, "Ethiopia Observer", Vol. II, No. 3 (April 1958) p. 101.

<sup>10</sup>Two other chronicles of Tewodros were later written in Amharic, one by Aläka Wäldä Mariam and the other by an anonymous writer.

Here, it is important to note that prior to the reign of Tewodros, all sorts of literary compositions - books of devotion, imperial chronicles, important letters and kine poetry - were

composed solely in Geez, the classical language of the church equivalent to Latin in the European tradition, which persisted to be used for church services until the middle of the twentieth century. Tewodros has thus played an important role in the development of Amharic literature by breaking with the old tradition of having his chronicle recorded in Geez.

See also Albert X. Gerard, Four African Literatures, (University of California Press, 1971) p. 276.

<sup>11</sup>Wright, Ibid, pp. 11-23.

<sup>12</sup>Margery Perham, The Government of Ethiopia, (London, 1969) p. 121.

<sup>13</sup>Wright, Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup>ሰጣ ሰለፀ has double meaning. It could mean either an interpreter or the court official who echoes the words of the Emperor loudly for the benefit of the court audience.

<sup>15</sup>አጣርኛ 101፣ / ቀንሠ ዩኒቨርሲቲ፣ የኢትዮጵያ ቋንቋዎች ሥነ ጽሑፍ ክፍል፣ 1964 ዓ.ም. / ገጽ 33 - 34 .

<sup>16</sup>Wright, Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup>Phankhrust, Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Four of Gabra Igziabher's poems can be found along with their English translations in Major J.I. Eadie, An Amharic Reader, (Cambridge University Press, 1924) pp. 193-202.

See also Richard Pankhrust, "The Foundations of..."

<sup>19</sup>Wright, Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup>Ladislas Farago, Abyssinia on the Eve (London, 1935) P. 122.

<sup>21</sup>Wright, Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>22</sup>Thomas Leiper Kane, Ethiopian Literature in Amharic (Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1975.)

<sup>23</sup>Ricci, "Storia delle letterature d'Oriente" as quoted by Kane, Ibid, p. 11.



<sup>38</sup>Mengistu Lemma, "Modern Ethiopian Literature: The Task Ahead" Voice of Ethiopia ( 19 May 196) pp. 24.

<sup>39</sup>Kane, Ibid, P. 191.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid, p. 185.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, p. 109.

<sup>42</sup>Tesfaye Gessesse, Ethiopian Literature before and after the Revolution ( A paper presented at the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference held in Addis Ababa March 14, 1978) p. 10.

<sup>43</sup>

ሰላም ማተሚያ ቤት 1948 ዓ.ም. / 78 7 •  
 ሰላም ማተሚያ ቤት 1948 ዓ.ም. / 78 7 •

<sup>44</sup>

See Also Chapter Two.

## CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>

አፈጠርቅ ገብረ አየሱስ፣ ልብ-ጠለይ ታሪክ /አሰገላገራሪቦ ስ፡አ፣  
 አሠመራ፣ 1958 ዓ.ም. / 78 91

<sup>2</sup>English translation by Tadesse Tamrat with the title Tobbia, Ethiopia Observer, vol. VIII, No. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p. 53.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, pp. 51-52.

<sup>6</sup>So called because of his radical views about society and its norms.

<sup>7</sup>

ሰላም ማተሚያ ቤት፣ ፍቅር አስከ መቃብር፣ /ብርሃና ሰላም ማተሚያ ቤት፣  
 አዲስ አበባ 1958 ዓ.ም. / 78 122.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, pp. 274-275.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p. 244.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, p. 411.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, p. 221.

<sup>12</sup>ዳኛ ጥዕ ወር ቀን ለደፍርስ / ንገድ ማተሚያ ቤት ለዲስ አበባ  
1962 ዓ.ም. / ገጽ 7

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p. 25.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, pp. 8-11.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, pp. 39-40.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, p. 46.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid, p. 236.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid, pp. 35-36.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, p. 145, 146.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid, p. 146.

