

THE AMHARIC "DIME NOVEL"
ITS EMERGENCE, MAJOR FEATURES & SIGNIFICANCE
(1949 - 1966 E.C.)

BY

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A B S T R A C T

Writing small Amharic fiction became a dominant practice by the beginning of the second-half of the present century. These works, derogatorily known as Amharic "dime novels", constitute a large portion of the prose fiction in the language. If not identical many of them have conspicuous similarity in their format. They also share some attributes with regard to their techniques and subject matter.

Amharic "dime novels" are often criticized for their poor literary standards and there are tendencies to ignore their significance in Amharic literature. Except for a few brief remarks no serious attempt has been made so far to study them. The purpose of this thesis is, therefore, to have a closer observation of the major features of these works, and to pin-point some of their contributions to Amharic literature. Descriptive and explanatory as it is, the thesis illustrates the creative aptitude and technical performance demonstrated in these works.



Amharic "dime novels", themselves being the product of a literature in a process of change, have in turn been the cause for the transition. They have played a role in promoting Amharic prose fiction into a different stage - helping it to break away from traditional practice and move toward modernity. Even though they continued to be highly influenced by the old authors, they nevertheless introduced new elements of modern narrative techniques. Apart from their significance in depicting the socio-economic and cultural color of their time, these works have undoubtedly enriched Amharic literature with more experience in fiction writing.

In brief, the study enunciates the nature of the first large scale literary production which reflects the creative temperament of a new generation of writers that cropped up in the 1950s and 1960s E.C.

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Definition of Terms

Many terms are coined to designate ideas, concepts, methods, etc. in literature. One may find more terms than one being used to express similar concepts or, as it is sometimes the case, a term may be variously interpreted. In order to avoid possible discrepancies, therefore, it would be proper to give a specific definition to a few of the terms as they are used in this thesis. The following are considered to have a key role in the discussion.

Central Character: As it is often the case, stories present a person that plays a central role, a protagonist whose being, according to Dietrich, "... is central to the action" (Dietrich Undated: 79). However, the term 'protagonist' involves a meaning that goes beyond being a principal character. Another critic describes the protagonist as "... the one who undergoes the major change, the one whose career serves as the chief focus of interest, the one around whom all else in the plot revolves" (Friedman 1967: 154). It has also come to be the equivalent of a hero who engages himself to noble causes and whose endeavour to promote human ideals wins for him the sympathy of the reader. But the principal

characters of the majority of Amharic "dime novels" lack such qualities and can hardly be referred to as protagonists. Instead, the term "central character" is used in the thesis to indicate the main personage of a story.

Feature: This is rather a more general term and in literary criticism it refers to the various aspects, both internal and external, of a literary piece. It embodies the prominent and conspicuous properties of a work which also comprises the various components and methods employed to organize them. The term is applied in the thesis in this general sense and includes the different aspects of both the subject and form of a work.

Form and Structure: "Form" is a more frequently used term in literature and its application traditionally goes to a literary genre or type such as the novel, short story, ballad, etc. A more current approach relates "form" to a central concept that deals with the methods of organizing the materials of a literary piece. In the words of Abrams, "the 'form' of a work, in this central sense, is its essential organizing principle" (Abrams 1981), and has very much to do with its structure. If critics use the term "structure" interchangeably with "form" it is because they both are

referring to the organizational mechanism and the shape of a work. As defined by Shaw "form" is the manner and style of arranging and coordinating the parts of a composition, the structural pattern of a work of art "(Shaw 1972). "Structure" may mean more than a formal attribute; but the term is used in this study in its limited sense to mean the mode of organization, the construction and arrangement of the different actions of a fictional work.

Moralistic-didactic: In the criticism of Amharic literature, it is perhaps Thomas Kane who first used the term (Kane 1975 : 29). In fact, the two terms impart a more or less similar concept that they may appear as redundant. A standard definition of the term 'moral' reads as "pertaining to or concerned with right conduct or the distinction between right and wrong:... the moral teaching or practical lesson contained in a fabee, tale, experience, etc."

(Barnhart 1969). Therefore, the term's application goes to the nature of the subject matter that is being dealt with in a work.

On the other hand, the term 'didactic' is defined as "intended for instruction; instructive:... inclined to teach or lecture others too much:..." (Barnhart 1969),

thus, pertaining to the mode of approach or the method of presenting a material. The study makes preference to continue using the term 'moralistic - didactic' to designate an idea that contains both the content of the work and the intention or the manner of presentation of the authors -moralistic in content and didactic in intent.

Narrative Technique: "Narrative" can be simply understood as a piece of literary work that tells a story, factual or imagined, and which constitutes the setting, characters, episodes, actions, etc. The term "narrative technique" therefore, refers to an aggregation of various ways and means that a writer employs in developing his story. It is the means in which the subject, idea, theme and all the foregoing in a fictional work can be realized. Recent development in fiction underlies the indivisible relationship between technique and subject matter; "A theory of technique also requires that the critic assume that the subject matter of a novel... cannot be separated from its technique, since it is only by means of technique that these ... have any existence at all" (Stevick 1967: 46). The term is applied to the methods employed in constructing the fictional materials into meaningful relationships. Since this is a concept pertaining to the organizational

process of a work it would obviously be related to other critical concepts such as form, structure, and plot.

Plot: "plot may be defined as the arrangement of events and actions in a story to convey a theme" (Dietrich Undated: 127), and it refers to how the actions of a literary work are causally related to each other. It is the plan of action on which the parts of a story are interrelated and "..., as these are ordered and rendered toward achieving particular emotional and artistic effects" (Abrams 1981). Events may not be arranged in their chronological order of occurrence to become a plot. Instead, it is the arrangement of events as the writer wants them in order to achieve his desired effect. As its definition reads, "A plot is different from a story or story line (the order of events as they occur)" (Shaw 1972).

Popular: In a study of literature certain forms are referred to as popular. The term employs different concepts such as the amount of its readability, the low price of the work, the kind of subject a work is dealing with, etc. Based on these critical concepts, therefore, the term is here applied to mean the kind of works which are cheaply produced and whose literary merit is below the taste of the educated, but which are read by the less educated portion of the population.

Subject and Theme: "Subject" is a broad term for whatever is treated in a work and explains what a writer is writing about. It is the area of human experience that constitutes the material with which an author makes his story. "Theme", on the other hand, refers to the comment made on the subject. It explains how a writer views and interprets that part of human experience he writes about. "properly speaking, the theme of a work is not its subject but rather its central ideas which may be stated directly or indirectly" (Cuddon 1977). Hence, it is the kind of message that the writer intends to communicate to his reader or the generalization that the reader is expected to reach at.

Since a work of art may be variously interpreted a certain degree of variation is possible while making a thematic statement.

Sub-plot: The term stands for a certain structure of a story, or a series of actions, that develops on a relatively separate course from the main line of the story. It is defined as "a subsidiary action in a play or story which coincides with the main action" (Cuddon 1977). The term is used here to explain an action that may be separately viewed from the main line of the story but which appears there to assist its development.

Sub-type: In literary criticism works are classified into certain species or types of literature based on their most general form. These are, according to the classical classification, "epic, tragedy, lyric, comedy and satire, to which would now be added novel and short story"(Cuddon 1977). There may be different varieties of the same type and, hence, the term 'sub-type' is applied in this study to denote such varieties of the novel type.



Pronunciation Key

Vowels

a	'a' as in act, bat
ä	'u' as in curse
e	'e' as in roses
é	'a' as in name, fate
i	'i' as in if, big
o	'o' as in no, object
u	'oo' as in doom, moon

Consonants

č	'ch' as in church
č'	a glottalized palatal stop
š	'sh' as in shoe
s'	a glottalized dental fricative
ŋ	a nasalized palatal stop
k'	a glottalized velar stop
j	'j' as in jungle
t'	a glottalized dental stop
p'	a glottalized bilabial stop

Note: Unless stated otherwise all the dates are given in
Gregorian Calendar.

Introduction

This thesis is written to study those works of Amharic fiction which are often derogatorily referred to as 'bésa lebolläd' a term coined to mean 'dime novel'. Amharic "dime novels" constitute a good portion of the prose fiction in the language. However, these works are not well studied as they should because critics mostly focus on major works.

In his book **Ethiopian Literature In Amharic** Thomas Kane deals with a few of these works. His study is, by and large, a thematic one and does not emphasize the technical and other aspects of the literature. Moreover, he does not make any distinction between this group of works and the rest of Amharic prose fiction. A couple of articles appeared in the sixties by Solomon Deressa and Māngesttu Lāmma. In fact, it is the former who first made this distinction and who gave the label of "dime novel" to these works. It has now become an established fact to think of the existence of a certain group of works which are known as Amharic "dime novels".

Both critics reproached what the writers of these books were doing. Solomon Deressa reviewed these works and evaluated them as unworthy of being considered as literary pieces. In fact, Solomon Deressa wrote his article to hush down the people who made "a hue and a cry" about the foreign-educated Ethiopians for failing to read Amharic books. Māngesttu Lāmma also manifested his anger and charged that these writers were corrupting Amharic literature. He was particularly incensed by their moralistic/didactic intent.

Whatever their standard may be, these works ought to be given due attention and be studied for two main reasons:

- 1) They are the first indigenous large-scale output of Amharic fiction and hence reveal the nature of its creative temperament at its early stage;
- 2) These works are the basis upon which modern Amharic prose fiction developed - drawing lessons from their thematic and technical usage.

To have a proper understanding of the rise and development of Amharic fiction one should examine the role played by the "dime novels". This thesis was originally planned to study the characteristic features of these works. Later, however, preference was made to focus on the

major features because the aspect that could be taken as typical to them is not of cardinal importance to distinguish them from the rest of Amharic fictional works. A principal difference between the two is that of size, and this would be a factor too peripheral to be considered as their distinguishing feature or quality. Taking this into account, therefore, a study on the various attributes of the "dime novels" and their contribution to Amharic fiction was believed to be a better task to attend to.

The main objective of the thesis, therefore, is to have a closer look at these Amharic books and to elaborate their social, technical, thematic, etc. attributes. It tries to answer the questions:

- 1) When did the "dime novels" flourish and how did they emerge as a dominant practice?
- 2) What situations favoured them?
- 3) Who are the writers of the "dime novels" and what did they write about?
- 4) What methods are employed in the making of these works?
- 5) What is their significance to the development of Amharic fiction writing?

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is a very brief account of the American dime novel; its background and major features. It is important to consider if these Amharic books and the American dime novels have common features. This information will be useful in explaining the nature of the relation between them - which shall come at the end of the study.

Chapter two provides a review of the background of Amharic fiction writing and thus briefs on the literary experience prior to the "dime novel". This is extended to relate the post-war literary activities and the changing social milieu with that of the emergence of the Amharic "dime novel". It also makes an introductory remark on the general traits of these works and the opinions of critics.

Chapter three begins by defining the kind of books so named as "dime novels" and forwards a set of criteria used to identify a work that belongs to this group. The chapter studies the major features of the "dime novel" based on fifty selected works. According to the methods employed in organizing their materials the works are divided into different groups. In order to facilitate the process a profile of the plot of every work is also made available. The same data is used to identify the major themes that are frequent among these works. This is followed by a discussion of characters and language styles.

In chapter four the thesis highlights the socio-historical significance of Amharic "Dime Novels" and their contribution to the development of modern fiction writing in the language. The conclusion summarizes the main points of the preceding chapters and enunciates the propositions which may, hopefully, answer the above mentioned questions.

The preparation of the thesis has been hindered by a few difficulties. Finding a typical American dime novel, for instance, has been impossible and this created a lack of first-hand information about the form¹. The lack of information, however, was compensated by reading the comments of critics who have dealt with the dime novels. The unavailability of statistical data and documented facts on the nature of the literary activities in Ethiopia, the number of books published, the number of copies sold, the kind of books imported, the kind of movies screened, etc. has been a serious challenge in conducting the research. Therefore, the thesis has to rely on fragments of information gathered from different direct and indirect sources to complement what is missing.

A single work may have different features which need to be discussed. But considering that there are many works included, it would be impossible to deal with all of them in a paper of this size. Therefore, it has become

necessary to limit the scope of this study and to focus only on the major and most recurrent features. It has also been a serious challenge to decide on how to go about making a detailed textual analysis to substantiate the points being raised. Providing a single observation with such an analysis may take many pages. Therefore, except on a few occasions, the textual analyses are left out and examples are only referred to in the works in which they are found.

One other challenge was the task of translating the Amharic text into English. Certain Amharic texts are full of culture bound expressions that are difficult to be correctly rendered into English. At times, the Amharic texts are ungrammatical that a direct translation would appear awkward. On such occasions, therefore, texts are slightly shortened and their grammatical errors corrected before being translated. Whenever there arises doubt that a text has not been accurately rendered the Amharic equivalent is given.

The thesis, though it does not claim to be a comprehensive study, hopes to serve as a starting point for further study on the subject. At least, it would draw the interest of other critics to examine the nature of the creative spirit contained in these works.

CHAPTER ONE

1. The Dime - Novel: A Brief Account of Its Emergence and a Summary of Its Major Features

The dime-novel has its origin in the United States of America where it emerged as a popular form in the second-half of the 19th century. It got its name from the American word for ten cents which was originally the price of these novels. Here are some of the major historical and socio-economic factors which have been assembled from various sources as having contributed to its emergence and popularity.

The period in which the dime-novel flourished, 1850 - 1900, was a turning point in the history of the United States. The Civil War (1861 - 1865) was a crucial event in the political life of the country and in the making of modern America. The war brought about a large military population and along with it a rising sense of nationalism pervaded the country. On the other hand, the war was followed by the advancement of a new kind of industrial economy which drew America into a different socio-economic milieu. Industries and business centers spread throughout the country, new infrastructural projects such as the Trans-Continental Railroad made rapid progress - thus

encouraging many people to come to urban centers and creating large masses of workers and business men (Ellis 1954:503-513).

Such being the general situation, Americans were caught by a tide of great social change. Since the literary practice of a certain period is somehow related to the general socio-economic and cultural life the literature of the US has also followed the trend of the changing times. As Milton Ellis says,

" The results of these changes were far reaching, extending beyond the bounds of industry, Commerce, and other economic enterprises, into the realm of the cultural and spiritual life of the nation. Ultimately the optimistic idealistic, romantic view of life.... yielded to the realistic spirit, ... (Ellis 1954:504)."

Before the realism of Howells, Dreiser, Twain and Crane gained the appreciation of the American readership, however, as a kind of transitional literature, another form became popular. This was a kind of literature produced to provide stories for the growing number of army soldiers and construction and factory workers. Magazines like Harper's Magazine (1850) and Atlantic Monthly (1857) appeared to serve this purpose by presenting serialized stories which were, later on, put together in the form of a novel.

The dime-novel has thus evolved to dominate the literary scene of the US during the second-half of the nineteenth century. According to the Beadle & Co., a famous publisher of dime-novels, the war, the frontier settlements and experiences of Indian life and character were the subjects of these works. S. Ellis's *Seth Jones* (1860) and Anne Stephen's *Malaeska* (1860) are examples of the dime-novel. These works had an immediate purpose of injecting nationalism and a sense of 'Americanness' to young members of the Union Army and the new worker population. To this effect the stories are largely characterized by melodramatic actions and exaggerated sentimentalism.

... the dime-novel provided the new working class with tales of adventure and excitement that were as implicitly political in their nationalism and patriotic fervour- ... the popular novels of the period, especially the dime novels, created an illusory rather than a real past is precisely the point: these works were not intended to tell their audience who they were, but who they ought to be (Salzman 1988:553).

Therefore, the dime-novel could also be viewed as a propagandistic literature of the romantic type that depicts ideal heroism. Its popularity waned as these historical events, the Civil War and the Western Front Campaign, grew dimmer in the memory of the nation. In the course of its development, however, other forms of popular fiction such as the domestic novel emerged to dominate the



scene in the late nineteenth century. The domestic sentimentalists, as they are commonly known, were the most widely spoken of. Except in the choice of subject there is no marked difference between the dime-novel and the domestic novel; the later

" was but a variation on the adventure fantasies of the dime novelists. ... In most basic sense, there was little difference between the Heaven yearned for by Susan Warner and the open spaces of the West that attracted many dime-novelists.... what they provided was the illusion of a meaningful structure (Salzman 1988:565)."

The domestic sentimentalists seemed to be uncertain about the effects of the socio-economic changes that they looked back to their past for beliefs, moral values and their stories were, as it is in the dime-novels, designed in the manner of a romantic tale of adventure. In the words of Alexander Cowie,

"... the domestic novel may be roughly defined, in its first phase at least, as an extended prose tale composed chiefly of common place household incidents and episodes casually worked into a trite plot involving the fortunes of characters who exist less as individuals than as carriers of moral or religious sentiment (Cowie 1951:413)."

The tradition of popular literature is also known in England even before it was in the United States. The penny dreadfuls of England were melodramatic and sensational tales and in many regards were similar to the American dime novels. According to the definition of A. F. Scott, a penny dreadful is a "...novelette of violence mystery, adventure, which is cheaply produced, "(Scott 1967:215).

The dime-novels and other popular fiction are generally regarded as having hackneyed and often poorly contrived plots. The production of such popular fiction was primarily motivated by business interest - the authors wrote their stories in a rush to get them quickly sold. They were fully occupied with moralistic purposes and seemed to pay little attention about originality of style and technical excellence. The result, therefore, was the reproduction of fiction with more or less similar plot patterns, stock characters, themes, narrative style, etc... Margaret Dalziel emphasizes on the repetitiveness of popular fiction in the following words.

They constantly repeat stock situations and characters....: the nautical hero: the foundling motif: the abduction of the heroine: the seduction of an innocent girl by a designing aristocrat: the use of the supernatural, with prophecies and premonitions...; the power of the emotions, particularly grief and remorse, which frequently cause illness, madness or death...; and the triumph of virtue over vice. The rigid observance of these conventions is one cause of the overwhelming sameness of these stories (Dalziel 1957:16).

Such works were not criticized for violating the values and accepted conventions of the society- not even in their use of language. When they deal with issues of morality they echo ideas that conform with already established conventions and beliefs of the public. This is a characteristic that may be accountable for the predictability of these works.

The dime novel, as it is the case with other forms of popular fiction, is the product of a society in transition. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to identify it as the literature of the new age much as it is wrong to say that it belongs to the past.

In reality these writers represented the transition from the older romance to a new type of novel, the nature of which was yet undetermined. As romance, many were pallid reflections of a type that is past, love stories bathed in sweetness and sentimentalism and conveying moral lessons but seldom penetrating beneath the surface of life and hence throwing little light upon its meaning and significance (Ellis 1954:513).

In defining the dime-novel, therefore, one has to take into account the above political, economic, and social atmosphere that outlined its emergence as a particular form of the novel genre that was popular in the United States of America in the late 19th century. As the dime novelists

were amateur writers who write their stories for sale, their works are often criticized as poorly done. Written for easy and quick reading pleasure, their printing is least cared for and standard control seems almost absent. As commodity items - it is the number of sales than the quality of a work that mattered most both to the authors and the publishers. In addition, since the dime novelists usually write on popular subjects and already established ideas their works seem old even when they are newly written. It is this lack of originality and freshness that became the major reason for their quick extinction.

However, dime novels have become successful in establishing the tradition of literary communication among the lowest order of the population. They are popular in a more comprehensive sense of the term. At the outset, they are intended for the common people and, indeed, have become pleasurable to the majority of them. They are also popular in the sense that they are less expensive to be easily obtained by many people. Though their lack in artistic excellence and their sensational approach to life hindered them from gaining a lasting influence they have been able to effectively capture the interest of the audience of their period.

CHAPTER TWO

2. The Emergence and Development of Amharic "Dime Novel"

2.1 Background

In the course of the development of Amharic prose fiction *Tobbiya* (1900 E.C.) was the first narrative written in about 17,500 words. This was followed by *Yato Menem Laybākaññenna Yato Meññot Bākānttu Tarik* (1911 E.C.), *Wādajé Lebbé* (1923 E.C.) and *Addis Alām* (1925 E.C.).