<sup>22</sup>በር ሃኑ ዘሪሁን፣ ማዕበል፣ የአብዮት ዋዜማ / የኢትዮጵያ መጻሕፍት  
ደርጅት፣ ለዲስ አበባ፣ 1972 ዓ.ም. / ገጽ 65

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup>ሥነ ጽሑፍ ከአብዮት ፍንጻታ ወዲህ / ክፍል ሁለት / "የካቲት  
3ኛ ዓመት ቀጥር 4፣ ሚያዚያ 1972 ዓ.ም. / ገጽ 23

<sup>25</sup>Lulit In Kadmas Bashagär and Shitaye in Yähä!lina Däwäl.

## CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup> በደርገድ ተክለ ጠዋር ያተ፣ ፋቡላ፣ የአንሰሶቹ ከመዲ፣ ሁለተኛ አዲስ ዌን፣ /1913/ ርገዊ ካሌገደር/ አዲስ አበባ/ ገጽ 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp. 31-32.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> ዌፍ ታሊ ገገሱ፣ አፋጀሽን፣ /አዲስ አበባ ጥቅምት 1958/ የተተየበ/ ገጽ 21 .

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 29.

<sup>10</sup> መኮንን አንጻላቸው፣ የደም ደምፅ ። አርጫ፣ Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted from a translation of the play by S. Wright in S. Wright, Three Plays, p. 106.

<sup>12</sup> ። የደም ደምፅ ። አርጫ፣ Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Kābādä later translated Romeo and Julliet into Amharic.

<sup>14</sup> Later translated in to English by Stephen Wright with the title Prophecy Fulfilled in 1953.

<sup>15</sup> Yākātāt Maibäl, another of Kābādä's plays is based on the Faust legend.

<sup>16</sup> ገርጫቸው ተክለ ጠዋር ያተ፣ ተያደርሰ፣ ታሪካዊ ደራጭ/ ብርሃንና ሰላም ጥተላያ ቤተ፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ 1960 ዓ.ም. /ገጽ 102 - 103.

<sup>17</sup> Later translated into English by the playwright himself with the title The Marriage of Unequals in 1970 G.C.

Also translated into Russian in 1966.

<sup>18</sup> መንገድ ለጥንታዊ ግልጽ ገቢ ገቢ / በርሃና ሰላም ማተሚያ ቤት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ 1957 ዓ.ም. / ገጽ 64.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>20</sup> Menghistu Lemma, The Marriage of Unequals ( London, Macmillan & Co. Lts., 1970) p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> His English works include the four plays: Tewodros, Azmari Oda-Oak Oracle, At the Collision of Your Altars together with a number of poems.

<sup>23</sup> ፀጋዬ ገብረ መድኅን፣ የሸሀ አክሊል / አዲስ አበባ፣ ገንደ ማተሚያ ቤት 1952 ዓ.ም. / ገጽ 56.

#### CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup> በላቲን ገታ ማሳታ ሥላሴ ወልደ መስቀል፣ ዘክረ ነገር፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ አር ተስ ቲክ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ 1962 ዓ.ም. / ገጽ 292 - 314 .

<sup>2</sup> "Wax and gold" poetry is characterized by the multiplicity of meaning in some of its words and expressions as opposed to ordinary poems in which words and expressions take a single direct meaning.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 298.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. j297.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 298

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 305.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 306.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 307.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 308.

<sup>26</sup> የፍ ታሰ ፲፯፻፶፯፣ አለ ቋጥረ፣ ገብዝ ለ ዩገ፣ / ያለ ታሰ /

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., Note also the similarity with the following lines from Walda Giorgis's poem.

ሰላገር መዋትን ማነፅ ዋት ያለፀ  
ምንም ዋት አይደለም እሱስ ሰርገ ነፀ ::

29 Ibid.

30 ከበደ ሚካኤል፣ ሥልጣኔ ማለት ጾገዳነቻ / አዲስ አበባ፣ አርቲስቲክ ማተሚያ ሊሚትድ/ ገጽ 25 - 26.