The authors of these works had passed through the traditional church school which was then the dominant institution of education in the country. *Afāwārk' Gābrä-Eyyāsus* was born in *Zāgé*, a famous center for church education in *Gojjam*. *Heruy Wāldä-Sellāsé* had also been to *Ragu'él Church* at *Enttōtto* where he studied reading and writing. Their experience in these church schools contributed in shaping their intellectual attitude (*Bahru* 1991:106).

In their choice of subject matter and technique, these authors employed some of the prominent features of devotional literature². The teaching of the different books of the Christian religion in *Wādajé Lebbé* and the demonstration of a strong faith of the Christian characters

in Tobbiya and Yälebb Hassab, for example, show the authors' preoccupation with subjects similar to the devotional literature. Reviewing Tobbiya, Albert Gérard wrote,

...., Christian ideals remained alive in the minds of the learned. It had always been part of the function of Ethiopian literature, devotional and narrative, whether oral or written in Ge'ez, to remind listeners and readers of the true message of the Gospel. ...Lebb Walläd Tarik must be considered as an attempt to illustrate what was best in the native Christian tradition that has existed uninterruptedly since the fourth century (Gérard 1971:283-4).

In the 'gädl' literature it is common to find an episode that deals with the conversion of 'arämaweyan', i.e, non-believers including Muslims, into the Christian religion. Such an episode, for example, is found in Gädlä Täklä-Haymanot where Abunä Täklä-Haymanot baptizes a certain Muslim family which in turn converts a large community of Muslims. Eventhough this idea is underplayed in the story of Tobbiya it may also be regarded as the central thematic point of the work. As the story comes to an end it emphasizes the point in the declaration made by the convert king.

"Due to the ignorance passed on to me from my forefathers I have lived by supplicating an idol. But now Kerestos, gave me heart, drew me out of ignorance, let me know the true Creator. Since the true religion is from Kerestos, He has become my religion. Those of you who

would like to be by my side should be baptized as I have done so", When he saw that his religion was revered he declared that" a Christian should govern and never be governed"...

Because of one merchant all were saved. Because of one woman all became believers. On the word of one king was founded Ethiopia (Afäwärk' 1961 E.C.:68).

The influence of Church literature is also manifested in the techniques used by the early Amharic authors. The use of an ideal positive hero, the use of an episodic plot, the interference of the supernatural, the abundance of coincidences, etc., for example, are characteristics of hagiographies that one can often trace in the first Amharic works. The protagonists of Tobbiya and Yälebb Hassab are characterized as persons of strong faith, wisdom, determination and as promoters of a noble cause. As it is the case with Gädlä Kerestos-Sāmra, Gädlä Giyorgis and Gädlä Täklä-Haymanot such idealization and aggrandizement of a hero is characteristic of all hagiographies.

Developing a narrative along the hero's line of action rather than as a cause-and-effect relationship of events is another characteristic of the 'gädl ' that has also influenced the first Amharic works. The 'gädl ' is a narrative composed of a series of events and episodes which generally appear as independent units. The units are loosely interrelated and become parts of the whole only in

terms of the similarity of their subject. In *Gädlä Kerestos-Sämra*, for instance, there are about thirty-six such units dealing with different events and episodes. These units make one long narrative not because the actions and happenings of the consecutive units are logically interrelated, but because they have a common function of featuring the different miracles of the heroine. In doing so the writer achieves his goal by communicating the rewards of having a strong faith to the reader or listener. *Gädlä Gäbrä-Mānfās-Kēddus* and *Gädlä Täklä-Haymanot* have twenty-eight and sixty-five chapters respectively which feature episodes that may also be viewed as independent. Like wise, logic and causality are not what govern the development of the story of *Addis Alām*. The relationship between the subjects of the different chapters appears more important than the causal relationship of the actions. Actions happen not as the natural development of the story but as means to inspire statements which the author uses to communicate his lessons in good conduct or idealistic behaviour.

These writers' contact with the modern world equipped them with new ideas and literary forms which they used in their works (Bahru 1991:105-9). *Afāwārk' Gäbrä-Eyyāsus* was in Italy when he wrote *Tobbiya* (Gérard 1971:279-280; Bahru 1991:106). *Heruy Wäldä-Sellase* had also travelled to

England, France, Germany, Egypt, Greece, Israel and Japan on different government missions which had exposed him to the modern world of life and literature.

Afäwärk's stay in Italy and his exposure to the romantic tradition of Western novelists enabled him to introduce the novel to Amharic literature. Though there is no evidence available to indicate if Heruy Wäldä-Sellase has actually read John Bunyan's *The Pilgrims Progress* the fact that his *Wädajé Lebbé* has the most general characteristics of the former would induce the reader to believe that the author might have at least, known of an earlier translation of Bunyan's book in Amharic.³

The authors' orientation to the West has also inspired in them a desire for change, a strong wish to get their country civilized (Bahru 1991:103-4). This is manifested in their works and has become a dominant subject that characterizes the first Amharic works. As Albert Gérard says,

Antebellum Amharic writers were change oriented...., there is an overt critique of Ethiopian society and mores. All emphasize in varying degrees the need to abolish the exorbitant privileges of the feudal overlords, to outgrow obsolete superstitions and degraded customs, to accept technological change. They were eager propagandists for the modernizing line... (Gérard 1971:303).

Change has always been a common agenda for Ethiopian writers. Heruy Wäldä-Sellase, who is a major writer of the pre-war period, is an advocate of modernization and his works are characterized by ideas of change. Though he did not use it in creative literature Afawärk Gäbrä-Eyyäsus is also known for his progressive outlook.⁴ Other writers who wrote in other genres too upheld the need for reform. Gäbrä Egzi'abehér's poems make an appeal for political reform, and Täklä-Hawareyat Täklä-Maryam's Yä'ensesoč Komédi (1904 E.C.) is also a satirical comedy which refutes the corrupt bureaucracy of the autocratic government.

Most often, the writers take Europe as a model for the kind of civilization they long to be adopted by their society. In Addis Alām for instance, Awwākä, who is presented as the model of a modern man, wears a European costume and tries to live in a Europeanized manner. Throughout the story the author uses the central character as a mouthpiece to convince the society of the need to abolish superstitious and immoral traditional practices. He also tries to introduce the advantages of European technology by demonstrating the use of the telephone and the phonograph. In his other work, Yälebb Hassab, the same author refutes the traditional custom of child-marriage and gives advice on the advantage of modern medication.

Amharic prose fiction, after being briefly interrupted by the Italian occupation, resumed with works such as *Are'aya* (1939 E.C.), *Age'azi*; (1948 E.C.) *Enddä Wäṭṭač Kärääč* (1946 E.C.) etc.. Though the hostile experience at being colonized flooded Amharic fiction with new themes of nationalism and patriotic resistance, writers also continued to instigate the society to stand for change.

Germaččāw Täklä-Hawareyat's *Are'aya*, for example, is the continuation of what had already been attempted by Heruy Wäldä-Sellase in Addis Alām. The central characters of both works are young men who have travelled to Europe and who upon their return show interest to change their society. Eventhough *Are'aya* puts more emphasis on patriotic resistance it also deals with the theme of reform which is forwarded in the long dialogues that the central character makes with other characters.

Church literature has also continued to influence the authors of the post-war period. Such techniques as the interference of the supernal and the arrangement of narratives on an episodic-plot can be seen in works like *Age'azi*. The central character of this story, for instance, speaks with Ethiopia who reveals herself in the disguise of a lady on a horse back (p.62). He also

experiences miracles, such as the pulling out of his rib-bones (p.82), that remind the reader of similar actions in the 'gädls'.

One day, while Age'azi is visiting a certain school in Europe, he comes across a geography class where he overhears the teacher telling the students about Ethiopia's colonization by a fascist power. He gets angry at this and returns to his room. There, a voice from an unknown origin comes and sings to him a song of consolation (p.74-75). On another occasion he is visited by King David⁵ who provides him with verses of prayer. After the departure of David, Saint Giyorgis arrives on his horse and pulls out Age'azi's rib-bone so that he may feel the kind of pain that his fellow citizens in Ethiopia are suffering (p81-82). Such meetings with heavenly beings or saints is characteristic of 'gädl' narratives. The Miazia prayer of Gädlä Kerestos-Sämra, for example, tells how Musé, Eliyas and Yohannes (Moses, Elijah and John) visited Kerestos-Sämra in order to baptize her with holy water that they brought from the river Jordan (p127-134).

Though the degree of application varies from work to work, early Amharic fiction (1900-1940 E.C.)⁶ can generally be said to have been influenced by forms and contents derived from both indigenous and Western sources.

The authors used the techniques of the 'gādl' narrative such as the episodic plot, the ideal all round hero, the supernatural, etc. The use of allegory and description of characters and setting are elements traceable to western influences. They not only continued to deal with religious subjects but also began to deal with concrete social problems.

2.2 Change and the Rise of a New Generation

With the memory of the fascist invasion still fresh, Amharic works that ensued after the Restoration of Independence dealt with the war and the patriotic resistance. As years passed, however, the memory of the war years waned and other more topical issues began to draw the attention of the writers.

Amharic prose fiction marked a development with the publication of *Enddā Wāttač Kārrāč*. Unlike its predecessor, *Are'aya*, this work does not give predominance to historical events of the war. The war being an active background to the story, it gives more emphasis to showing how the war affects the life of the people. The author goes one step forward to deal with the social problems caused by the war, such as the breaking-up of families, the rampant practice of prostitution and alcoholism.

In the successive years more fiction appeared that heralded the entrance of a new generation of writers to the literary scene. Authors like Dässalänn Hara-Mika'él, Mäzgäbu Abatä, Bä'emnat Gäbrä-Amlak, Mäkonnen Zäwdé, Békka Nāmo, Getaččāw Awwākā, Täklä-Maryam Fanttayé etc. were new authors who came in the forties. This is also a period in which Amharic prose fiction takes another important step by introducing the short-story genre. Recently, critics seem to have identified Tāmāsgān Gäbré's "Yägullälléw Säkkaram" (1941 E.C.) as the first short-story published in Amharic⁷. Later, a collection of short-stories, Mäskkārām, was published in 1949 E.C.

Pulling through the aftermath of war, Ethiopia was recovering from its crisis and resuming normal life afresh. Once political stability was secured efforts towards modernization continued. Material and spiritual life began to undergo change. The reorganization of the Ethiopian government began in the mid-thirties, but it was towards the end of the forties that it became substantively operational. The reopening of different ministries, the expansion of education, the development of amenities and other economic and infrastructural activities, etc. enhanced the process of change in the country⁸. In general, the whole country was under a state of transformation and, as the process continued, there began to arise a conflict between the new and the old.

Since the capital was the country's main link with the outer world it was the most exposed to change. For example, the majority of schools and educated manpower, technological establishments, commerce and communication facilities, etc. were concentrated in the capital and few other towns(Markakis 1975:164). A large number of employees were working in Addis Abäba where the state sector and other enterprises were mainly operating (Markakis 1975:162n). Though at a very slackened rate the number of towns and the degree of urbanization increased. However, the rural sector remained unchanged. Thus the gulf between the urban centres and the country-side grew deeper.

It is this changing social milieu that militated the creative spirit of Amharic writers of the late forties and early fifties-providing them with rich materials for their works. Eventhough they retained the general features of the works of the preceding period the above mentioned authors reflected their time which, in its totality, could be defined as an interaction of opposing social forces: that is, the quest for modernity and the resistance to tradition. They attempted to interpret the anomalies of a society in transition.



Mäkonnen Zäwde's Yä'alām Sāw Ermejja (1948 E.C.), for example, was designed primarily to show the evils of uncontrolled Westernization. One of the two major characters, Bezu Ayyāhu, is portrayed as a Western oriented youth whose ill manners lead him to final destruction. On the contrary, the other character, Gärrāmāw, who remains in Ethiopia studying the local education becomes successful. Though the author does not totally reject European civilization his emphasis lies more on the rewards of being loyal to one's own origin and tradition. Particularly his Sāwenna Edmēw (1952 E.C.) deals with a certain family that averts city life and goes to the country where the members become productive and live in peace. A more or less similar attitude is reflected in the other works of the author.

In Bä'emnat Gäbrä-Amlak's Lejennät Tāmälleso Aymätam (1949 E.C.), though not projected so dominantly, elements of this view are visible. Laissez-faire city life, alcoholism, the moral laxity of the machine age, and the individual's self alienation (p.50-57; p.88; p115-121;p.131) are issues raised in this work. However, to a relatively better degree, the criticism against town-life is counter balanced by its critical and objective criticism also of rigid conservatism and its positive regard for modern schooling. The conversation of Yehéyyes and

Berehanu at the end of the story paraphrases the kind of balance the author is attempting to reach at (p.122-131).

Mäzgäbu Abatä's attitude towards change is rather of a subordinationist kind to the will of the Emperor. In his *Tebäbä Sellasé* (1948 E.C.), for example, the central character's life is presented to demonstrate the Emperor's vision to modernize the country. *Tebäbä's* life is dedicated to the fulfilment of this vision. The story tells about a young boy who goes to study in America and who later returns to serve his country and king faithfully.

Even though the story is generally framed as a demonstration of the vision of modern development, it is largely dominated by the author's orthodox beliefs in keeping traditional practices intact. The work is full of moralizing speeches that are directly addressed to the reader imploring him to stand loyal to the Emperor and the time-old practices. A portion of such passages reads, slightly shortened:

Those who rebel against the Emperor are short-sighted and incapable of thinking of the future...

Dear modern youth: I know you are equipped with the knowledge that would enable you to identify what is good from what is bad. Therefore, you should carefully handle your education that it may assist you to render useful service to your king and your country.

I would like you to persist in fasting

and kneeling before God, practices passed on to you right from the time of Adam, and to maintain your Orthodox religion unadulterated in any way...(p.155-156)

Eventhough the writers do vary in their interpretation they generally tend to deal with subjects that project the changing social milieu. Education itself being one of the major activities of the time, for example, becomes the main subject of Amharic writers. A larger portion of the stories of Lejennät Tämälleso Aymätam, and Tebäbä Sellasé is concerned with school life. In this regard previous works, like Addis Aläm, Are'aya and Age'azi which dealt with the subject, allotted few pages.

The conflict between the old and the new, a theme which was raised before the occupation, grew to widen its scope (Bahru 1991:164-165). The different angles of this contention provided the authors with their materials. The argument between Aläka Kenfä and Ato Abbay, in Lejennät Tämälleso Aymätam, reflects such contention. As representatives of two opposing social attitudes, they not only disagree in their general outlook but even in their dressing styles (pp 9-11). The challenge that the modernizing process faces in the traditional Ethiopian society stretches from the simple manner of greeting to linguistic expressions. Yehéyyes in Lejennät Tämälleso Aymätam criticizes the behavioural change of the modern youth:

What about the so called civilized youth who is the product of modern education? He does not heed 'arb' and 'räbu' [fridays and wednesdays which are fasting days of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church], does not go to church, has no father confessor, and has even no shame of smoking tobacco that is accursed by the Lord Himself and is condemned by our forefathers. No need to mention his dress style. You don't find one out of a thousand who can dress himself properly. He has also changed his language, he says, "take a chair" instead of "have a rest" or "täkoffäs," take a coffee" instead of saying "drink coffee". There are worse characters; my relative Ato Haylé arranged a marriage for his son with a respectable girl from a good family. The son readily rejected the offer causing his father to fall ill for two weeks.... the son later told the father that he had already made his own choice. Such an absurdity has never been heard of even among the heathens let alone in our christian society. (p. 127-128)

Some authors blame the importation of foreign ideas as the source of societal malaise while others blame old traditional practices as obstacles to progress. Writing on the subject of marriage, for example, Bäemnät Gäbrä-Amlak presents the success of the modern approach while Mäkonnen Zäwdé upholds the traditional practice. Mäzgäbu Abatä makes a compromise between the modern and the traditional. Even if Professor Tēbābā Sellasé makes his own choice the consent of the parents and the fulfilment of ethnic and social criteria were pre-requisites (pp 158-159). Telling

about young people who are coming to the towns from the countryside Mäzgäbu writes a success story whereas Mäkonnen depicts a man who loses his identity in the confusion of town life. The latter wrote *Sāwenna Edmēw* to make people aware of the frustration of townlife.

Writing about concrete social problems, a trend which has its inception in Heruy's *Haddis Alām*, takes a step forward in the late forties and the fifties. The authors of the new generation continue to portray their time and to deal with sociological problems like divorce and its consequences (*Ewnātemm Yā'enjjāra Ennat*, 1945 E.C.), adultery and illegitimate sex (*Sayawkāw Tābākkālāw*, 1947 E.C. and *Enddatkādaññ*, 1947 E.C.), etc.

2.3 The Amharic "Dime-Novel"

The late forties and fifties (E.C.) saw not only the emergence of new writers but also an increase in the works published. In 1948 and 1949 E.C. only, more than hundred works came into print.⁹ The progress made in education meant an increase in intellectual activity. "As in many other societies the spread of modern education in Ethiopia had two major effects: the training of skilled personnel to staff the growing bureaucracy, and the dissemination of ideas of change. In short, modern education produced functionaries and intellectuals" (Bahru 1991:109).

It also entailed a growth, sluggishly though, in the number of literate people who needed literature (Pankhurst 1965:60-83).¹⁰ From the point of view of the production of literary materials the role of schools is obviously significant as the authors are generally drawn from them (Molvaer: 1980:x.). Schools of higher education, particularly in the capital, of the post-1935 period were the fermentation ground of the country's political activities and "... , various influences worked on the students to give them a sharper perception of their society and a more radical formulation of their ideas of changing it.. "(Bahru 1991:222;Markakis 1975:188).

Such being the general outline of the country's educational environment many young Ethiopians, the majority of whom were oriented with ideas of change and who had the opportunity to get in touch with the Western type of schools, came out with strong enthusiasm for writing. As shall be discussed in the next chapter, these young people wanted to air their views on issues concerning their society. Reasons stated in their prefatory messages generally reflect the writers' interest in criticizing the various aspects of the on going change and their commitment to contribute to the enlightenment of the public.

The little progress made in the printing presses of the post-war period created a relatively better

Opportunity. The number of printing presses, which was seven by the eve of the Italian war (Pankhurst 1962:283), remained the same until later in the 1940s E.C.. By the beginning of the 1950s E.C. more printing presses were added to those already operating. These included:

- Täsfa Gäbrä-Sellase Press
- Addis Press
- Tenssa'ë Zä-Guba'ë Press
- Märha-Tebäab Press
- Commercial Press
- Kasaté-Berhan Press
- Central Press
- Chamber Press
- Täfäri Makonnen Press
- Ethiopia Press
- Šäwa Press
- Näsannät Press
- St. George Press

Outside the capital there were other printing enterprises such as the Il Poligrafico Press, Yämängest Press, Kokäbä-Sebäh Press and Pietro Silla Press in Asmara and St. Lazaire Press in Dire-Dawa. The opening of publishers like the Presbyternean, Yämesserač Dems', Oxford University Press and the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts was itself a new phenomenon that had not been heard of before. The situation, therefore, was generally encouraging for the writers of the new generation. Even if they were not writers by profession, they engaged themselves in writing because it appealed to them as a convenient and easy medium for reaching the society. They lacked the technical skill and experience in creative literature, a thing which they usually admitted. However,

they did not hesitate to try to reproduce their ideas into prose narrative, drama and poetry. The outcome was the production of more works in Amharic than ever before among which came into being the narratives in prose so widely known as the Amharic "dime novel" or "bésa lebbwälläd". The term "dime novel" was first adopted by Solomon Déréssa refering to works such as *Ennantāw Ferāduñ*, *Mennāw Zānnātkebben?*, *Kānfār Mātač'* and Kamsur sampled out in his article (Solomon 1969:17-22).