31 ከበደ ሚካኤል፣ የቀኔ ጩባት / አዲስ አበባ፣ አርቲስቲክ ማተሚያ ቤት 1958 ዓ.ም.

32 ከበደ ሚካኤል፣ የቀኔ አዘመራ / ብርሃንና ሰላም ማተሚያ ቤት፣ አዲስ አበባ 1956 ዓ.ም. / ገጽ 59.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., pp. 63-64

35 Ibid., p. 66.

36 Kābādā' has used religious stories in his dramatic works as well. Examples are Ak'ab, Bisratā Gäbrel and Yätinbit Kätäro.

37 Ibid., p. 37.

38 ከበደ ሚካኤል፣ የቀኔ አዘመራ / አዲስ አበባ፣ ብርሃንና ሰላም ማተሚያ ቤት 1956 ዓ.ም. /

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., p. 151.

41 Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>42</sup> Kane, Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>43</sup> "ፍቅርን በጾገም ለጾገም ለማይለወጡ ሁሉ" የገገም ገባዳ / አዲስ አበባ 1959 ዓ.ም. / ገጽ 9.

<sup>44</sup> መንገሥ ተ ለማ፣ Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>48</sup> The term "Shankilla" implies not only blackness but also Slavery.

<sup>49</sup> The term "Mojja" refers to a high class of Amhara aristocrats.

<sup>50</sup> መንገሥ ተ ለማ፣ በቫ አሸብር ባሜሪካ / የፖለቲካ አሰረኛ የነበሩ ገገዎች አዲስ አበባ፣ ቅጥር ማተሚያ ቤት፣ ታኅሣሥ 1967 ዓ.ም. / ገጽ 12.

<sup>51</sup> መንገሥ ተ ለማ፣ የገገም ገባዳ፣ Ibid., p. 38

See also በገላገይ in the same volume p. 41.

<sup>52</sup> መንገሥ ተ ለማ በቫ አሸብር ባሜሪካ፣ Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> ወገድ ገብረ መድኅን፣ አባተ ወይ አበባ/አዲስ አበባ፣ 1966 ዓ.ም. /

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 92-98.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 109-110.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 71-104.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 168-169.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 184-185.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 129-130.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp. 141-142.

<sup>73</sup> ስለቀን ደረሰ ልዩነት / ሃሌ መጻፍት፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ 1963

ዓ.ዎ. / ገጽ 7.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>77</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>78</sup> ስለቀን ደረሰ Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

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ሰዓሊ ገለጻ የሁ

ተረት ተረት የመሠረት፣ ሁለተኛ እትም ። አዲስ አበባ፣  
ብርሃንና ሰላም ማተሚያ ቤት፣ 1962 ዓ.ም.

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ፍቅር አሰከ መቀበር፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ብርሃንና ሰላም  
ማተሚያ ቤት፣ 1958 ዓ.ም.

መንግሥት ለማ፣

ቢሻ አሸባር ባሜሪካ፣ የፖለቲካ እሥረኛ የነበሩ ገጥሞች፣  
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ቤት፣ 1953 ዓ.ም.

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ማተሚያ ቤት፣ 1949 ዓ.ም.

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1947 ዓ.ም.

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1960 ዓ.ም.

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ቀጥር 4፣ ጫያዘያ፣ 1972 ዓ.ም.

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1966 ዓ.ም.

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አዲስ አበባ፣ የኢትዮጵያ መጻፍት ድርጅት፣ ንገድ  
ግተጫያ ቤት፣ 1972 ዓ.ም.

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ተስፋ ዩ ገሠሠ፣ አጭር የኢትዮጵያ ተያተር ጥናት ከመጀመሪያው እስከ ከበደ  
ጫካኤል፣ ከሁለተኛው የኢንተርናሽናል ጥናትና ምርመራ  
ዓመታዊ ሪፖርት የተቀጻ፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ 1966 እ.ኤ.አ.

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አዲስ አበባ፣ 1913 /ርገዊ ካሌንደር/

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ልብነ ድንገል፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ተስፋ ግተጫያ ቤት  
1951 ዓ.ም.