Solomon Déréssa's article had a picture displaying a few "dime novels" and reviewed the features of these works. He presented his observations of the works which he disapprovingly referred to as the Amharic counterpart of the dime novels. The major features of his article can be summarized as follows:

- a) The layout: paperback; poorly designed; 80 pages long (12x17cm. paper size) on the average; proof-reading almost absent;
- b) The inside pages: a display of aphorisms and photographs of the authors; forwards, acknowledgements, prefaces and introductions often dealing with outlandish subject matter;
- c) The making of the story: lacking in imagination and a sense of realism; outrageous and badly manipulated phantasies; bringing a saga of generations condensed into a few page; plot marred by erroneous arrangement; unjustifiable occurrences of actions, episodes, etc.; not action oriented; abuse of the point-of-view technique; marked by the Senecan blood-and thunder ending;

d) **The Characters:** papier-maché characters who crop up anytime as they vanish so blithely; one-sided characterization and creating larger-than-life character; lacking intrinsic motivation to convince the reader;

e) **The Subject:** kind of philosophy without substance; seldom dealing with pressing contemporary problems; ineffective social criticism; parental opposition to young lovers: complaints on thwarted justice;

f) **The Language:** poor; stilted and confusing dialogues; cliché statements abound; (Solomon 1969:17-22)

Solomon Déréssa's evaluation of the works, which he says are collected at random, happens to be unfavourable. By the time he wrote the article, however, there have already been many Amharic "dime novels". It is important to note the fact that the authors are possessed by an immediate urge to express their ideas. Purpose posed itself as the primary and most desired aspect of writing that technique is considered as something of a secondary importance. In fact, many of them request the reader's cooperation to overlook their shortcomings in technique and to attend to the message he may profit from them.

As it has always been the case in Ethiopian literature the works of these apprentice writers deal with issues of social concern. The authors' perseverance in writing is generally geared to a discussion of the contemporary society. Eventhough their analysis is ineffective, one can see that they have touched upon the different problems of



their period (Däbbäbä S. 1982 E.C.:22-23). There are also a few Amharic "dime novels" which are designed to equip the reader with the teachings of religious subjects and which attempt to interpret some rather abstract and universal ideas such as 'the meaning of life', 'the fate of man', 'discovering the world of knowledge' etc.

The popularity of Amharic "dime novels" may be debatable because, there is no available statistical information made on the number of readers or books sold to warrant such generalization. According to Solomon Déréssa, the books were kept in book-stores for a long time which could mean the lack of enough number of readers. He tells that he bought the books "cheaper by the dozen, actually getting up to 30% reduction". Relating to the amount of books sold he further indicates that the number did not usually exceed a couple of thousands (Solomon 1969:17). A survey made on some fifty of randomly picked Amharic "dime novels" in two of the major libraries in Addis Ababa (The National Library and Addis Ababa University: Kennedy Library) shows that a book is borrowed by 4-5 readers on the average. A few works like Eteyyé Laders, Amanuél Dārso Māls, Yāmālatāw Tōs, etc., however, were borrowed more than ten times-each. Based on these fragmentary information one may, therefore, tend to believe that Amharic "dime novels" did not enjoy a large number of readers. Never-the-less,

more works of the same calibre continued to be published over the years.

Besides the number of books sold or the rate of circulation, there are other features too which critics contend to be the marks of popular literature. J. Tompkins and M. Dalziel, who have studied the nature of English popular literature of the 18th and 19th centuries respectively, forward other traits. According to them the popular fiction are :

- a) popular as a form of entertainment and inferior as a form of art;
- b) market motivated and hence written in haste and cheaply sold;
- c) dealing with common place and topical subject matters which could appeal to the taste of the less literate public;
- d) repeating events, episodes, stock characters and situations, plot patterns, themes, etc.; and
- e) stories which feature idealized life such as the triumph of virtue over vice - reflecting values, tastes and wishes of the huge public (Tompkins 1961:1 - 115; Dalziel 1957:4 - 20, 84 - 106 and 159 - 172).

Amharic "time novels", of course, may not fully observe the major features of popular literature described above. The majority of these works are not designed for entertainment. They set out mainly to edify and reform rather than to please or entertain the public. As it has already been noted the writers are not solely market motivated. However, as shall be discussed later on, these works share many of the characteristics with such type of fiction as to warrant them to be called popular.

"All popular literature is cheap in one sense of the term, and probably the major part of its definition is that it can be enjoyed with a minimum of effort on the part of the reader", observes M. Dalziel (Dalziel 1957:4). As E. Obiechina says:

... the content of much of the popular pamphlets has the authenticity of an internal evidence; the writers and the subjects they deal with have a built-in intimacy of relationship. That is why the popular authors write with the commitment one encounters in the pamphlet literature: because they are dealing with situations of which they form a part, ... (Obiechina 1973:116)

The subject matter that the Amharic writers choose to write about are not alien to the life of the society and, in addition to this, the fact that the authors' view and interpretation of the contemporary society do not violate

accepted values and conventions could be the reason for the works to continue to be in demand. Solomon Déréssa has stressed this point and says, "As to interests and values, I think, one can safely say that they are as pertinent to our lives as American best-sellers are to the American way of life" (Solomon 1969:22).

All the same the critics have bitterly attacked these works. For example, Mängestu Lämman describes the nature of these works in the following words:

The vice that bedevils contemporary Amharic literature is not its preoccupation with topical subject matter and theme, but the flow of crude didacticism that overwhelms it. In such a state of affairs replete with all sorts of bogus profundity every peddler of moral platitudes assumes the role of the prophet and moral philosopher (Mängestu L. 1965:4).

One has to take into account that the short-comings raised by Mängestu Lämman are generally the result of the influence of earlier authors. If they are moralistic-didactic they are only continuing the tradition of the devotional literature and other works that preceded them (Molvaer 1980:3).

CHAPTER THREE

3. Major Features of Amharic "Dime Novel"

The previous chapter has highlighted how the emergence of the Amharic "dime novel" is closely associated with the rise of a new generation of writers. This chapter shall begin by defining the type and establishing the set of criteria which should be considered in identifying a work as a "dime novel". It also introduces the criteria used to select the works that are discussed in the chapter. This is followed by the main part of the discussion that deals with the quiddities of Amharic "dime novel".

There is not a clearly specified criteria set to determine which fictional narrative in Amharic should be labelled as a "dime novel". The summary of Solomon Déréssa's observations may serve as basic in defining the type that the term refers to. In fact, his opinion seems to have gained acceptance by other critics in the field. In a recently held panel discussion, for example, Däbbäbä Säyfu, assistant professor at the Institute of Language Studies of the Addis Ababa University, says,

By *bésa lebbolläd* [dime novel] I mean a sentimental narrative written in a few pages and whose artistic standard is least cared for. Its generic class is usually the novel. ..., it is a type that is composed in a few

days and sold for a few cents (dime), it is a one-shot reading and an ephemeral reading at that. ..., For example, the attempt at the novel form as "Eteyye laders" and "Sayeggabbu Täfattu", ... (Däbbäbä S. 1982, E.C: 22).

This is a view shared by the other members of the panel and it is also possible that students in the field would follow the trend set by their teachers. Actually, there are students who have used the term in their research papers.¹¹ Taking into account the critics' understanding of the type, therefore, one may define Amharic "dime novel" as:

Amharic prose narrative often in paper-back that is written in 25-100 pages of a 12x17cm paper size (4,000-17,000 words) on the average. Its generic class is the novel though it is actually between the short-story and the short novel often the size of a long short-story; a fictional narrative of little literary merit that came into existence in the late 1940s and 1950s E.C.

The classification of Amharic works as "dime novel" is made in light of the above definition and takes into consideration if a work is:

- A) a prose narrative written in 25-100 pages:
- B) a narrative attempting to follow the main pattern of the novel:
- C) a narrative of little literary merit:

The production of Amharic "dime novels" has not been totally abandoned. Even if it continued to appear late in



the 70s, the heyday of the type was the beginning of the second-half of the present century.¹² Particularly in the fifties these works constitute the larger portion of the fictional narratives published in the language. In practice, these paper-backs are rather too many that it would not be convenient to discuss all of them here. It is necessary, therefore, to select some works and the following criteria are used in the selection.

- a) **Date of publication:** Even if similar works continued to appear much later, emphasis is made on the ones published during the heyday of the type. Since the nature of a certain literary form is somehow related to the economic and socio-cultural conditions of the period that produced this would be a factor worthy of attention. Therefore, the selection is made among the works that are published between E.C. 1949-1966: that is between the jubilee anniversary of the Emperor's coronation and the year of the Ethiopian Revolution.
- b) **Physical Lay-out:** according to the above description, upon which a sort of convention has developed in identifying the "dime novel", such physical properties as size, cover, illustration, etc. are considered. If not for their size, the larger works would possibly be confusing to the reader. Therefore, the selection considers the average size and other aspects of the type's physical appearance.
- c) **Narrative Form:** this is an aspect of technique that deals with the manner in which a certain story develops. The authors of Amharic "dime novels" have used different methods in rendering their stories. Based on these differences one can classify the works into different sub-categories. The study, therefore, tries to include works that would represent these different categories.
- d) **Subject Matter:** the "dime novels" deal with various subject matters which may be divided into a few groups such as education, love and marriage, etc. The books that are discussed here are chosen from these subject groups.

- e) **The Number of books by an author:** the authors of Amharic "dime novels" are generally regarded as 'one-shot' writers. Eventhough many of them promise to come up with another work it often remains unfulfilled. A few of them, however, produced as many as 15-20 works covering good portion of the total production. This study also takes into account the number of books by these authors. (The list of books thus selected and used as the primary references in the study is found on page 121).

3.1 Physical Lay-out

3.1.1 Size and cover

Amharic "dime novels" are in paperback and the binding is poor. According to a measurement made on some hundred and fifty of these booklets the average size of an amharic "dime novel" is 16x12c.m. The inner leaves are pulp paper of the same brand. Their colour is usually among the faded varieties of green, red, blue or yellow. Unlike the nature of popular literature, whose cover is supposed to be eye-catching and glossy, Amharic "dime novels" have a generally dull appearance. The imperceptibility of the letters and the poor drawings are real problems which could lessen the interest of readers.

The number of pages varies from one booklet to another, but most of them have a slim volume ranging between 25-75 pages. Some of these works are too short that they do not exceed the size of a short-story. Aklilu Atlabbaččāw's Māwwāyayāt is only 19 pages long; and considering that the story actually begins on page 9 it would not even meet the standard size of a short story - written in less than four

thousand words. In fact, some of the authors of these works describe their books as 'accer tarik' which literally means 'short-story'. In the introduction to his YäAlmaz Eda Mänggesttu Gädamu writes,

I know that many people are complaining that all my works, except two, are very short. It is the story that is needed, not many pages. I am not the one who started writing short stories. Writers abroad particularly all known authors around the world do write in ten to fifty pages. (Mänggesttu G. 1955 E.C: 3.)

Another popular author, Abbé Gubäñña, also refers to his Kältammawa Eheté as a short-story. It is yet unclear whether they are consciously referring to the short-story genre or if they are only mentioning the size. It is true that these Amharic books are short and, as in some cases, even shorter than novelettes. However, they are nothing like a short story as the genre is known in Western literature.

According to critics the short story's major tenets are:

- a) compactness of form - written in less than 10,000 words and brief enough to be read at one sitting;
- b) economy of management - the use of a very limited number of characters, less space for explanation, description and character development, fewer words spoken in dialogues;

c) aiming toward achieving a single rather than a multiple effect to which every action in the story is subordinated; and

d) the use of fewer incidents which are so planned to demonstrate a single aspect of the human condition as its central idea (Abrams 1981; Johnson and Hamlin 1966:1-3)

In fact, most Amharic "dime novels" are not longer than the size "prescribed" for the short story. However, they are lacking the other essential ingredients of the form and, instead, appear to be an attempt at the novel form. "Ordinarily," write Johnson and Hamlin, "the novel treats more characters, more events, covers more time and more ground than the short story, and is a great deal more discursive" (Johnson and Hamlin 1966:1). E.M. Forster suggests that the minimum length of the novel is about 50,000 words and a standard definition of the form says, "a relatively long fictional prose narrative with a more or less complex plot or pattern of events, about human beings, their feeling, thoughts, actions, etc." (Webster 1961).

Eventhough recent critical approaches tend to eschew the use of rigid rules about the form of a certain literature there seem to be a general agreement on the

validity of the above tenets of the two forms. Regarding the Amharic works in light of these tenets, therefore, one would certainly have a reason to believe that their generic class is that of the novel. Most amharic "dime novels" do ramble over various subjects and are often full of digressions. The stories cover more time and involve many incidents, events and a profusion of characters. They may or may not be good novels, but these are more of the characteristics of the novel. Eventhough the authors call their works as "aččer tarik" the stories are rather covering more time and many subject matters as would the novel. For example, the story of Kāltammawa Eheté starts before the birth of the central character and her brother. Then it tells how these two grow together in a certain village from where the girl vanishes. Then the story goes on to follow the boy's journey to Addis Ababa and continues to relate his school life. Finally, it tells how the grown-up boy meets his sister in a bar where she works as a barlady. The story is presented in just 47 small pages (about 7,900 words) but covers an outline of the life and destiny of two generations.

There are also longer works such as Tebābu Tayyé's Nuro Mäč Endih Nāw (about 16,700 words) and Berhanu Zārihun's Čārāka Setwāta (about 16,800 words), but these

too are not longer than the size of a long short-story and their physical layout and the nature of their narrative is much the same as the short ones.

On the cover of these short works one would usually find the title, the name of the author, the date and place of publication. Quite many of them have a drawing on their front-cover which is intended to demonstrate the theme of the story, to represent a certain scene or to summarize an episode in the story. The drawing on the front-cover of Abbé Gubäñña's Yä'amäs' Nuzzazé, shows a sick man on his death-bed talking to a man sitting beside him (appendix i).

A few other cases show drawings which seem to have been adopted from foreign sources. The one on Mulugéta Mäbe'a-Siyon's Gudén Awättahāw, for instance, shows a drawing of a woman whose appearance resembles the ones found on Indian film posters that were popular in the capital city and other towns like Nazareth, Jimma and Asälla (appendix vi).¹³ The drawing on the cover of Mänggestu Gädamu's Yäbunna Bét Zenbboč is a cartoon (appendix iv). Eventhough the majority of the "dime novels" continued to appear as dull and colourless there are few exceptions with eye-catching drawings. For example, on the front-cover of Mänggestu Gädamu's Kāmann Aneššé is a donkey dressed in a gentleman's suit, a neck-tie and spectacles "shaking hands"

with a man who is humbly bowing to it (appendix viii).

Almost all "dime novels" declare the date of their publication by using the traditional style of quoting the year of the Emperor's reign. It is not uncommon to read a statement such as "this book is published on the 32nd year of the reign of His Majesty Haile Sellasie I, Emperor of Ethiopia" either on the cover or on an inside page. Some books use their front-cover for funny blurbs like this couplet on Ayyälä Kidané's "Enkka Lejehen":

ከመፋደህ በፊት ዘግተህ በሮሃ
ኢንግ ተቀበለኝ ሠ-ሰድ ስፔሰን
Before you close your door and go away

Here, take your child from me. (Ayyälä 1956)

or this one on Germa Čäru's Käsenssät Eskä-Mot:

የፍጡር ዓይነት:-
በጭንቀት ሠወሰድ፣
በአሣር ሠወኖር፣
በጸኑር ሠወጥ፡፡

The fate of a creature:

To be born in labour;

To live in difficulty;

To die in agony. (Germa Č. 1960)

Such statements are intended to indicate the theme or the general idea of the story. There are also many cases where proverbs are used for the same purpose, e.g. in Yägabečča Tānk. "የፈረን ያደርሳል፤ ጭንቀት ቤት ያፈርሳል"

(What is feared to happen will sure come to pass, jealousy finally breaks-up conjugal life), and Biblical statements like "He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind "(proverbs 11:29) in Germa Dammānu's Wāraš Yālélāw Bét.

The back-covers are used to list books published by the author or the titles of books he plans to publish (appendix v). Photographs and short bibliographic notes of authors and blurbs seldom appear on the back-cover (appendix vii).

3.1.2 Inside Flying-Pages

Many of these works have a flying page which is often the duplicate of the cover page. A copyright notice may also appear on a different leaf. A few other works have a page showing the photograph of the author and, in some cases, it is preceded by the pictures of the Emperor and/or other members of the royal family. There are also cases when the number of the flying pages increase to include photographs of the parents of the author.

Some authors dedicate extra pages for moralistic aphorisms and sententious expressions of wisdom. Under the title Feré-Kānafer (quotable sayings) Germa Čāru writes,

ለእኩል የሀያቆረቆር አገሩን አንድ ችግር

He who does not care for his own pride cannot take pride in his country.

ለመክሰር አንድ ሣንቲም አክብሮት

Give a cent its due if you want to grow rich.

ለሐያለኛ መድሐኒቱ ብልህተኛ ሃሳብ

It is the wise man that can handle the high-handed dictator.

ሰው ከሆንን ሰው አንናጃለን

If you think you are human, then do not disrespect another human being. (Germa Č. 1960 E.C.: 3-4)

These gnomonic statements are usually concocted on popular ethics and values which strike one as stale and hackneyed expressions. following are only a few samples.

በየጊዜው ካደረሱት ጉዳዮች አንገጣጠሚ
ነገሮች ካላቸው የመገናኛ ቃላት

Words Originated from my mind
about incidents I have encountered

በመዘግየት ከተጠቀምኩት ጉዳዮች በመቸገል የተገኘው
ነገሮች ያሉ ስህተት ::

I have suffered more by being in a hurry than by being slow.

ስታደርገው በመቆረጥ ካምፋፀሙት አድርገው
የሚያስፀኝላቸው ነገር ያሉ ስህተት ::

You regret more by commission rather than by omission. (Eliyas 1954 E.C.)

ለኛ ለሰዎች የሚያስፈልገን

What We Humans Need

ሠው አለየንም ብለው ካምፋፀሙት ሃሳብ

ካምፋፀሙት ያለው ብለው ማስታወስ ያለብን ::

Better refrain from committing sinful deeds in the dark by thinking that God's eyes are focused on you.

ከሠላፍ ጊደፍ ኦርቆኝ ብሎ ማለብ ገልጾ ዕውቆት ካው ::

It is wise to pray not to be encumbered by a lazy friend.

(Asäfa T. 1959 E.C.: 83-4)

It is a common practice in these works to have a notice which informs the reader that they are fiction and not meant to refer to any person or place in reality. Even after introducing their works as 'lebb wälläd', which literally means 'heart-borne' for fiction, the authors do not refrain from making notices like "Since the story contained in this little book is fictional it is not in any way related to anybody's history," (Mänggestu.G. 1957). There are also warnings given to readers. In Täčän Abbäbä's Yä'emmahoy Mäzāz, for example, it reads:

WARNING

Pregnant women and people with heart problems must not read this book. (Täčän 1956 E.C.)

Acknowledgements and words of dedication are also included in the inside pages. Some authors tell their social background and previous profession as well. Dedicating his Yä'amsa Aläka Gābré to

the Ethiopian Armed Forces, Mänggestu Gädamu tells his reader that he was once a member of the signal corps. It is not unusual to find poems before and/or after the main body of the narratives. Except in a few cases like Wändayyāhu Habtä-Gabre'él's Mäddāsāt Bāwttatennāt and Däbbäbä Admeké's Yāmalādaw Dāha, the poems deal with outlandish subjects which have no relevance to the main story. They are there as bonuses.

3.1.3 Prefaces and Introductions

Two other important elements still extraneous to the actual story are the preface and introduction. The writers of Amharic "dime novels" use these titles to forward some general remarks about their works. A closer observation, however, discloses some discrepancies. Though making a preliminary note is acceptable to a preface some authors have wrongly used it as the short abstract of their stories. Under this title the authors give the brief outlines of their stories and the reader has nothing left to discover by reading them. For example, the preface of Sāwenna Nurow, a very short work as it is, already discloses all the major happenings of the story. It reads in part:

My book Sāwenna Nurow tells about the story of Asfaw: about how he grew-up in the family of his wealthy parents and how he was educated until he receives his

- diploma of higher learning. It also tells how he succeeded to get a higher post in the government where he embezzled money.

It tells how his conduct deteriorated to become a womanizer, a drunkard and a gambler; and how he came to embezzle a large sum of money and was imprisoned. His beloved parents passed away before his release from prison. After his release he improved his conduct and became religious. Then, he got married and became the father of four children. This is the story of Asfaw in brief. (Gännät 1959 E.C.: 8)



There are many cases where prefaces are used to explain the themes or morals of the stories in a much similar manner. For instance, part of the preface of Meskinu Debb Argaččāw by Mäzgäbu Abatä reads:

I confirm to you that it [the story] includes all the problems and ups-and-downs of life and everything that is caused by disdain. As an over-stretched cord or an excessively tightened rope the end of imperious people is bound to snap. ... It also shows what the lot of those people who inflict cruelty upon others looks like. (Mäzgäbu 1956 E.C.: 5)

It is quite interesting to find an author who advises his readers to be content with just the introduction. In the preface to Bunna Kājiwa, Ayyälä Kidané writes, "Those of you who may not be able to read this book to the end, or fail to understand the substance, reading the introduction will suffice you" (Ayyälä 1961 E.C.).

In the majority of cases, the authors use their introductions to discuss various matters related to writing. They find it expedient to forward their opinions and views about the purpose of fiction writing, the problem of getting enough readers who are capable of appreciating a work of art, the high cost of printing, the problem of marketing their works, and other social problems too. The following excerpts are just a few indicators to the kind of issues raised.

There is no author who writes a story without a purpose. The duty of the author is to write about whatever he feels and experiences, spicing them with expressions [like a cook spices his sauces with pepper and salt]. (Gétaččāw G. 1959 E.C.:8-9)

The story is very short. It is not that I am incapable to make it longer; the only reason for not doing so is that I am afraid of the amount of money needed to have it printed. (Afāwārk' F. 1955 E.C.:the preface)

The main purpose for writing this book is to provide the solution to people who are perhaps facing similar problems as the ones found in the story, to warn others from committing similar mistakes. (Wäldä-Amanu'él 1961 E.C.: 5)

The main point I have discussed in this book is about men and women who deny legitimacy to their new-born ones. (Ayyälä 1956 E.C.:)

This story shows the betterment made in marriage... and how fortunate one could be living in a modern age. (Amdä-Seyon 1953 E.C: 9)

The length of the prefaces and introductions vary from one book to another. They may be as long as ten pages as in *Mäddäsät Bāwättatennät* and *Yägabečča Tānk'* or just one sentence as in *Māwwāyāt*. It should be noted however, that not all Amharic "dime novels" have prefaces and introductions; *Kāltammawa Eheté* and *Wāraš Yäléllāw Bét*, for instance, do not have any.

3.1.4 Chapters and Headings

Amharic "dime novels" are often divided into chapters. A few of them give different sub-topics to each of the consecutive chapters while in some other cases the parts are only marked by numbers. Among those whose chapters are headed by sub-topics there are some works that include a table of contents as it is in *Feré Heywät*. In the majority of cases, however, the sub-topics appear at the head of every new chapter - often printed in bold letters and underlined.

Quite a good number of these works also use both the number and the sub-topic together. It is common to see chapters whose headings read as "chapter 2: FROM INFANCY TO CHILDHOOD", (Germa Č. 1960 E.C: 29). There are also many works which appear as one long chapter. The narratives of

Afawār. Fälläkä's Sara, Eliyas Bäṣah's Sāw Yabbawen Egzi'abhér Yegälssāwal, Yerga Mänggestu's Polisenna Dañña Bābalagār, etc., for example, are not divided into chapters. These works only repeat the title of the book at the beginning of their stories - sometimes complimented with sub-titles - and do not make a temporary stop.

Many writers of the "dime novels" seem not to have a proper understanding of the purpose of chapter divisions. One may find relatively longer works not divided into chapters and the short narratives divided. Yā'amsa Alāka Gäbré has five chapters whereas Polisenna Dañña Bābalagār is not divided at all - these are 35 and 79 pages long respectively. A few cases show that some authors do not even know where to begin a new chapter. For instance, a new chapter begins in the middle of a speech of a character in Kuratenna Werdāt (Täfarra 1955 E.C.: 65-6). The chapters are made without considering the functional purpose of dividing a narrative into different units. Philip Stevick writes,

... the writer of extended narrative is obliged to make his work out of subordinate, distinguishable parts, each of which can be seen as a form in itself. ..., one responds to the form of a novel by responding to its chapters. And without the possibility of responding to the form of its chapters, as more or less discrete units, an understanding of the whole work would be infinitely more difficult... (Stevick 1967: 174).

The necessity of segmenting a narrative into relatively self-contained and meaningful units is not correctly understood by many authors. Sometimes chapters are shorter than a page as in *Mäwdäd Yamä'ttaw Tānk'* (Bällätä 1958 E.C.: 55-56). In fact, a chapter may not be judged for its size alone. The point is that the authors, while dividing their story into chapters, do not consider other criteria to make them the "discrete units" of a whole. Many a time, the division is done at random.

The headings used in amharic "dime novels" are more or less similar. Their purport as a technique is two-fold: it serves as an opening to the story and/or the chapters, and it also introduces the subject-matter to the reader. Usually, the headings are statements that summarize the important event, action or episode of the part. For example, the reader who, in the first four chapters, has the information that the character-narrator is out in search of his father's body comes across a heading that reads *Mäkaberun Agäññähu* (I FOUND THE GRAVE) at the beginning of chapter five in *Yämānfäs Kuslāñña* (Yelma M. 1958 E.C.: 33). It is made clear, therefore, that the major happening of this particular chapter would not be other than the discovering of the grave.

Many headings serve as moral instructions. **Sāw Yabbawen Egzi'abhér Yegālssāwal** (what is hidden by man shall be brought to light by God) and **Adlewon Bäsāyef** (injustice by the sword). In **Yā'amsa Alāka Gābré** all the five chapters are headed by drawings of different armaments: a sword, Bow and arrows, a pistol, a shield and a couple of spears, and a helmet. Considering that the story is about the heroic deeds of a certain soldier who is defending the territorial integrity of his country one can see the thematic relationship of the drawings.

3.1.5 Captions and Illustrations

Amharic "dime novels" abound in captions. As a matter of fact, one may also consider the headings mentioned above as captions because, according to the standard definition of the term, a caption is "a heading or title, as of chapter, or page. ... a legend for a picture or illustration," (Barnhart 1969).

Apart from those used as headings of chapters and as sub-titles, captions are often found under the photographs of the Emperor, the author, and other pictures alike. A caption may be in prose or verse, a sort of words of wisdom quoted from other sources or composed by the author. The caption under the picture of the Emperor may be a statement quoted from his speech:

The captions under the photographs of the authors are intended to reflect the authors' view of life.

It is naive to think that time shall redress what has been spoilt by man. (Yelma M. 1959 E.C.)

- a) You should not forget that everything done without due care shall bring disaster.
- b) You must make sure that you really know yourself and are capable of living up to your ideals.
- c) Action is the real evidence, not the skill expressed in words alone (Mulugéta 1963 E.C.)

Except for Germa Dammānu's Wāraš Yäléllāw Bét and Mänggestu Gādamu's Somaléw, these "dime novels" seldom use illustrations inside the main text (appendix ii,iii,ix).

3.2 Narrative Form

The term technique in literature refers to a concept that deals with the method used in processing a certain narrative. It includes the set of method, or the craft, that the writer employs to organize and develop his material into an intelligible work. Therefore, it is a concept which, by and large, has a close relationship with form because they both deal with ways of telling a story, the former with the process and the latter with the outcome. Writing on the subject Philip Stevick says,

... techniques have no existence apart from their employment in particular novels, that one cannot begin to judge the effectiveness of one way of telling a story over another without judging the relation between the technique and the whole structure of the novel in which it appears. (Stevick 1967: 46)

Of course, technique and form express a notion that is not limited to an external scheme alone but are also the integral parts of the work which has no existence without them. In order to analyze the technical aspects that make the form(s) of Amharic "dime novel", however, it would be more manageable to limit its application to a certain meaning. "When we speak of the form of a literary work", defines Cuddon, "we refer to its shape and structure and

the manner in which it is made... - as opposed to its substance or what it is about" (Cuddon 1977).

Based on this definition, the study shall now deal with the shape and structural aspects of the narrative of the "dime novels". It is also important to note here that a reference to the plot would be the primary method applied in studying the form of a work. After all, as R. F. Dietrich says, "plot may be defined as the arrangement of events and actions in a story ... (Dietrich. n. d.: 127); or in the words of Norman Friedman, plot is "..., the sequential flow of events in time and its means and causes, effects and ends" (Friedman 1967E.C: 150).

Amharic "dime novels" may be classified into a few sub-categories depending upon the pattern of their plots. The differences in the patterns of the plots differentiates the shape or structure of the narratives.

It is best to begin here by presenting the profiles of the plots of ten selected "dime-novels". The complete list of the selected Amharic "dime novels" and the profiles of their plots is appended in the end. The profiles do not necessarily follow the course of actions in their temporal order of occurrence. (The symbol '#' indicates a

discontinuation in the sequential development of a narration; it may also indicate a point where the narration resumes at a different place or at a different period of time)

1. Adlewon Bäsäyef: A family - a son born to it - the death of the parents - the son becomes spoiled and spends what he has inherited - his uncle gives him a post in the government for which he is not qualified - another boss comes and he loses his job and is sent to prison - after being released he goes on wandering aimlessly - he suffers a lot and faces a series of misfortunes - finally, he is shot by certain people - he dies in an operation room of a hospital.

2. Amanuél Därso Mäls: A young man explains the reason why he tells his life story and begins at the death of his father # On his death bed. The father makes a will and a few days later he dies - the son inherits a good portion of the property and expends it all - he leaves his job and mistreats his wife - she leaves him and he continues to go to different women - one day unknown men kidnap him and cut-off his tongue and he becomes dumb - he becomes dependent on his previous mistress who tries to help him - he quarrels with the woman and is admitted to an asylum - his wife visits him in the hospital - he gets cured and his

wife takes him to her home and helps him to recover - he gets a job as an accountant -he receives his first salary and on his way home becomes tempted to go to the bars - he overcomes the temptation and goes to his wife; she becomes happy.

3. **Ancci Yāgādam Tākel:** A young Ethiopian who is studying in Berkley, California, receives a letter sent to him by a young girl from Ethiopia. -- He writes back to the girl and the exchange continues.

4. **Bunna Kājiwa:** A young girl tells the story of her deceased mother # The mother is married to a man according to the traditional custom - the man beats her because of her "infertility" - she runs away and comes to a town and becomes a prostitute - she gives birth to a girl who becomes a 'bunna kāji' (who makes and serves coffee to the customers) - the mother meets with a man from her village who finds her a job - she saves money and opens her own brothel- two men quarell over her and one of them kills her - the man from the mother's village takes the abandoned girl who narrates the story.

5. **Čārāka Setwāta:** A young man (Bākkālā), argues with his uncle about his marriage. The uncle advises him to try another girl who may help him to forget his deserting

fianceé, but the former says he couldn't get one # A new secretary is employed in Bäkkälä's office - he is a serious and disciplined man; never flinches to fun loving office girls - he likes the new secretary and one day gives her a ride home - they fall in love - the staff members and the bosses conspire against them; so they change their jobs - The problem with the girl is that she's engaged to another man without her consent - Bäkkälä talks with her fiancé and pays him birr 2,000, that solves the problem - he assigns his friend Abäbä to take care of his lover and goes to Europe - by the time he comes back his lover refuses to marry him - he gets disturbed and his relatives send him to Asmāra - he receives a telephone call from Addis Abāba and learns that the man she is going to marry is his friend Abäbä - on the day of the wedding he watches the wedding procession pass by - he enters a brothel and sleeps with a prostitute.

6. Čärk' Yämmiyasttēl Wänné: A drunkard writes a letter to his previous teacher asking for advice - the teacher answers him and tries to persuade him to stop drinking - the drunkard tries to quit drinking - the teacher gets happy - the drunkard fails in his effort - the teacher becomes unhappy.

7. **"Enkka Lejehen"**: A family - a son born to it - the young boy becomes spoiled - takes a mistress by whom he gets two children - he betrays her - she dies - he gets other children from two different women - when he tries to leave as usual one of the women brings his child and leaves it with him - he gives the child to a neighbouring woman the husband of whom kills him.

8. **Enkoyyé Demamé**: An old woman called Enkoyyé Demamé walks in the rain # The young Enkoyyé gets married to a rich white man who keeps a shop; Enkoyyé gives birth to twin children, a son and daughter - the white man becomes ill and decides to go to his country - he takes the son with him and leaves the daughter with Enkoyyé - on a ship to France the white man dies and a French woman adopts the baby son (Burdo) # Enkoyyé becomes poor and gives her daughter (Dengäté or Térésa) to a certain family - Dengäte Grows-up but nobody wants to marry her because she is a mulatto # Burdo grows- up but nobody wants to marry him because he is a mulatto # Dengäté leaves her home and goes to Addis Abäba where she becomes a prostitute # Burdo goes to Ethiopia and by chance meets with Térésa in a bar - they become lovers and get married # Enkoyyé comes to the house of Térésa looking for a job and gets hired as a servant; Burdo does not like the old woman because she is ugly.

9. **Essun Tāyewi:** A young prisoner in handcuffs is led into a court charged for murdering his father - the court begins the investigation on evidences, words of witnesses and available exhibits. Adjourned to another day - the accused is immersed in deep thought while staying in the prison cell - the investigation continues its second-day hearing of witnesses - it is disclosed that the wife of the murdered man had committed suicide and has been buried; the police continue to investigate the crime - on the third session of the hearing the complex situation is unravelled and it is discovered that the killers of both the husband and wife are two other people - the accused is acquitted.

10. **Eteyyé Laders:** Manddäfro discusses with his friends about women - one of these friends inherits the wealth of his dying uncle - the friends move to the villa and buy a luxurious car - Manddäfro continues to pick-up street-girls - a girl marries him but he refuses to sleep with her; she leaves him - he strikes an affair with a married woman and deceives the husband by presenting himself as the woman's brother - the husband goes to another place and, in the meantime, the woman becomes pregnant - Manddäfro leaves her, the woman dies while attempting an abortion.

The resumé, including those appended in the end, clearly show that the greater number of Amharic "dime



novels" use similar methods in plot construction. There are, of course, a few exceptions. Based on this information one may identify the following methods. (in parentheses are given the numbers of the stories that illustrate the methods)

1. **A - Z:** This is a method where actions, events and episodes of a story are arranged in chronological order. The narration starts at the beginning of the story and develops by strictly observing the succession of events in their natural spatio-temporal order. It follows the course of the life of a character up to the end of the story and does not make any significant detour or a change of order that may affect the shape of the narrative. Many of these stories develop a chain of actions which are interrelated as cause-and-effect.

(1,7,9,10,11,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,27,29,31,32,33,35,38,39,40,41,48,49,50)

2. **A, B, A, B:** This refers to a method where a story is presented as correspondence between two characters. The epistolary work arranges its units in such a way that the whole process is a two-way interaction.

Apart from the epistolary works there are also a few works which carry their story through extended dialogue. The only difference is perhaps the presence of a narrator who plays the role of an intermedator between the characters - an agent who intrudes to express the mood, feeling, etc. of the actants or who makes some remarks which have no relevance at all.

(3,6,13,26,37)

3. **Z # A - Y:** Another method employed by the Amharic "dime novel" is to begin a narrative with the last unit of the story. It is a technique applied by stories of confession that are usually presented by a character-narrator. The Amharic "dime novels" written in this mode do not actually invert the whole order of a story so as to narrate it in a backward direction. It is only that the narrator, who has already experienced whatever is in the story, presents himself at the beginning of the narrative with the information about what happened at the end of story. He, the narrator, posts himself at a higher level of narration and proceeds to tell the story - beginning from where it starts and unfolding actions, events, and episodes according to their order of occurrence - until he reaches

the point where he first appears to the reader.
(2,4,5,30)

4. X # A - W # X - Z: There are confession stories whose narratives do not begin with the last event in the story. The narrator starts at a point a little earlier from the end and then proceeds to the beginning. The story develops until it reaches where the scene at the beginning of the narrative is at its proper order in time. From this point on the narrative continues to deal with the last part of the story.
(42,43,45)

5. A - B # C - D #...# Y - Z : The narrative appears in a succession of smaller units every one of which has some degree of completeness. A unit constitutes a chapter but is self-contained and it resembles much like a storiette. The narrative follows the central character's role in each of these units and in a sense is episodic. A few cases show a narrative following the central character's movement from place to place where every new place makes a single unit. This is much like the above, the only difference being change of locale rather than of character.
(36,44,47)

6. B # A,C - Z: A narrative begins at a point a little later from the beginning of the story. It then goes back to the point where the story starts and proceeds to the end in chronological order.
(34)

7. A - F # A₂ - F # F - P # A₃ - P # P - Z: Narratives with a main plot and other sub-plots. Events and actions follow a chronological order. A temporary stop. A new story begins and proceeds until another temporary stop. Reverts to the former. Temporary stop and ... so on. The latter is subordinate to the former and finally the two merge together to continue in a single line of narration. The method gives the narrative a certain degree of complexity and widens its scope.
(12)

8. A - P # A₂ - Z₂ # P - Z: There are works which sustain the course of the first narrative to continue with a second narrative that begins and ends there before they resume with the first one. The second narrative is superimposed on the first with no apparent logical connection between the two.
(46)

9. Y # A - H # I - J # K - L # M - X , Y, Z: It is a method in which a narrative begins a little before the end of a story and goes back to the first action in the story. It goes on to follow the lives of different characters who appear in different places but whose lives and destiny are bound together. The narrative unfolds the stories of the different characters in successive alternation and, though they are taking place in different times and places, interweaves them so that the different parts make one single story.

(8)

To sum up, as the profile of the plots and the methods used in constructing them show, the majority of Amharic "dime novels" have a high degree of similarity in their format. The works grouped under the 'A - Z' method, for example, relate events as they happen in time and in the course of the narration one may identify three to four stages of development.

A story usually begins at the home of the central character's parents - before, at or after his/her birth, and by providing a brief account of his/her childhood. This is often followed by a certain action that would destabilize the life of the character. In nos. 1, 17, 19, 27, 32, 38, and 50, for instance, the central characters become bereft of their parents, a factor that would cause a new development in the course of the narration.

A second stage may start when the central character leaves home to try his/her lot. It is a stage that features the character's struggle in life - the exposure of an unexperienced mind to the world. As is usually the case the experiences are not at all pleasant. In story nos. 14, 27, 31, 32 and 41 the central characters pass through a series of problems after they leave their home. In some other cases the characters may not go into trouble and, depending on the nature of the individual's disposition and his/her family background, may instead be engaged in extravagant or rather disastrous behaviour. This is true, for instance, of stories in nos. 1, 7, 21, 23 and 40.

A third stage may begin as actions reach their climax and as the central characters make a final attempt to achieve whatever they were after. Some works tell stories about successful characters and some others about unsuccessful ones. They may extend into a fourth stage in which the wrong-doers are punished (no. 27) and the good ones or at least those who repent and reform are rewarded (nos. 23, 33, and 41).

Not all narratives develop through all the stages mentioned. Some dwell long on the initial stage or two. Then rush incredibly fast towards the end and thus appear unproportional.

One may also find but a few works which employ such devices as 'flashbacks' and 'foreshadowing' techniques. In story no. 20, for example, the character-narrator brings in an experience from his past and relates it to his present. In doing so he tries to prove to the reader how he is being consistent. The device of foreshadowing is found in story no. 5. At the beginning of the story the character-narrator remarks that his girl friend is wearing a ring. He does it as a passing remark. This, however, serves to foreshadow an event that takes place much later - her marriage to another man.