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ታይሉ ገብረሕይወት፣ ለቀይ አበባ፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ የኢትዮጵያ መጻሕፍት ደርጅት፣  
ገንዘብ ማተሚያ ቤት፣ 1972 ዓ.ም.

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1952 ዓ.ም.

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1950 ዓ.ም.

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ልቤ፣ የሰውን መባይና ኑሮ በመሰላ የሚገልጽ፣ 2ኛ ለልጅ  
ምክር ለአባት መታሰቢያ፣ 3ኛ ሱከርና ወተት፣ የልጆች  
ማሳደጊያ፣ 4ኛ የልብ አሰብ፣ የብርሃንና የጽዮን ቅገሳ  
ጋብቻ / አዲስ አበባ፣ አርቲስቲክ ማተሚያ ቤት፣  
1963 ዓ.ም.

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1966 ዓ.ም.

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1968 ዓ.ም.

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ሥነ ጽሑፍ ክፍል፣ 1964 ዓ.ም.

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ወይይት፣ ቀጽ 1፣ ቀ.1፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ጥቅምት 1960  
ዓ.ም.

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ብርሃንና ሰላም ማተሚያ ቤት፣ 1967 ዓ.ም.

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1963 ዓ.ም.

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ንገህህ ሀጻህ ንጋህ ጸሃ ጋገህ ጸግግግ ንገሀገህ ንሀገህ ጸሃግ ሀገ ጋገጊ ጸሃግ

• ደ.ክ 9561 ንተህ ድኸተ ኮ ሀሀሀ  
ሃጋግ ንገህህ ሀጻህ ንጸተህ ንተሃህ ንገሃህ ጸሃግ ጸሃግ

• ደ.ክ 1957 ንተህ ድኸተ ኮ  
ጸተህ ጸተህ ጋህ ንገህህ ሀጻህ ንጋተህ ንጋግግ ጸሃግ

• ደ.ክ 8561  
ንተህ ድኸተ ኮ ሀገ ሀገ ጋህ ንገህህ ሀጻህ ንጸግግ ንገሃህ

• ደ.ክ 0961 ንተህ ድኸተ ኮ ሀገ ሀገ ጋህ ንገህህ ሀጻህ ንጸተህ ጸተህ

• ደ.ክ 7561 ንተህ ድኸተ ኮ ጸገገ  
ንገህህ ሀጻህ ንጋተህ ንገህህ ጸሃግ ጸሃግ ጸሃግ ጸሃግ

• ደ.ክ 1961  
ንጸተህ ጸተህ ኮ ሀገ ሀገ ጋህ ንገህህ ሀጻህ ንጸግግ ጸሃግ

• ደ.ክ 9561 ንተህ ድኸተ ኮ  
ጸተህ ጸተህ ጋህ ንገህህ ሀጻህ ንጋተህ ንጋግግ ጸሃግ

:: ጸተህ ጸተህ ንገ ጸተህ ንጸተህ  
ጸተህ ኮ ሀገ ሀገ ጋህ ንገህህ ሀጻህ ንጸተህ ጸተህ ጸተህ ጸተህ

1061 ንጸተህ ጸተህ ጸተህ ጸተህ ጸተህ ጸተህ ጸተህ ጸተህ

• ደ.ክ  
8561 ንጸተህ ጸተህ ጸተህ ንጸተህ ጸተህ ጸተህ ጸተህ ጸተህ

• ደ.ክ 6961 ንተህ  
ጸተህ ኮ ሀገ ሀገ ጋህ ንገህህ ሀጻህ ንጸተህ ጸተህ ንጸተህ ጸተህ

/ ጸተህ ጸተህ / ጸተህ ጸተህ

/ ጸተህ ጸተህ / ንጸተህ ጸተህ ንጸተህ ጸተህ

ንተህ ድኸተ ኮ ሀገ ሀገ ጋህ ንገህህ ሀጻህ ንጸተህ ጸተህ ንጸተህ ጸተህ

• ደ.ክ 1961 / 09 ጸተህ ንተህ ድኸተ ኮ ጸተህ  
ጸተህ ጸተህ ንገህህ ሀጻህ ንጸተህ ጸተህ ንጸተህ ጸተህ

ወለደጊዮርጊስ ወለደ ዩሰንስ ሀገር ሰጠ ተጋዳይ ለመላት አልቆ ባይ፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ የቤተ ሳይንስ ህዝብ ትምህርት ግብይት ቤት፣ 1928 ዓ.ም.