It is only in a few works that one can see attempts at some kind of technical maneuverings. Constructing a narrative on a primary plot and sub-plot, as in no. 12, and constructing a unified action out of bits of different and rather independent actions, as in nos. 44 and 47, are very rare.

3.3 Major Thematic Trends

A theme is a general comment that a writer makes on the subject and is a term used broadly as the total meaning of an artistic work.

The authors of Amharic "dime novels" have written on various subjects and have forwarded their interpretations of them. Whether or not the themes are well integrated into the stories, that is a different matter. In fact, it is a common practice among these authors to tell explicitly the meaning of their stories and the messages they would like to impart.

The following is an attempt to identify the major thematic trends of Amharic "dime novels". From the outset, one can easily identify two points concerning the themes of these works. First, Amharic "dime novels" exhibit a great deal of repetition of subjects. Second, there are too many topics in a single work. Most authors tend to write discursively and to ramble over as many subject matters as they can so as to comment on as many issues as possible. Therefore, in many works themes overlap one another. Bearing these two general traits in mind, an attempt is made here to choose the most recurrent themes of Amharic "dime novels".

a) Love and Marriage

The most popular subject matter of Amharic "dime novels" is that of love and marriage and many of them deal with the different aspects of this man-woman relationship.

Love as an emotional experience between young boys and

girls is rarely a major subject to the "dime novel". Among the selected works, for example, there are only three such cases - Sara, Mäawdāād Yamāttaw Tānk' and k'alén Lāmātābbāk'. In these stories the youngsters choose their own lovers and as in the last two cases they face parental interference. There is a general tendency to make such relationships end up in tragedy. For example, in Māwdād Yamāttaw Tānk', eventhough the couple manage to escape the opposing parents and marry, both of them die in a very pitiful manner.

It is rather the illegitimate love between grown-ups that seems to interest the majority of the authors. Many works deal with adultery and comment on the indecency of such practices. They tell stories of men and women who are occupied in chasing one another. Taddāsā in Yā'aradaw Taddāsā is a very good example of the kind of adulterous characters that abound in the "dime novels". He engages himself in deflowering school girls, corrupting married women, office girls and even maid servants and peasant women. He makes every promise possible until he deceives his victims and then does not hesitate to throw them out. Other works such as Manennātehen Ewāk', Wāha Yābāllaw Bét, Etteyyé Laders, Yaltaddäläč Bäsaw Särg Tādarāč, etc. also deal with characters, men and women, who engage themselves in similar practices.

The authors depict such practice as detrimental to society and its institutions. Their criticism is often directed at young civil servants who are irresponsible and morally corrupt. The adultery which has become rampant among this class of society is shown to lead to crime and self destruction. In *Essun Tāyew!*, *Wāha Yābāllaw Bét*, **"Enkka Lejehen"**, *Gārrāmāw*, *Amanu'él Dārso Māls* and many other works the main characters are involved in criminal actions.

In relation to married life these works raise issues like divorce, remarriage, and other harmful traditional elements and try to show how they affect the wellbeing of the society. The death of one of the married couples and the remarriage that follows, as in *Yāmānfās Kūslāñña* and *Kāltammawa Eheté*, causes the misery of children. Divorce may also be followed by a remarriage that creates an unfavourable situation to children. The father in *Gudunna Tariku* marries different women and his child suffers in the hands of his step-mothers. Due to her step-mother's ill treatment the daughter in *Kāltammawa Eheté* runs away from home and becomes a prostitute. The central character of *Bunna Kājiwa* runs away from her husband, who beats her up believing that she is infertile, only to become a prostitute. A marriage between a black woman and a white man in *Enkoyyé Demamé* shows how their mulatto offsprings grow to become outcasts.

In most cases the writers limit themselves to criticizing the ills of marital relationships and fall short of supplying the remedy. One can cite only a few works whose stories demonstrate what a good marriage ought to look like. Such models, for example, are found in *Manennätehen Ewäk*, *Säwenna Nurow* and *Feré Heywät* where the young couple make their own choice and are married according to custom - that is, with the full consent of their parents and in some cases with sacramental oaths of a church wedding.

b) Morality and Present-day Society

One of the most popular themes of Amharic "dime novels" is the conduct and practice of the young generation. Many of the above mentioned works, for example, deal with the various aspects of this subject covering a wide range of topics.

There is a general tendency of making a distinction between young people with modern life-styles and the rest of the population. A character who represents the former type usually behaves contrary to established norms of traditional society. Almost all characters who engage in excessive drinking, debauchery and other immoral behaviour

are young people. The central characters in Čärk' Yammiyastel Wänné, Manennätehen Ewäk', Ya-amäs' Nuzzazé, Wäraš Yälélllläw Bét, Säwenna Nurow, "Enkka Lejehen" and Mäsälal are all young, some of whom have been to countries abroad. As the narrator character of Yä'amäs' Nuzzazé admits these young people assume themselves as civilized and take the liberty of belittling traditional values. The kind of criticism that many writers forward can be surmised from the following speech:

Ever since modern civilization was introduced life has become a mess;... the order of our country has been disrupted, our culture debased, the foundation of our tradition shaken ... thus leading us to anarchy and confusion.....Civilization offers children equal rights with parents; yelling back at parents or mocking them has now become an accepted practice. (Märse'é-Hazän 1956E.C.: 31-32)

It is not uncommon to read stories in which indecent behaviour is presented as a biproduct of modern civilization. Frequenting bars, neglecting family responsibilities and embezzling government funds come under constant attack.

Among the works that comment upon the corrupt bureaucracy are: Yä'amäs' Nuzzazé, Yä'aradaw Taddäsä, Säwenna Nurrow, Polisenna Daňña Bābalagär, Kūratenna Werddät and Čäräka Setwāta. For example, El-Tex in Mäsälal, passes his own wife over to another man in order to get promotion. The narrator-character in Yä'amäs' Nuzzazé tells

how he married a woman for the sake of her wealth and social status in spite of her ill manners and cruelty. A similar story is found in *Lāwāgu Lā'arba Semment Sā'at Tägabbu*.

The young generation's fun-loving attitude and its dissipation is also the target of criticism. The whole story of *Mäddäsät Bāwāttatennāt* is an exposition of this attitude. While introducing his book the author defines the youth's main occupation in the following words.

Many associations are established in our town ... associations for road construction, for educational development... etc. Do you know that there is also another association that is different from the above ones? Its main objective is: " To BE HAPPY ". Its motto, " Enjoy Life,... (Wādayyāhu 1958 E.C.: 14-15).

There are, of course, other issues which are raised in relation to morality. Actually, most Amharic "dime novels" roam over various subjects at random. For example, one can find tracts on betrayal, greed, hypocrisy, etc, but these are less focused upon.

c) The spread of Brothels and Prostitution

The increase in the number of brothels concerns many writers of the "dime novel".

The stories of Mäddasāt Bāwāttatennāt and Yāmalādaw Dāha attempt at giving a detailed account of the kind of life that goes on in such places. They demonstrate the extravagance of the people and how overdrinking pushes them to misbehave. The character-narrator of Bunna Kājiwa describes it thus:

...somebody forces a girl to dance with him - calling her different names, of course. Oh, the different kind of behaviours there are! How startling and distressing it is to see the things that people do. ... you would be amazed if you listen to the foul language! (Ayyälä 1961 E.C.: 17)

Brothels are depicted as places where people of all sorts come together and/or the final destination to destitute and wanton women. A few works explicitly point out the growth of urban centers as favourable for the expansion of saloons and the increasing number of prostitutes. An old man in Wāraš Yäléllāw Bét says,

On the one hand, many anti-development practices are rapidly progressing in the towns. The poisonous prostitutes which abound in the capital and other provincial towns have safely entrenched themselves. These deserters and divorcées who mushroom along with the newly found towns indicate the aimlessness of the rural population's flight to the towns. On the other hand, this aggravates the social problem by increasing the rate of divorce and bringing about much confusion. (Germa D. 1958 E.C.: 69-70)

As it is often the case, Amharic dime novelists do not examine the source of the problem. They usually present it as the problem of the individual and seem to be contented by telling their reader that he should avoid committing similar mistakes. However, there are rare exceptions. The family disintegration caused by the Italian invasion, for instance, is presented in *Sāw Yabbawen Egzi'abhér Yegālssāwal* as a factor that led many women to prostitution. In *Bunna Kājiwa* the author looks into the traditional social system and indicates how gender based oppression aggravates the situation.

Prostitution, though a detailed account of it is seldom given, is treated as a defaming profession which ultimately ruins the woman that practices it. For example, the prostitute in *Sāw Yabbawen Egziabhér Yegālssāwal* turns into a servant and finally dies in a prison; the one in *Bunna Kājiwa* gets killed amidst a quarrel, the character narrator in *Salemällās Kārrāhu* becomes a beggar and leads a miserable life before she goes to a monastery, etc. In fact, the authors do not regard the victims of this profession as people who are evil by nature, eventhough they are often depicted as corruptors of other people. All or almost all prostitutes are portrayed as women who are doomed to lead a life which they themselves do not like.

As indicated above, the woman in Bunna Kājiwa is forced into the profession; the girl in Salemmälläs Kārrāhu runs away from her parents after being betrayed by her lover and is left without any choice but to become a prostitute; the one in Kāltammawa Eheté is also forced out of her home by the cruel step-mother.

A more detailed portrayal of a woman who runs a bar is found in Amanuél Dārso Māls. In spite of the crisis she suffers from the falling market, she tries very hard to assist her lover for the sake of the good times they had together. She is characterized as a virtuous woman who remains faithful to a friend in his difficult times, forgiving him even when he does wrongs to her.

d) Education Versus Tradition

Many Amharic dime novelists write about education and its place in a society that is dominantly traditional. Eventhough the writers do not disregard the merit of learning, they generally show a tendency to be critical of the behavioral attitudes of the educated.

Some write about the traditional church education. Feré Heywāt is one such work which tells about the difficulties that attend the long and wearisome toil of church education.

Most "dime-novels" deal with the Western type of education. Going to school is often viewed as a road to success. Most characters who happen to be so educated become self sufficient unless their own mismanagement brings about their ruin. The criticism generally revolves around the problems of acculturation or the conflict between cultures¹⁴.

The problem of acculturation is seen in the style of dressing, the habit of smoking and drinking, in forsaking one's religion and its prescriptions. The authors accuse the educated people who try to imitate the civilized ways of the white man¹⁵. El-Tex in **Māsālal** and his two friends are young men dressed in Italian suits and behaving as Europeans. The selfish motive of the character narrator of **Yā'amās' Nuzzazé** who refuses to host his brothers and sisters in his house demonstrates the conflict between the individualistic attitude of the educated man and the communal way of traditional life.

Kuratenna Werdät is a more skilful presentation of the conflict between an educated young man and the conservative local population. Abäbä, after his prolonged stay in America, comes back with a strong desire to modernize his country. However, the social pressure around him belittles his effort and regards his education with scorn. The young

educated man becomes a lonely soul with frustrated dreams. Describing his defeat Abäbä finally says, "Please do not bother me. I am a black man and I should live as one. Once I wanted to live like a white man. But I have eventually understood that is impossible. I have to accept that" (Täfarra 1955 E.C.: 83).

We have considered the dominant and most recurrent themes in Amharic "dime novels". There are also other less frequent themes not worthwhile to go into. Suffice it to say: Christianity and nationalism, which were the reverberating themes of early Amharic literature, gave way to current social problems in the "dime novel".

One may also add that these writers do usually write about life in the urban centres and tend to make the new generation and its role in the society their major area of discussion. Eventhough they repeatedly claim that they stand for change only a few indicate the merits of changing the social milieu.

The majority direct their shallow criticism to what they refer to as "zämän amäṭṭaš", that is, the new way of life. Their principal motive is to warn readers from falling into undesirable habits which may appear at first as marks of civilization. They usually accuse the new

rising middle class for polluting social life with "zāman amäṭṭaš" behaviours.

3.4 Characterization

Indeed, the quality of a fictional work depends largely on the skill shown in its characterization. Writing on amharic literature Thomas Kane comments:

... the largest portion of the literature... has a profusion of characters, but none treated in depth, characters which appear and disappear without warning. ..Relationships of the characters to each other are seldom explained, milieus are left to the reader's imagination and credible motivation for a character's behaviour is frequently wanting even among the better writers. (Kane 1975:17)

His statement is true of the characters of Amharic "dime novels". The moralistic / didactic intention, which has long been the main tradition among the writers of the country, continues to be the central motive in the production of these works. Little or no attention is given to the proper handling of characters.

Except in a few cases almost all characters in Amharic "dime novels" are easily identifiable types. The authors are not concerned in the behavioral patterns and idiosyncrasies of individual characters. By using uncomplicated stereotype characters the authors simply drum the message that they want to convey.

In most stories the focus is on the central character and rarely deviates to other characters. It is this central character who carries out every major action in the story. In *Wāraš Yäléllāw Bét*, for example, the story begins as Gédiwon fantasizes about the beauty and charms of Addis Abāba. The story follows Gédiwon as he leaves his village and the reader is never allowed to dwell on other characters that come and go as it develops. The story comes to an end when Gediwon meets his father.

Characters are moulded to serve as carriers of ideas. In most instances the moral of a work is verbally mouthed by the central characters instead of being shown through their actions. A character follows a certain pattern of behaviour which hardly changes. If a character undergoes change, which is a very rare phenomenon, it is often a complete shift into the opposite category. When a writer makes such a shift he does so in order to teach a lesson to the reader. In *Sāwenna Nurrow Asfaw* changes from "black to white", so to speak. Contrary to what he used to be he becomes a religious and well disciplined man. However, the majority of Amharic "dime novels" do not exhibit this characteristic. As in *Yä'aradaw Taddāsā*, *Adlewon Basāyef*, *Mannennātehen Ewāk'*, *Wa Ené Sāw Māhoné*, and many other works, the characters maintain the set of behaviours they are assigned from beginning to end.

There is a repetitiveness about the way that the "dime novels" characterize certain types of personalities. The pattern of behaviour employed to characterize Asfaw in *Sāwenna Nurrow*, for instance, is also used in other characters. *Käbbädä* in *Wäha Yābāllaw Bét*, the nameless character in *Yāmalādaw Dāha*, the narrator-character in *Amanuéł Dārso Māls*, etc., are by-and-large repetitions of the same type. They are variables of the same personality representing the spoiled youth whose indulgence in money expending, alcohol drinking, womanizing, etc. drags him to an injurious end. All step-mothers found in these works are depicted with a more or less similar set of behaviours. In *Kāältammawa Eheté*, for example, she is characterized as a cruel woman who always beats her step-children and treats them brutally. Gudu's step-mother in *Gudunna Tariku* is equally merciless towards him and she behaves the same way as the woman in the former work.

In most stories, a character's behaviour is readily introduced by the narrator before the reader gets the chance to know him in action. A character would thus be labelled with a set of cliché items taken from the stock of public experience, and the author does not probe into the individual's inner-self to give him a mark of individuality. If at all a character undergoes a change the motives and the process of change are often left in

darkness. In some cases the change is only mentioned as a passing remark which fails to convince the reader.

The profusion of characters who make sudden appearances and who disappear as quickly is another feature of the "dime novel." These are anonymous persons that the reader instantly forgets.

Although Amharic "dime novels" are collectively characterized by a profusion of flat characters, there are exceptions which contain round characters. The narrator character in *Amanuél Dārso Māls*, for example, is one such character. The man who has been a drunkard, a womanizer and a spendthrift at the beginning of the story gradually develops hysteria, undergoes treatment and then is healed. The change takes place gradually and every step of the development is well motivated and convincing.

A few works feature characters with a certain degree of complexities. The central character in *Gärrämāw* is a criminal who murders his own friend to revenge the latter's abduction of his wife. The central character is portrayed as a man who feels guilty of the murder he committed and who struggles to cleanse himself by virtuous deeds. Unlike in most "dime novels" *Gärrämāw* is not introduced in a rush. It is after reading a good portion of the story that his personality becomes elucidated.

Most authors do not let their characters speak for themselves. They interfere to comment, to interpret and to explain. Thus, the reader often faces the dominant presence of an author who attenuates the independent existence of the actual actants of a story.

Most stories do not give the amount of information necessary to paint a vividly perceptible and emotionally touching character. A narrator often introduces a character by name and goes on telling about what happens to him. It is a very rare practice among the dime novelists to give a physical description of characters. Talking about a drunkard, for instance, he would simply write: "Ato So and So is a drunkard who expends his money in bars and never gets home until very late in the evening." He does not bother to relate some more information on how Ato So and So behaves in the bars, communicates with fellow drunkards, pays his bill, etc, to help the reader to feel him closely.

The attempt to employ the dramatic method of characterization is observable in Mäddäsät Bāwättatennāt, YāGétaččāw Misttoč, Yā'aradaw Taddäsä, Gārrāmāw, Yāmalādaw Dāha and Wāraš Yālélłāw Bét. The dramatic method, according to Warren Beach,

... is the method of direct presentation,
and aims to give the reader the sense of

being present, here and now, in the scene of action. That is why those elements are undramatic which make us aware of an author explaining things: exposition, description, and characterization by the author, psychological analysis, philosophizing and sentimentalizing about the characters and events (Beach 1932:181).

There are a few cases where the narrator draws back from his position as a mediator and lets the reader see the characters as they are actually engaged in action. The following narrative from Wāraš Yāléllew Bét indicates how the method is used to dramatize a certain episode:

He descended down the gorge. By the road's side, right at the edge of the cliff, he found a tree. That was exactly what he was looking for. He brought out a rope from his pocket, threw it up and tied it on the branch. His hands began to tremble. His legs also began to shake as if he had caught malaria. His body tensed. Trembling, he prepared the noose into which to place his neck. (Germa D. 1958: 55)

Such direct presentations are rare. Soon the narrator crops up and interferes with the character in the scene of action.

A prolonged absence of a mediating narrator occurs in works whose narration is carried out by dialogues. The narrative of YāGétaččāw Misttoč employs this method and there is a minimum degree of interference on the part of the narrator.

The majority of Amharic "dime novels" use the dialogue mainly for conveying the ideas of the authors and not for expressing the characters' individual personality. The manner in which one character speaks does not differ from the others. The priest, the school boy, the house maid, etc. all use the same language style.

In practice the authors of Amharic "dime novels" do not seem to have considered characterization as an integral part of the narrative technique. In the majority of "dime novels" preference is made to portray characters through the voice of a narrator. A narrator is endowed with unlimited omniscience and is entitled to edit and present his material as it pleases him. Thus characters are deprived of their independent and natural existence and fail to be convincing.

3.5 Language Style

The authors of the "dime novels" show different standards in their command of language, capacity at expressing ideas, and manner of presentation. The literary tradition before the emergence of the "dime novels" lacks the techniques of fiction writing. The long tradition in Geez literature and its orientation to religious subjects and those pioneer works in Amharic have provided them very little experience to start with.

- 1 -

In the majority of the "dime novels" the authors use simple words and an average size of sentences. The sentences are by-and-large grammatical and capable of conveying their ideas. In fact, works like *Kältammawa Eheté*, *Čäräka Setewäta*, *Wäraš Yäléllāw Bét*, *Yä'aradaw Taddäsä*, *Gärrāmāw*, etc. are characterized by short and effectively concise sentences. A good number of Amharic "dime novels" demonstrate well constructed sentences and phrases.

However, there are some works whose narratives show ungrammatical, long and circumlocutory sentences which, at times, are unharmonious with their subject-object-verb (SOV) coordination. The prose of such works as *Sāwenna Nurrow*, *Manennātehen Ewāk'* and *Adlewon Bäsäyef*, for example, is poor and incapable of conveying clear and precise message. The sentences are long and full of subordinate clauses. In *Yä'amäs' Nuzzazé*, for instance, a sentence runs as long as seventeen lines (49-50). Such long sentences hamper the readability of the narrative and obstruct the reader's effort to follow the story's development.

The strong didacticism of the writers must have also affected the language. Because of their desire to instruct the reader, they tend to be patronizing and superfluous.

At times, the authors go to the extent of enumerating the main ideas in a character's speech in order to draw the reader's attention to these ideas. A portion of a conversation between a father and his son in Gudén Awättahäw, for instance, reads as follows: (They are discussing the problem of prostitution)

Since I got a chance to forward the following points I began thus:

- 1 - Father, do you hear me ? To begin with, the cause of the problem is that of under age [i.e. child marriage]. It would be good if there was a decree to limit the age of marriage.
- 2 - If the children that are being engaged are first introduced they would both have the chance to know one another better, hence, there would not be such problems as the ones mentioned above. In order to achieve this result, the people need to have education .
- 3 - Moreover, the people would easily fulfil their desire had it been that they have enough money. Therefore, we should not overlook the need to study the means in which the people can get money; etc.

I have forwarded my opinion that it would be easy to get jobs for those people if such problems could be tackled right away (Mulugéta 1963 E.C.: 43).

The Amharic version of this excerpt uses very formal language that it does not sound like natural speech. The language of most "dime novels", both the dialogue and the narrative discourse, are so formal that one hardly makes the difference between the language style of the narrator and that of the character. Many a time, the narrative

discourse and the dialogue of a character appear in a single sentence. E. g.: "They answered to him saying that we are not marrying because we think it is better to think over it beforehand", (Alula 1956 E.C.: 42); the actual speech and the narration are not delineated by quotation marks.

A few authors embed jargons, loan words, and taboo and vulgar expressions into the narrative discourse. Expressions such as "Yähasab problem" (የሐሳብ ፕሮብሌም) "Säwennätén contron sadärg" (ሰውነቴን ካንትሮን ሳድሮግ), normal hono tägännä" (ኖርማል ሆኖ ተገኘ), "... I lost my senses. My excrements filled my baggy pants. The room stank with shit ..." etc. are only a few examples.

On the other hand, a few works do use the dialogue as a method of characterization. A successful example is YäGétaččāw Missttoč where the speeches of different characters display their individual personalities. Similar attempts are made in Yä'aradaw Taddäsä, Amanu'él Dārso Mäls and Čäräka Setwāta.

Many authors use poetry in their works. One often comes across poems interspersed throughout the narration, e.g., in Yāmānfäs Kuslāñña, "Enkka Lejehen", Bunna Kājiwa, etc. The poems may be typographically separated from the

prose narrative or the narrative may suddenly change from prose to verse or vice-versa.

The simile is the most frequently used figure of speech. Though less frequently found the metaphor and hyperbole are also used. Clichés abound, e.g.,: "hair that looks like a skein of black silk" (ጥቂር የሐር ሃዩ የመስለ ፀጉር) and "tear that gush out from the four corners of her eyes" (ጥንጥጥ ከገጥ ሳንዳዘን የሚገርፍ-ላ ዕንገ). However, there are few instances where fresh imagery is used. In *Yāgabečča Tānk'* (16-17), the author imitates the biblical style of Solomon's Song of Songs.

Many authors embellish their narratives with proverbs and sententious statements to assist the ideas they want to impart to the reader and to enhance their arguments with expressions of folk wisdom. In works such as *Manennātehen Ewāk'*, the use of too many proverbs impairs the readability of the story and bores the reader. Quotations from European literature, e.g., from Shakespeare, "the world is a stage where every man must play a part" (*The Merchant of Venice*: Act 1, scene 1), or statements by historical figures, such as "C'est l'argent qui fait la guerre" by Napoleon, (*Māsälal* 21), are not uncommon.

To conclude, there is no one style under which one can categorize Amharic "dime novels" collectively. The writers use different styles and demonstrate different levels of efficacy depending on their talent and skill.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. The Significance of Amharic "Dime Novel"

4.1 The Mirror of their Time

It is a truism that literature has a very strong bond with the social milieu that produce it. Henry James, in his essay "The Art of Fiction", writes, "The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life" (James 1963:79-80). Regarding the novel, or any other fictional narrative as the representation of life is indeed a point on which the majority of authors and critics agree. The relevance of fiction lies in encoding aspects of the real life of today and preserving them to the historians of tomorrow. In this accord, what Edmund and Jules de Goncourt say is worth mentioning: "The novel is made with documents, related from life, or heightened, just as history is made with written documents. The historians are the narrators of the past, the novelists of the present" (Liddell 1953:99)¹⁶.

Amharic "dime-novels" are also the depiction of their time and can be understood as reflecting the Ethiopian society then prevailing. The very physique of these works demonstrates the nature of the printing technology and the skill of the publishers of that particular period when the

"dime-novels" flourished. They are certainly the imprints of their period - life looked at from private and social points of view. As imaginary projections of the individual authors, however, they cannot be taken as authentic information and need to be supplemented with factual records. Nonetheless, the works are full of bits of information which are of paramount importance to historical and sociological studies. Some stories are quite close to actual historical events. Mänggestu Gädamu's *Somaléw*, for instance, is a nationalistic work reflecting the territorial claims of Somalia;¹⁷ the kind of life that is protyrayed in *Polisenna Dañña Bābalagār* also reflects the corruption of the authorities. Though it could be that it is modulated from an individual view point, that it is exaggerated or distorted, it nonetheless contains factual elements about how the peasants suffer under the system of tenancy and under the corrupt village rulers and regional administrators.

In whatever way an author may interpret his materials it does not alter the fact that they are gathered from his direct and indirect experiences in the society. Consciously and unconsciously the writer relates these materials to his creative work. As Proust would say, "The man of letters envies the painter, he would like to make sketches, to take notes,... But when he writes, there's not

a gesture of his people, a twitch, an accent which has not been brought to his inspiration by his memory" (Liddell 1953 :111).¹⁸

Gudunna Tariku is another example that explains how these works play a significant role in providing information which are relevant for understanding Ethiopia's educational system in the 30s and 40s. The story is set in Šäwa in the 30s and tells how the traditional education leaves its place to the modern.¹⁹

Social life during the post-war period and the after-effect of fascism - both at the objective and subjective levels - are recorded in these works. Eventhough poorly executed and maladroitly presented the settings of the stories, the characters and their values, etc. could be deciphered as credible historical and sociological evidences. In a country like Ethiopia, where proper archives are almost absent, fictional stories can be good sources for socio-historical, cultural, and other related studies. That is what Reidulf Molvaer does in his book Tradition and Change In Ethiopia, in which he attempts to analyze the nature of Ethiopian Society - its tradition, institutions, values, etc. - with facts he collected from fictional works. In the introduction Molvaer writes,

Ethiopian authors of fiction are strongly concerned with the social and cultural life of their time, and it would not do Amharic literature full justice to evaluate it only on aesthetic grounds. This literature is not purely art for art's sake, or for entertainment; proper appreciation of the modern Ethiopian literary scene can be gained if one relates fictional writing to society (Molvaer. 1980:1).

Some works contain pictorial descriptions of scenes which have very close similarities with reality. The descriptions of Addis Abäba - its cinemas, the railway station, the kind of goods and food items sold in its shops, etc., do reflect what life in Addis then looked like. Wäraſ Yäléllāw Bét contains a good description of the town in the 1950s. In addition to the verbal descriptions, the pictorial illustrations of scenes are also very useful in this respect (appendix x). A perusal of these fiction also reveals aspects of the modernizing process and the growing commercial activities of the country. The type of cars and home furniture described in Mäwdäd Yamä'ttaw Täñk', for instance, are indicators of the change that is taking place and of the rise of a new middle class²⁰. There are, of course, a few authors who claim their works to be true stories. In the introduction to Yämānfäs Kuslāñña the author writes that his book is a true story. Pawlos Nonno also declares that his Yä'aradaw Taddäsä and YäGétaččāw Mistočč are only reproductions of what have actually happened. He tells us that his job as a journalist gave him

the opportunity to listen to true stories which he later rewrote in the form of fiction.

The 1950s mark the emergence of a new kind of intellectual considerably different from the kind that preceded it. As indicated by John Markakis,

The attitudes and position of the younger generation of educated Ethiopians, that is, those who were trained in the late 1950s and 1960s, are quite different. The intellectual bent of tradition, and their social and political orientation far more radical than that of their elders. ..., the education they receive inevitably renders them critical of conditions in Ethiopia and impatient with the pace of reform adopted by the ruling group. (Markakis 1975 : 187)

The authors of Amharic "dime-novels", themselves being members of the younger educated generation, reflect the ongoing change of attitudes. Whether radical or not, their contribution in propagating the ideas and views of their time is beyond doubt.

4.2 Contribution to the development of Amharic prose fiction

4.2.1 Popularization of the novel form

The authors of the "dime-novels" could be viewed as enrichers of Amharic literature if not by quality at least

by quantity. There was the first large scale practice in fiction writing, and whatever their standard may be, did open an opportunity for the creative potential of the country to be tried out in the open. They have also played a significant part in popularizing the art of fiction. In a country where the population is largely illiterate and where readership is only at its infancy the "dime novels"

proved nearer to the popular taste. It is apparent that an ordinary reader would appreciate the simple and brief story of Kältammawa Eheté better than the highly idealized and poeticized story of Age'azi, one of the pioneer works in Amharic prose fiction.

Authors of Amharic "dime-novels", apart from providing stories, have also endeavoured to introduce the purpose and meaning of fiction writing to their readers. Notices on the flying pages of their books or prefatory passages such as,

... presumably, the story may reflect the life of somebody - yours, mine, some friend of ours. A story told about human beings, I believe, has some resemblance to the life of one of us ... we all belong to mankind. ... no author has created a story without certain elements of facts taken from actual life. The task of the writer is to recreate whatever material he may gather from life and compose it into a fictional story (Gétaččāw G. 1959 E.C.: 8-9)

express the author's intention in teaching the reading public on the *raison d'être* of fiction and its relevance. A few others categorically state that they write in order to help the promotion of literary activities. For example, in the introduction to *Yä'emmahoy Māzāz Tāč'an Abäbä* writes,

... my objective is not only to contribute to the refinement of Amharic but also to join hands with those who have the good will to enrich the world of literature. (Tāč'an 1956 E.C. : 3)

Authors like Abbé Gubäñña and Mänggestu Gädamu, on the other hand, claim that small books serve the larger public because they are available at cheaper prices. In the following passage Abbé Gubäñña states his case:

As most authors and readers would realize one needs much money to publish a big book; and since our readers are not yet developed I wanted to make the story a short one so that I can sell it for a reasonable price (Abbé 1955 E.C. : 7)

Some authors criticize Ethiopians' attitude towards Amharic literature. They consider them conceited for wanting to be identified as readers of foreign works while neglecting their own. The authors nonetheless admit that Amharic books are "full of rubbish". The following passage from Yelma Mannayé's *Yämānfäs Kūslāñña* shows how he evaluates the author - reader relationship.

Today, the demand for Amharic books is very little. The reasons, as I understand them, are the following:

1. The young, whether or not they understand what they read, like to fumble with books from abroad.
2. They do not think that they can gain any knowledge from their own language, Amharic.
3. Being seen with foreign books is a manner of raising one's reputation. Thus preference is for foreign works over the Amharic ones.
4. Amharic writings, particularly by young authors, are often full of "eté emäyté" [children's play chants]
5. The price of Amharic books is extremely high whereas imported books are sold at throw away prices (Yelma M. 1958 E.C. : 15-16).

Eventhough the majority of dime novelists put more emphasis on the instructive and educative function of literature they all have a strong conviction that they are writing to help develop the country's literature and to popularize fiction writing. Serious critics like Solomon Déréssa and Mängestu Lämama have shown grave concern that the "dime novels" were degrading the literary standard of Amharic fiction. However, these works should be understood as part of the country's indigenous endeavour and commended as such. They form the rudimentary background of Amharic prose fiction at its grass-root level.

4.2.2. Technical and Thematic Contribution

A major shortcoming of the Amharic "dime-novel",

according to Māngestu Lāmma, is "... the flow of crude didacticism that overwhelms it. ...[that] every peddler of moral platitudes assumes the role of the prophet and moral philosopher" (Māngestu L. 1965 : 4). Of course, this is a trend that has continued from the literature of the preceding decades, but it is also true that during the 1950s Amharic literature has begun to deviate from the old trend. As has been explained by Albert Gérard,

Between the present generation and the previous one, a fundamental rift has occurred. Earlier writers, who were trying to promote the modernization of their country, did so in the conventional spirit of ancient Ethiopian literature, which could be described as "normative". They took over the preacher's task of telling the people how to behave, what to eschew. They showed little interest in the complexities of real experience. (Gérard 1971: 358-9).

He goes on saying that a new note was struck opening a new phase of development to Amharic literature. This new note is closely related with the emergence of popular literature, an integral part of which is the "dime-novel". Amharic "dime-novels" can be labelled as 'popular' because the form has been practised by increased number of authors from different walks of life, and because they deal with subjects nearer to real and day-to-day experience of the ordinary people than the literature of the preceding period.

Bearing in mind the change that Gérard explains to have occurred during the 1950s, one should not forget the fact that these "dime novels" were successors to the normative literature that preceded them. They have actually continued with some of the thematic and technical styles of earlier works such as the use of idealized heroes and stock situations, spokesman characters, episodic development of stories, extended dialogues, and dealing with moralizing subjects. On the other hand, as they were produced in a period of change, they have also attempted to depict this changing social reality. However, the authors of these works are by and large young people who lacked experience and their insight is far from deep.

Perhaps, the most important contribution that the "dime-novels" have made to Amharic fiction is a thematic one. Amharic prose fiction prior to the "dime-novels" did not accommodate variety of themes. The prose works before and immediately after the Italian occupation were marked by a strong ecclesiastic and nationalist-patriotic attitude (Amsalu 1976 E.C. : 199).

Eventhough themes on reformation and acculturation, aspects of the modern period, were already touched upon in earlier works like Addis Alām, Are'aya, Endāwättäč Kārrāč,

etc. these were treated more elaborately in the "dime-novels". As Däbäbä Säyefu says, "...there are many current subject matters discussed in these works - eventhough they appear in incomplete bits. If one raises a question on the nature of Ethiopian society during the 1950 s there can be found more truth in these novelettes than we can find in the major works" (Däbäbbä S. 1982 E.C. : 22).

Particularly, the contribution of the "dime-novels" in secularizing the thematic trend of Amharic prose fiction is great. They have helped in pulling out the literature from its religious and moralizing enclave towards matters of everyday reality and the various social problems of the period. In this regard they have certainly paved the way to the gradual shift to real experience. For instance, marriage is a frequent theme among the "dime novels" as in Lāwāgu Lā'arba Semment Sā'at Tāgabbu, YāGétaččāw Mistoč, Eteyyé Laders, Yāgabečča Tānk', Kālén Lāmātābbāk', etc., but none of these have treated the subject from the religious point of view as it was treated in Yāberehanénna Yāseyon Mogäsa Gabečča.

Unlike previous works the "dime novels" turned towards the common place and ordinary local life, reinforcing Amharic literature's move towards realism. The social setting and the kind of life portrayed in works like Čäräka

Set ätta, Enkoy, Dāmamé, Yā'aradaw Taddäsä, Kältammawa Eheté, Wāraś Yäléllāw Bét, etc., for example, are more life-like than in earlier works like Age'azi, Sāwenna Edméw, etc.

The "dime-novels" have also played a significant role in portraying the lives of ordinary people who belong to the lower stratum of society: coolies, lumpens, prostitutes, orphans, criminals, taxi drivers, etc., never appeared in print prior to these works.

The authors of these works made a major shift not only in the choice of subject matter but also in their mode of interpretation and the kind of messages they passed to their readers. The theme on the necessity of reform, which was preponderous in works before the Italian occupation and the years following it, for example, is treated from a different view point in the "dime-novels". The previous works advocated the need to reform and modernize the country along the line of the Western model. On the contrary, the authors of the "dime-novels" tend to view the influence of the West with increased scepticism. In place of previous writers' open call to follow the model of Europe these ones reflect their mistrust of it. In this regard Mäsälal, Yä'amäs' Nuzzazé, Wāha Yäbällaw Bét, and many more Amharic "dime-novels" can be contrasted with

previous works like *Addis Alula*, *Age'azi*, *Are'aya*, etc.

One has to note also that these writers do not always hold the Western influence responsible for the different social ills they are writing about. A few works have actually attempted to direct their criticism towards the local tradition itself. The gender based oppression of women, problems in marital relationships, etc., for example, are presented as causes for the expansion of prostitution.

Most of all, Amharic "dime-novels" played a significant role in introducing different sub-types of the genre. The seeds of epistolary fiction, science fiction, the detective story, for example, were first introduced by the authors of the "dime-novels". Eventhough they lacked the proper skill they have nonetheless introduced them in crude forms. K.Amis says, "...: Science fiction is that class of prose narrative treating of a situation that could not arise in the world we know, but which hypothesised on the basis of some innovation in science or technology, or pseudo-science or pseudo-technology, whether human or extra-terrestrial in origin" (Amis 1960:18). Mängestu Gädamu's *Yä'enssesoč Rokkét* may be lacking in the qualities of a 'make-believe' world that is founded on a well established scientific hypothesis. Even if it falls short

of science fiction in the proper sense, even if it appears as a blend of the fable, an aspect of science fiction is legible in it. The laboratory experiments, the project to launch a space shuttle, the travel into space, etc. has to some degree presumptions to science fiction. The Monkey's ability to move back-and-forth in time itself is a fascinating bit of imagination. Of course, the work is a satire on the foolishness of Ethiopian scientists and their pomposity about their scientific endeavours. Yelma Habtäyyäs, in Esun Täyew, paved the road for the emergence of the detective story. His works primarily deal with criminal investigations. He also first introduced sequels into Amharic fiction with the publication of Yaltaddäläčč Bäsäw Särg Tädarräč and Eteyé Laders.

Even if they are suffering from lack of skill in integrating their subjects into proper forms of fiction they nevertheless have introduced some elements of technique which are to be regarded as helpful inputs. The "dime-novels" have certainly enhanced the making of action oriented stories. In Yä'emmahoy Māzāz, for example, the story develops in a series of actions which are causally interrelated. In such stories actions do not appear at random but happen as the natural out-come of preceding actions. Wäraš Yäléllāw Bét, Mäwdād Yamättaw Tānk', Enkoyyé Dāmamé, Čäräka Setwäta, etc. are examples of these kind of



works. The messages or the moral lessons of these stories are conveyed through the actions of the characters and are not explicitly stated in the narration or conversations of the characters. It would not be fair to regard all Amharic "dime-novels" as devoid of action. Eventhough many of them are loaded with didactic and moralizing statements, the existence of action oriented stories is not to be denied either.

Characterization is another technique where Amharic "dime-novels" made some progress about. Stock and stereotype characters certainly abound in these works. However, few characters whose portrayal has the touch of individuality have surfaced. Unlike the kind of cardboard characters found in previous works the "dime novels" have portrayed life-like characters as Gédiwon in Wäraś Yäléllāw Bét, Terunāś in Yä'aradaw Taddäsä, etc. Some critics agree that these works introduced the technique of portraying characters through dialogue (Däbäbä S.1982:23). Though the dialogue was already in use in earlier works it is in the "dime novels" that realistic and life-like conversations first appeared.

Amharic "dime-novels" facilitated the gradual detachment of creative literature from ecclesiastical subjects which had hitherto dominated it. A good number of

Amharic "dime-novels" moved towards objective presentation of life, hence, contributing to the slow and gradual development of modern Amharic fiction.

4.2.3 Providing Experience for Apprentice Writers

In the development of Amharic prose fiction the "dime-novel" served many new writers to try their potential. Young people from various walks of life tried their hands in story telling and the number of authors sharply increased.