ዳኛ ተባብሮ ወርቅ፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ንግድ ግብይት ቤት፣ 1962 ዓ.ም.

\_\_\_\_\_ አጭር ስራ ስያቸ፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ብርሃንና ሰላም ግብይት ቤት፣ 1967 ዓ.ም.

የኢትዮጵያ ቋንቋዎችና ሥነ ጽሑፍ ክፍል፣ አማርኛ ለኮሌጅ ደረጃ የተዘጋጀ፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ፣ 1966 ዓ.ም.

የፍታሜ ገንጠል ወዘመራትና ገጥቆች፣ ቀኝ ገታ የፍታሜ ገንጠል በየጊዜው ከጸጋ ተባብሮ ገጥቆች ጥቂቶች፣ አዲስ አበባ / በታይፕ ተተክሎ የተሻለ፣/

\_\_\_\_\_ አፋጀሽን፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ቀደምት ጋይሌ ሥላሴ ዩኒቨርሲቲ፣ የኢትዮጵያ ጥናትና ምርምር ክፍል፣ 1958 ዓ.ም. / በታይፕ ተተክሎ የተሻለ፣/

ገራወርቅ አገሩ ለግብርና ጉዞ፣ ሰብአዊ ጉዞ የሌሎችም ይህን የኔ ተረጎሞ፣ ገርግ ተባብሮ ተሰልፎ ያት፣ ቲያዳርስ፣ ታሪካዊ ድራማ፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ብርሃንና ሰላም ግብይት ቤት፣ 1960 ዓ.ም.

\_\_\_\_\_ አርአያ፣ ታሪካዊ ልብወለድ፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ አርቲስቲክ ግብይት ቤት 3ኛ ታከት 1951 ዓ.ም.

ፀጋዬ ገብረ መዳኅን፣ ሀሁ በሰደስት ወር እና እናት ዓለም ጠኑ፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ብርሃንና ሰላም ግብይት ቤት፣ 1967 ዓ.ም.

\_\_\_\_\_ / ተርጓሚ / ማክሲም ሸክሶ ፎክ ፎክ ፎክ ፎክ፣ ፀጋዬ ገብረ መዳኅን እንደተረገጠው፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ለክሰፍርድ ፕረስ፣ 1964 ዓ.ም.

\_\_\_\_\_ / ተርጓሚ / ጎረቤት፣ ከዊሊያም ሸክሶ ፎክ ፎክ ፎክ ፎክ፣ ፀጋዬ ገብረ መዳኅን እንደተረገጠው፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ለክሰፍርድ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ፕረስ፣

\_\_\_\_\_ አሳት ወይ አበባ፣ ሥነ ገጥም፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ብርሃንና ሰላም ግብይት ቤት፣ 1966 ዓ.ም.

ፀጋዬ ገብረመድህን / ተርጓሚ / ስቴፊን ዊልያም ሸክሶፐር እንደጻፈው፣ ፀጋዬ  
 ገብረ መድህን እንደተረገመው፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ብርሃኑና  
 ሰላም ጥቅም ስም፣ 1953 ዓ.ም.

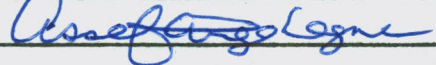
\_\_\_\_\_ የሸሀ አክሊል፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ንግድ ጥቅም ስም፣  
 1953 ዓ.ም.

\_\_\_\_\_ አቡጊዳ ቀይሶ / ያልታተመ /

\_\_\_\_\_ መልዕክተ / ያልታተመ /

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 the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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