In the process, some of these writers discovered their talent and, in their continued effort to acquire literary skill and proficiency, have succeeded to become known authors in the language. Among the writers who began by writing the "dime-novel" Abbé Gubäñña, Berhanu Zärihun, Yelma Habtäyyäs, Sahlä-Sellase Berehanä-Mariam, etc., have established their names in the history of Amharic fiction writing. Berhanu Zärihun, who later authored well featured novels as Yätewodros Enbba, Ma'ebäl (a trilogy), and Yätanggut Mistter, began his art by writing works like Amanu'él Därsö Mäls and Čäräka Setwätta which belong to the "dime-novels". Apart from the few prolific writers there are also other writers who have produced single works which are of considerable worth. Unfortunately, people like

Germe Dammanu, Zāmmānā Kasāññ, Ayyälä Kidané, etc. have abandoned writing inspite of their apparent talent in story telling. However, the few books they have produced have made their contribution.

Conclusion

The Amharic "dime novel" marks an important chapter in the history of Amharic fictional literature. Eventhough the country enjoys a vast tradition of written literature it is only at the opening of the twentieth century that the first fictional works began to appear. This is soon interrupted by the Italian invasion. The first decade after independence did not bring a considerable change in the country's literary activity and it remained basically similar to what has been practiced prior to the war.

The Amharic "dime novel" started with little experience as the country began to move into the modern age. It came into existence towards the end of the first half of twentieth century when a new generation of writers cropped up. It was a period of relative progress in the area of education and in the growth of printing presses. The number of literate people was slowly increasing and the young writers felt the need to provide reading materials in Amharic.²¹

Being the successors of the writers of the period prior to theirs, they sought in vain for guidance in traditional literature and the few fictional works that preceded. However, their works were not the repetition of

the past but a reflection of the new age that produced them. Some of them have had an orientation of the outer world and with the country open to foreign influences they were exposed to ideas of modern literary practice.

With a bulk of religious literature at its background the "dime novel" served as a transition to modernity. It is a blend of the past and the present. The authors, as some of them have declared in their prefatory messages, tried to imitate the European form of fiction writing. How far they have succeeded remains doubtful.

The American dime novels, as have been reviewed in chapter one, share certain similarities with the Amharic works. Both, for example,

- a) have flourished in a period following a general social crisis;
- b) are cheaply produced works in paperback and with illustrations;
- c) observe repetition of subjects, stock situations and characters;
- d) are written with a strong moralistic and didactic intention;

However, such similarities are merely categorical and do not admit conditions that differentiate one from the other. In fact, the Amharic works are much more inferior both in their physical layout and the technical manipulation of their material. Quite often the Amharic works lack coherence and if there are some which contain interesting episodes they are rarely well organized to capture the reader's attention. There are, of course, works as *Māwdād Yamāttaw Tānk'*, *Yä'emmahoy Mēzāz*, *Kāltammawa Eheté*, etc. which tend to be sentimental and appealing to the tender feelings of their readers. But this is not the case with the majority of them. Amharic "dime novels" rarely feature melodramatic tales of adventure and excitement nor do they depict a romantic illusion of the past - characteristics that are central to the American dime novel. Except for a few works of adventure and fantasy, such as *Kamsur*, *Kalén lāmātābbāk'*, *Satemma Fātānawan Allāfäčč* and *Mogādāñhaw Fālasfa* the majority are enmeshed in the social life of their time.

The absence of publishers affected the marketing of these works. The writers often complain of the high publishing expense which they have to shoulder. But they continued to produce them and as they usually state in their introductions they wrote because they wanted to teach the reader different aspects of the social situation of

their time. As it has been highlighted in chapter three, the main subject of Amharic "dime novels" is the new social reality that began to take shape during the mid-twentieth century.

With their sceptical attitude to the changing situation, the authors used their short works to criticize the unbridled inflow of foreign manners and behaviours which corrupt society. This does not mean that they are against change. On the contrary, the majority of the writers reiterate the need for reform and actually criticize traditional society for its ignorance and out-dated practices which they deem detrimental to the country's progress. Many works show the authors' opposition to the cruelty and injustice of administrators and judiciaries and to the corruption that has entangled the government.

Their criticism is generally directed towards the young generation and the new emerging middle-class which they assume to be the promoters of the ills of society. They repeatedly attack the pedantic nature of the new generation, its moral laxity, its irresponsible and extravagant manners. Though the writers lack the knowledge of the forces of change their attempt to show the conflict between the old and the new is worthwhile.

The Amharic "dime novel" made possible the first large scale practice in Amharic fiction writing. In a country where creative literature was minimal, the genre provided a fresh opportunity for many apprentice writers to try their potential. With what little experience they got from earlier works their bold step to imitate Western style fiction has enriched Amharic literature.

These authors helped the gradual development of Amharic fiction writing by introducing different methods and bits of techniques that they gleaned from their readings. Such techniques as foreshadowing and flashback, description of setting and the use of dialogue for character portrayal, for instance, first appeared in the "dime novels". The contribution of such writers as Māngesttu Gädamu, Yelma Habtäyyäs, Berehanu Zärihun, Abbé Gubäñña and Pawlos Nöñño, paved the road for modern Amharic fiction.

NOTES

1. American dime novels ,those written during the second half of the 19th century, are not available in the libraries of the town. I have consulted the 'Tukul' library of the Embassy of the United States of America but they could not provide me with these books. Instead, they gave me a couple of other books published in the 20th century which they assume to be "cheap" and similar to the dime novels. Eventhough these books have given me an idea of what the "cheap" fiction of America look like they are not exactly similar to the dime novels as the citics describe them.

2. The devotional literature of the Ethiopian Orthodox church constitutes the apocrypha - mainly the "gädl" (hagiography) and the "dersan" (homily).

3. John Bunyan's book was already translated into Amharic by Gäbrä - Giyorgis Terfé in 1892. His book was published under the title Yäkerestian Mängäd by the Sweedish Misson, SwitZERSTLAND, at the St. chrischona Press. A revised edition under the title Yämännan Guzo was published in 1951 E.C. in Addis Abäba at the Artistic Press.

4. Afäwärk' Gäbrä- Eyäsus's progressive outlook is discussed at length by Albert Gérard (1971:281-284). According to him, Afäwärk' is one of the prominent intellectuals of the

early 20th century Ethiopia who denounce the ruthless exploitation of the people by feudal lords. He expresses resentment on the totally illiterate population of the country which, due to its adherence to religious dogmas, hindered the country's effort toward modernization.

5. The second king of the Hebrews, the father of king Solomon who ruled Israel during c 1000 B.C.. He is well known among the followers of Ethiopian Orthodox church for his unparalleled skill on the harp.

6. This is the period that the first batch of Amharic writers belong to. The post-1940 E.C. period, particularly the years following the jubilee anniversary of the king's coronation, marks the rise of a new generation of writers.

7. In 1984, Asfaw Damtë wrote an article to claim that Tāmāsgän Gäbré's story is the first short story in the language. Though critics seem not to have noticed it, he argues that this work has the characteristics of the short story genre (Asfaw 1984). The point is further discussed by Zärihun Asfaw who holds the same opinion with Asfaw Damtë (Zärihun 1984 E.C). The story has recently appeared in Lāzza (Tāmāsgän 1984 E.C.: 14-21). A note by the editor also underlies the conviction that it is the first short story published in Amharic.

8. According to an official administrative directory, there were 14 ministries and 8 major government agencies which include banks, electric light and power, telecommunication and highway activities (Imperial Ethiopian Institute of Public Administration 1957). Towards the end of the 1940s E.C. many Europe-returned students and new graduates from the University College of Addis Abäba and other secondary schools have joined the government. The consecutive numbers of the Year Book issued by the Ministry of Education gives statistical information on the progress of education. This was the period when the urban centers, particularly the capital, began to provide their inhabitants with different social services and amenities (Pankhurst, R. 1965: 60-83; Markakis 1975:143-181).

9. There is no statistics available on the number of books then published or on the number of copies that a work has. I got this impression from Asfaw Damtē's remark on the increase of published books during this period (1985a E.C.:40). Though the list is far from being complete, Alämayyāhu Abbäbä's bibliographic list also indicates that the number of Amharic fictional works published has sharply increased in the 1950s E.C. than any time before (Alämayyāhu 1976 E.C.).

10. R. Pankhurst has included in his article a data taken from the Addis Abäba Municipal Census. According to the data, which is made on September 1961, about 37% of the city's population between the the ages 15-44 were literate.

11. For example, students graduating from the Department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature have used the term 'bēsa lebolläd' in their senior essays (Abatä 1978 E.C., Däjäné 1979 E.C., Gétaččäw B. 1976 E.C.).

12. Though it has lately become a rare practice stories which resemble the "dime novels" of the 50's continued to appear in the 70's. Därässä Berru's *Kämäkära Bästiya* (1967 E.C.), Germa Wāndemmu's *Kürtäññaw Gälagay* (1975 E.C.) and Éfrém Bätträwärk's *Kämutanoč Mänddär* (1983 E.C.), for example, are very similar to the "dime novels".

13. I gathered this information from a recent interview I had with Ato Attiliyo Vadala, director of Cinema Ethiopia, Musé George Délogosyan, a senior technician at the same cinema house, and Ato Gäbrä-Kerestos Täsämma, head of the Department of cinema service at Ambassador Theatre. All of them are senior staff who have stayed in service since the 1950s. They told me that Indian, Italian and American "Texas" cinemas were popular and frequently featured in the 50 s.

14. The new generation's difference to traditional ways began as young people continued to flock into the urban centers and become oriented to the luxuries of town life and the different mores of the West (Markakis 1975: 188).

15. The Young people's fancy to follow the "European way" in order to appear as civilized, is discussed by Markakis (1975:184).

16. Quoted from Goncourts, E. and J., *Journal des Goncourts*, 24 Oct. 1864.

17. The subject discussed in this book is a historical event that actually took place in the country in the late 1950s E.C.. For further information on recorded historical facts see Bahru 1991:216; Markakis 1975:368-71.

18. Quoted from Proust, M., *Le Temps Retrouvé*, II, p. 54.

19. For a comparison of historical accounts on the role of foreign missionaries in Ethiopian education see Markakis 1975:147-9, 151-2; Bahru 1991:108.

20. The change that took place in the 40s and then onwards and the gradual emergence of a new middle class society is discussed at length by J. Markakis (1975:184).

21. In the preface to his anthology, Yelma Déréssa has entreated young Ethiopians to write more books and to introduce the different literary genres which hitherto have a few or no appearance in Amharic literature (Yelma D. 1933 E.C.).

**A List of Selected Amharic "Dime Novels" used as
Primary References***

1. Adlewon Bäsäyef. Asäfa Täfäri, 1959. Addis Abäba:**
St George Press.
2. Amanuel Därsó Mäls. Berehanu Zärihun, 1956. A.A.:
Berehanenna Sälam Press.***
3. Ančči Yägädam Täkel. Germa Dammänu, 1957. A.A.:
Commercial Press.
4. Bunna KäJiwa. Ayyäla Kidané, 1961. A.A.: B.S.P.P.
5. Čäräka Setwäta. Berhannu Zärihun, n.d.. A.A.: B.S.P.P.
6. Čärk' Yämmiyastel Wänné. Gétaččäw Dawit, 1961. A.A.:
Central Press.
7. "Enkka Lejehen". Ayyälä Kidané, 1956. A.A.: Commercial
Press.

*All dates in this list are given in Ethiopian calendar

**Hereafter A.A.

***Hereafter B.S.P.P.

8. Enkoyyé Dāmamé. Māngestu Gādamu, 1956. A.A.: B.S.P.P.

9. Essun Täyew. Yelma Habtäyyäs, 1959. A.A.: Šäwa Press.

10. Eteyyé Laders. Yelma Habtäyyäs, 1957. A.A.: Šäwa Press.

11. Feré Heywät. Amdä-Šeyon Täsämma, 1953. A.A.: Tensaé Zä-Gubaé Press.

12. Gärrāmāw. Zämmänä Kasāñ, 1951. A.A.: Tensaé Zä-Gubaé Press.

13. Gudén Awäṭṭahāw. Mulugéta Mäbea-Šeyon, 1963. Asmāra Māngest Press.

14. Gudunna Tariku. Gäbra-Eyyäsus Haylä-Maryam, 1958. A.A.: Central Press.

15. Kalén Lämätäbbäk'. Wäldä-Amanuél Čäru, 1961. A.A.: B.S.P.P.

16. Kāmma Aneššé. Māngesttu Gādamu, 1952. A.A.: B.S.P.P.

17. Kältammawa Eheté. Abbē Gubāñña, 1955. A.A.: B.S.P.P.

18. Kuratenna Werdät. Täfarra Wāndem-Agāññāhu, 1955. A.A.:
Šāwa Press

19. Lāébab Tāsākkālkuñ. Gāzzahāñ Bālaynāh, n.d.. A.A.:
B.S.P.P.

20. Lāwāgu Lā'arba Semment Sā'at Tāgabbu. Yelma Habtäyyās,
1956. A.A.: Šāwa Press.

21. Lebb Wellek'. Māngesttu Mäkonnen, 1956. A.A.: Artistic
Press.

22. Mäddāsāt Bāwāttatennāt. Wāndayyāhu Habtä-Gabreél,
1958. A.A.: B.S.P.P.

23. Manennātehen Ewäk'. Ayyäläč Bākkälä, 1963. A.A.:
B.S.P.P.

24. Mäsaläl. Māngesttu Gādamu, 1958. A.A.: B.S.P.P.

25. Māwdād Yamāttaw Tānk'. Bāllatä Gulemma, 1958. A.A.:
Commercial Press.

26. ~~Mawwāy~~ yāt. Aklilu Atlabbačāw, 1956. A.A.: Märha-Tebah Press.

27. Meskinu Debb Argaččāw. Mäzgäbu Abatä, 1956.
A.A.:Tensaé Zä-Gubaé Press.

28. **Mogādāññaw Fālasfa.** Asræss Asfa-Wāsān, n.d.. A.A.:
Sāwa Press.
29. **Polisenna Dañña Bābalagär.** Yerga-Māngesttu Estifanos,
1959. A.A.: Tāsfa Gäbrä-Sellase Press.
30. **Salemmälläs Kārrāhu.** Gétahun Lénččö, 1961. A.A.: Red
Sea Press.
31. **Sara.** Afāwārk' Fälläkä, 1955. A.A.: Märha-Tebāb Press.
32. **Satemmar Fātānawan Allāfāč.** Fesseha-Seyon Kasayé,
1958. A.A.: St. George Press.
33. **Sāwenna Nurow.** Gännät Alāmayyāhu, 1959. A.A.:
Commercial Press.
34. **"Sāw Näbbärku".** Alāmayyāhu Telayé, 1957. A.A.: B.S.P.P.
35. **Sāw Yabbawen Egzi'abhér Yegāls'sāwal.** Éleyas Bāšah,
1957. A.A.: Commercial Press.
36. **Sāytan Gottaču.** Mākbeb Alāmu, 1958. A.A.: B.S.P.P.
37. **Somaléw.** Māngesttu Gādamu, 1958. A.A.: B.S.P.P.

38. **Sosttu Yämut Lejočč.** Ainiä Säyefu, 1956. A.A.: Märha-
Tebäb Press.
39. **Wa Ené! Säw Mähoné.** Géttaččaw Gäbrä-Mädhén, 1959.
A.A.: B.S.P.P.
40. **Wäha Yäbällaw Bét. Mërse'ë-Hazän Abbäbä,** 1956. A.A.:
B.S.P.P.
41. **Wäraš Yäléllaw Bét.** Germa Dammänu, 1958. A.A.:
Commercial Press.
42. **Yäadära Däbdabbé. Bäfekädu Zägäyyä,** 1958. A.A.:
Artistic Press.
43. **Yä'amäs' Nuzzazé.** Abbé Gubäñña, 1955. A.A.: B.S.P.P.
44. **Yä'aradaw Taddäsä.** Pawlos Noñño, 1955. A.A.: B.S.P.P.
45. **Yä'emmahoy Mäzäz.** Täčän Abbäbä, 1956. A.A. B.S.P.P.
46. **Yä'enssesoč Rokét.** Mängesttu Gädamu, 1955. A.A.:
Commercial Press.
47. **Yägétaččaw Misttoč.** Pawlos Noñño, 1955. A.A.: B.S.P.P.

-48. Yaltaddäläč Bäsaw Särg Tadaräč. Yelma Habtäyyäs, 1955.

A.A.: B:S.P.P.

49. Yämalädaw Dähä. Däbbäbä Admeké, 1956. A.A.: B.S.P.P.

50. Yämänfäs Kusläñña. Yelma Mannayé, 1958. A.A.: B.S.P.P.

List of Profiles of the Plots of The Selected "Dime Novels"*

11. Feré Heywät: A family - a son born to it - the son becomes wise and very good at learning - in spite of the parents strong refusal, he goes to Gondär for further study in church education - he suffers a lot to achieve his desire - comes back to his parents and marries according to the custom - he sends his son to a modern school in the capital - the son marries a girl of his own choice.

12. Gärrämāw: A monk lives in a monastery after the death of his wife - a bandit comes to the monastery and tells the monk how he broke out of jail and how he killed a friend who betrayed him to marry his wife - the monk teaches him to repent and reform - the bandit goes to Addis Abāba where he becomes rich # The daughter of the murdered man (and of the bandit's ex-wife) gets married to a man who betrays her - leaving her baby daughter she too goes to Addis Abāba where she becomes a maid servant to the rich man - the rich man discovers the identity of his servant and brings her abandoned daughter to grow in his house # A young man elopes with the daughter of his master - a son born to them and the mother dies - the boy grows and chance leads him to the house of the rich man # The boy and the adopted girl fall in love and get married - the rich man returns to the monk and himself becomes a monk.

13. Gudén Awäṭṭahāw: A young boy worries why divorce and prostitution become rampant - he discusses the issue with his father - in the discussion they refer to different stories they know from personal experiences.

14. Gudunna Tariku: A son is born with fully developed teeth - the son grows in the hands of an uncaring father and cruel step-mothers - the son suffers because his parents would not allow him to go to school - he manages to go to Addis Abāba where he is accepted into a boarding school - discarded by the school he tries different trades - finds a job as a teacher - he marries a girl but soon divorces her to marry another one - he finally changes his trade and becomes an agriculturalist.

* The profiles of the first ten works are already made available (60 -64).



15. **Kalén Lāmātābbāk:** A young boy and his sister discuss their future - they chose their own lovers - the girl's lover dies in an accident - the boy's lover is obliged to marry another man who leaves her upon her illness - the boy keeps his promise until she gets well and finally they become married.

16. **Kāman Aneššé:** A man discusses with his donkey - the man's brother disapproves the action and criticizes him on his foolishness - the donkey continues to philosophize on the foolishness of mankind - the donkey decides to live and to behave according to the philosophy of donkeys and refuses to be loaded - it tries to convert its master into a donkey - one day while riding on its back the donkey slips and they both fall over a cliff to be reborn as little donkeys.

17. **Kāltammaw Eheté:** A family - a son and daughter born to it - death of the children's mother - the father marries another woman - the stepmother maltreats the children - the daughter runs away - the father grieves - the son moves to another town for education - he finds his lost sister working in a brothel.

18. **Kuratenna Werdāt:** Two young boys go to study in America - they see the civilized world and experience racial segregation - upon the completion of their education one of them stays in America while the other returns to Ethiopia - the returnee gets into conflict with the tradition bound society - he tries to change it fails, is frustrated and begins to drink - finally he goes crazy.

19. **Lā'ebab Täsäkkäлкуñ:** On the death of his parents a boy leaves his village and goes to town - he becomes a coolie - he gives money he found in the street to its owner who, as a reward, adopts him - he gets a job and marries - while touring on a boat a storm breaks out and everybody is lost including his wife; he succeeds to swim to a certain island where the people are barbaric - he comes back to his country and is assigned to a high post - goes to another country on a diplomatic mission - he accidentally shoots down a snake and since this is a violation of the country's law he is sentenced to death.

20. **Lāwāgu Lā'arba Sement Sä'at Tägabbu:** A young man (Mandäfro) discusses with another man who implores him to marry a certain rich girl (Yäši) - after the couple's engagement Mandäfro and his friends discuss the advantages of marrying a rich girl - Mandäfro dreams of getting the wealth of his fiancée and becomes restless until he marries

her - a man suddenly comes to mandäfro and hurries him off to another wedding anniversary to substitute a lost bridegroom - on the wedding day the bride gives birth to a baby, Mandäfro is forced to accept the baby because her father has offered a good reward # Mandäfro is beaten up by unknown men because of his infidelity # Yäši did not know that he has been married to another - he discovers that Yäši is not virgin - one day she raves in her sleep and he hears her calling another man's name - on the wedding day mandäfro pretends as if he is discovering the infidelity of the girl for the first time; he warns her parents to give him back every expense he has spent for the wedding - the parents agree to do so and they become divorced 48 hours after their wedding # After a while he receives a love letter from a girl - then they become married - he is arrested for abducting the fiancée of another man - after a long investigation he becomes free of the crime he has been charged with.

21. Lebb Wellek': A family - a son born to it - the son grows to become lawless- the son leaves home- the son disturbs society - the son communes with the Devil - he deceives people and becomes rich -the Devil deserts him - he gets caught by the police - he regrets his deeds and commits suicide.

22. Mäddäsät Bāwättatennāt: A young man standing at the gate of a walled town - the youth gets into the town and observes the various festivities that the people of the town are occupied with - the youth decides to go out of the town and as he does so other young people of the town laugh at him.

23. Manennätehen Ewāk': A family - a son and daughter born to it - the death of their parents - the children become spoiled - the boy (Helina) marries a woman and the girl (Alāmawāké) becomes a prostitute - Helina becomes a womanizer - the son of Helina (Feréw) goes abroad for higher education - Helina dies due to heavy drinking while his sister, Alāmawāké, disappears - Feréw and Manntägboš (his sister) exchange letters - Feréw comes back and falls in love with a girl he meets at a party - they become married according to custom.

24. Mäsälal: Three young men dressed in an Italian suit are seated in a café - one of them, nick-named El-TeX, follows a girl to her home assuming that she is a student but when she asks him for money leaves her - he gets angry because people are nowadays money minded and immoral - he tells his

friends that he has no plan to marry - El-TeX goes to America and comes back after five years - marries an American woman - El-TeX uses this woman to get on the social ladder and to become rich.

25. Māwdād Yamāttaw Tānk': A young boy falls in love with a girl - the girl's father refuses their marriage - the couple elope to Asmāra and begin a happy life - the wife dies in a hospital in childbirth - the husband goes mad and dies.

26. Māwāyayāt: A young boy asks an old man about the different aspects of life - the old man answers the questions and thereby passes his wisdom over to the young one.

27. Meskinu Debb Argaččāw: A family - A son on the death of his parents is deprived of the right to inherit the properties of his family - the boy escapes and goes to Addis Abāba - he suffers in poverty until one day he gets a large sum of money buried in the ground - he becomes a rich man and turns out to be cruel to the poor - an angry poor man kills him.

28. Mogādāññaw Fālasfa: A man travels to an unknown land across deserts and oceans - he gets into a town where people of strange cultures and values live - after a while he moves to different places where he meets various types of people - he meets with Socrates with whom he discusses various issues - he then continues to travel to several other places and finally rests under a big tree called "Nationalism".

29. Polisenna Dañña Bābalagār: A family is brutally treated by the police and the judiciary - the mother is murdered and her daughter leaves the village - the girl's fiancé brings her back but on their way are arrested by the police - they suffer a lot in the hands of the corrupt officers and the prison guards - three voluntary young people try to expose these misdeeds by handing over secretly recorded evidence to higher government bodies - while in prison the police officer rapes the girl and she is avenged by her fiancé who kills the officer and the judge - the young boy escapes taking his fiancée with him but she dies of fever - those guilty are arrested and tried.

30. Salemmālās Kārrāhu: A nun tells the story of her life # As a girl she falls in love with a boy - he betrays her

and she leaves home - she goes to another town and becomes a prostitute - because of a quarrell over her she gets imprisoned - out of prison, having lost her beauty, becomes a beggar - she advises fellow girls to take lesson from her experience - then she goes to a monastery where she plans to spend the rest of her life.

31. Sara: A young boy falls in love with a girl - he kills a man who has shot his friend and runs away to the forest - he joins a group of bandits - accidentally saves the girl he loves and her father from other bandits - his group is dispersed by the police and he remains alone - he is captured by other strangers but the girl rescues him - her father reciprocates his good deeds by letting her marry him.

32. Satemmar Fātānawan Allāfāč: A wealthy family - a daughter is born to it - the death of the parents - the daughter (Gudeš) becomes spoiled - Gudeš marries and gives birth to a triplet - the triplet go abroad for higher education - Gudeš delivers four children at a single birth - she goes to a town naked in order to buy a modern dress but everybody considers her to be mad - she disappears into a forest; there a mad dog bites her due to which she conceives beasts - she gives birth to beasts in a hospital - the beasts meet and decide on how to administer themselves - Gudeš's children return from abroad - Gudeš and her children begin to live in peace.

33. Sāwenna Nurow: A man gets employed in a government office - he becomes corrupt and is imprisoned for embezzling government money - the death of his parents - gets out of prison and improves his conduct - marries a decent girl and becomes a father.

34. "Sāw Nābbärku": A five and half years old child philosophizing on the meaning of life # Birth - boyhood - leaves home - lives with relatives in a near by town - relatives mistreat him - runs away - to the wilderness - reaches a town - joins the military - is sent to a desert station - comes back - falls in love with a wealthy and beautiful girl - while out of town on a mission his inamorata being forced to marry a rich man - comes back and takes her away to an unknown island.

35. Sāw Yābbawen Egiz'abhér Yegālššāwal: Two families - their children get married - the country is invaded by the Italians - the young wife betrays her husband and marries a traitor - the country's independence is restored - the traitor dies and his wife becomes a prostitute - she then

goes to another town where she becomes a servant - sent to jail for the murder she did not commit and dies there - the killer and the conspirator are discovered and sentenced to death.

36. **Säytan Gottaču:** A man goes to a place where a demon is being deified and he becomes interested in the art - he goes to different conjurers and discovers that they are all liars.

37. **Somaléw:** A police officer asks a man in Hargéssa (North Somalia) to go to the front and fight against Ethiopia but the man refuses and is dragged to prison # two Somali young men argue on the Ethio-somalia issue (one is pro-Mogadishu and the other pro-Ethiopia) - they continue their argument but fail to come to an agreement.

38. **Sostu Yämut Lejoččena Yä'adāra Abbat:** Three boys are bereft of their parents and live under a caretaker - they go to school and become successful - the boys get married to girls of their own choice and according to custom - their caretaker father dies.

39. **Wa Ené! Sāw Māhoné:** A poor man but who saves every penny - he becomes rich and buys the shop whose owner he used to serve as a coolie - he continues to collect more wealth but does not want to spend a coin - he marries and becomes a father of two children. Every bit of his wealth, his wife and children, are burnt into ashes by accident - the sad man vanishes from the town.

40. **Waha Yābāllaw Bét:** A family - a son born to it - the son goes to England for higher education - returns to his country and leads an extravagant life - sent to jail for murder wrongly charged to him - gets out from prison - his fiancée betrays him - he falls ill and is admitted to a hospital - his ex-fiancée gets sick too - both he and she make their confession.

41. **Wāraš Yäléllāw Bét:** A country boy gets lured by the "easy and cosy" life in the big city - he goes to the city without his father's consent - he gradually loses hope of getting a job - he becomes wretched and attempts suicide - a certain priest advises him to go back to his father - he goes back home - the father gives him a warm welcome.

42. **Yä'adāra Däbdabbé:** A deceased author writes a letter (from his new world) to a friend in the real world (the narrator) in order to correct the misconception on his career as an author # He is born in a certain village - starts writing stories and plays in his childhood - he joins the school theatre club and his first work is published at

the age of 12 - when he grows he becomes a journalist, an actor, a novelist and a dramatist; he becomes the country's celebrated author and academician - he becomes ill and dies # The author tells his friend (the narrator) about his life in the new world and bids him good bye.

43. Yä'amäs' Nuzzazé: A man gives the reason why he tells the story of his life # A family - children born to them - the death of the parents - one child succeeds to go to the big town - he completes his secondary school and goes to America for further education - he comes back with a B.A. and with a "who cares ... go to hell..." attitude - he inherits the property of his family and denies the other children of their rights to it - he becomes a corrupt bureaucrat and uses every means to get rich - marries a wealthy, but mean, woman - Becomes ill and on his death bed regrets all the cruelties he has committed on his forlorn brothers and sisters - and in his will he returns them their property.

44. Yä'aradaw Taddäsä: Tayitu falls in love with Taddäsä and he deflowers her - she becomes pregnant but he chases her away # Taddäsä hands a love letter over to another girl - she agrees to marry him; but before that he brings her to his house and deflowers her - he chases her away # On a journey to another town the narrator-character becomes introduced to a certain girl - after some time, back in Addis Abäba, he meets the girl and she tells him her story; she says that she has been a government employee but is dismissed after being seduced by her boss; now she has become a prostitute. He asks her the name of the boss and she tells him that he is called Taddäsä # Astér and Haylä-Maryam are husband and wife - Taddäsä follows Astér and makes her his mistress - Astér divorces her husband and marries Taddäsä - some days latter he chases her away # Taddäsä seduces the sister of his friend - the girl tells this to her brother and together they plan to revenge - the girl asks Taddäsä to take her out of town - on a deserted road she asks him to stop the car so that she can make water; together they go out and the girl's brother kidnaps Taddäsä and hangs him on a tree.

45. Yä'emmahoy Mäzäz: An old woman (Semmäñ) and her granddaughter (Wäynitu) live in a big compound with their maid servant; the old woman's husband (Hunddé) had died a few years ago - Semmäñ has a dream # Hunddé and Yedängetu are members of an association - families of the members of the association gather at the house of Yedängetu - Yedängetu makes love to Semmäñ and she becomes pregnant - Semmäñ gives birth to Täsfayé - Täsfayé grows and starts an affair with a servant (Sankemm-Yälläs) who becomes pregnant -

Hunddé proposes his wish that his son get married to the daughter of Yedängetu - Yedängetu refuses to accept the offer knowing that both are his own children - Täsfayé learns the secret from his mother and he vanishes from home to die somewhere; before his death he sends a message to his mother and declares about his baby by Sankem-Yälläš - Hunddé becomes poisoned to death by an opponent - Sankem-Yälläš gives birth to Wäynitu # Yedängetu disappears upon hearing the death of his son - Yemmänhusal (the wife of Yedängetu) revenges the disappearance of her husband by burning the family of Semmän # The narrator who does not reveal himself until now suddenly shows up and tells that he is awakend by his wife.

46. Yä'ensesočč Rokét: Domestic animals are discussing about the ill treatment they receive in the hands of human beings - donkeys are working on a formula to launch a rocket in to space; they are joined by a scientist dog # Beasts hold a meeting and hijack a donkey to work for them; they decide to eat the donkey to become intelligent - a monkey goes forward in time and reaches the year 2500 and is held captive by human beings # The shuttle of the domestic animals blows-up upon its launching.

47. YäGétaččäw Mistočč: Gétaččäw marries a poor girl - his friends tell him that she is a lewd woman - he finds her with a certain man whom she says is her brother - after a while Gétaččäw comes back from another town and he discovers that his wife has married the man # Gétaččäw marries another girl - on the wedding day he discovers that she is not a virgin; he learns that she has had too many lovers and divorces her # Gétaččäw marries a girl whom he meets at a party - his friends tell him that she is unfaithful and they plan to prove it to him - a friend hides Gétaččäw in a wardrobe and brings in the wife; Gétaččäw hears their conversation and understands that his wife is unfaithful # Gétaččäw's uncle brings him a new wife - after a while his friends tell him that she is unfaithful - he evasesdrops on her and learns that his friends are right # Gétaččäw marries an office girl - later he discovers that she has an affair with her bosses # Gétaččäw marries an old, rich woman - though the woman is faithful she deprives him of his freedom - he deserts her; but she plots on him and has him jailed.

48. Yaltaddäläč Bäsäw Särg Tadaräčč: A young bachelor is in a hospital after a car accident where he falls in love with a nurse -out of hospital he is transferred to Dire Dawa - he comes back to Addis Abäba and finds out that his inamorata has betrayed him - the nurse is sentenced for life for killing her child.

49. Yāmalādaw Dāha: A young man goes to a corner bar - he watches how people behave, - when morning comes the young man goes home with an empty pocket.

50. Yāmānfās Kuslāñña: A family - a child born to it - death of the child's father - the mother marries another man - the stepfather causes discomfort to the boy - the boy leaves home - the boy wanders to different places - the boy sees the mother in his dream.

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APPENDICES

(Appendix i)



Achtzig- und vierzig-jährige Geschichte

(Appendix ii)



አንድ-አንድ በወራ ደንበኝ ሲያገኙባቸው ።

(Appendix - xix)



በሰላም ሆኖ ሲገኝ

(Appendix - xv)

ፈረስ ወ ከዚ ቀደም የነታማቸው መጻሕፍት

ለመቀነሱት ሠራዊት ይጠራሉ በውጣት
 የሮም አመጸደቀ ።
 በቀዳማዊ ኃይለ ሥላሴ ገዳማዊ ለገሰ
 ደረማ ቁመኛው በሐይቅ ።
 የፓትሪስ ለመምህራን አስፈላጊ ለማድረግ
 የሳመን ንዚል ።
 አልወለደም ።
 የዓጠረገ ነገር ።
 THE SAVAGE GIRL (በአንግሊካኛ)
 የራጊል ልገባ ።
 ምልክት ስርፈን በሰላሳ
 የህጉ ራሳ በሰላማዊ ስጦታ ።

ወደፊት

ለቸፋ ፈጣሪ ምስጋና ይደረገውና ማሳተሚያ
 በሰራው አቀጥላለሁ ።
 ቀጋው አንድ ብርሃን ።

(Appendix - V)



ጉዴን አወጣኝው!

ከሙሉጊታ መሰረድ

(Appendix - VI)

እስኝ ተይው !!

አ፡ አደፍርስ ፣ ካልጋቸው ፣ በላይ ፣ ተነስተው ፡

በመሬት ፣ የወረዱት ፣ በጨቤ ፣ ውጊያ ፣ አግካኝነት ሆነው ።

፤ ግርግ ፣ የተሳፈነት ፣ አድህ ፣ በካራ ፣ ውጊያ ፣ አድታ ፡

ላይ ፣ ታገኝ ፣ በመባል ፣ የገዳድ ፣ ሀላፊነት ፣ በጣት ፡

አካራ ፣ ታወቁ ፣ በወገድልም ፣ የባረን ፣ አደወት ፡

አካባቢውም ፣ ይላል ።

አስፍቀት ፣ ፣ ምናልባት ፣ ምስጢርን ፣ ጭምር ፡

በግርግ ፣ በሰው ፣ ለመገላገል ፣ ስትል ፣ በባለቤቷ ፡

አድድን ፣ አንስታ ፣ ይሆን ?

በቀለች ፣ ፣ የቶ ፣ አደፍርስ ፣ አጉትነት ፣ ከጥ

ቅን ፣ ጋር ፣ ተጋይቶባት ፣ ድንገት ፣ ሞታቸውን ፣

ከጊዜወታቸው ፣ ይልቅ ፣ ናቸው ፣ አንድሁሰ ?

፤ ሙሉ ስ፡ ፣ በግድገሪያ ፣ አነጋገር ፣ የወ/ር ፣

አፍቀት ፣ ያከስት ፣ ልጅ ፣ ነው ፣ ይላል ፤ ግን ፣ አከ

ሞናልባት ፣ ለጥቅም ፣ ቢል ፣ አድቸን ፣ በደም ፣ ታጥቦ ፡

ይሆናል ።

በላቱ ፣ ውስጥ ፣ አራት ፣ ተጠርጣሪዎች ፣ አሉ ፤

ገዳዩ ፣ አንድ ፣ ነው ።

ግን ፣ የቶ ?

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ከመገን አንኸ ።

ከመገን ሥታ ፣ ገዳሙ ።



አዲስ ፣ አበባ ፣ 1999 ዓ. ም.

ብርሃኑ ፣ ሰላም ፣ በቀዳማዊ ፣ ኃይለ ፣ ሥላሴ ፣ ማተሚያ ፣ ቤት ፣ ታተመ ፡

(Appendix - viii)

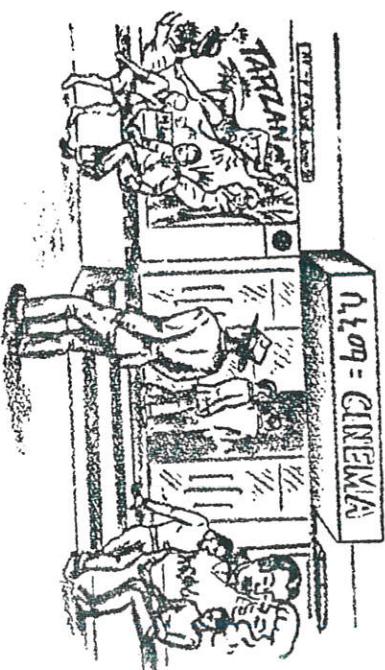
እግሩን፡ ከታች፡ የሚደግፈው፡ እንደችም፡ ነገር፡ ስላል ነበር፡ ብዙ፡ እሠቃያለሁ፡ ብሎ፡ ስጋት፡ እልነባረብንም፡

መለስ፡ ሲል፡ እንደት፡ ውሻ፡ ከባለገሩ፡ ግድም፡ እያላከለከች፡ ወደ፡ ከተማ፡ ስትገባግባ፡ እያት፡ አልፍ፡ እንላለሁ፡ ስትል፡ «እንጂ፡ ውሻ፡ ከጥቂት፡ ጊዜ፡ በኋላ፡ አሞራ፡ ይረባረብብኝ፡ ይሆናል፤ እባክሽ፡ እዚህ፡ ሠጥኝ»



ሲል፡ ደምፅ፡ ስለ፡ ሰማች፡ ቆም፡ ብላ፡ ወደ፡ እርሱ፡ ተመለከተች፡ እንገደን፡ እሰግጋ፡ ዙሪያውን፡ እያጠማ ዘዘች፡ እንደነፈችና፡ ጉዞዋን፡ ቀጠለች፡ «እኒ! እባክሽን?» አላት፡ ከምንም፡ አልቈጠረችውም፡ ዝም፡ ብላ፡ ጉዞዋን፡ ቀጠለች፡ «እኒ! እባክሽ፡ ኩቲ፡!» ሲላት፡ መለስ፡ ብላ፡ ቆመች፡

ጌዴዎን፡ ስለ፡ ሲኒማ፡ የሚሰማው፡ ዝና፡ ብዙ፡ ነበር፡ ጓደኞቹና፡ በየከተማውም፡ ተባትነው፡ በየሥረቻው፡ በማይረባ፡ ሥራ፡ የወጣትነትናውን፡ ጊዜ፡ የሚያባክኑት፡ ልጆች፡ ሀሎ፡ የሚቀበሉት፡ ወሬ፡ ስለ፡ ሲኒማ፡ ይበዘዋል፡—



« --- አይተኸዋል ? --- ያ፡ ታርዛን፤ በጨቢ፡ ጓደኛውን፡ ሲገድለው? --- አንበሳውን፡ እንኳ፡ ጭምቅ፡ አድርጎ፡ ሲጥለው! --- ያኛውስ፡ የጓደኛውን፡ ሚስት፡ ሰርቆ፡ ሲጠፋ፡ ባሏ፡ ደርሶ፡ የገደለው? --- እቢት! ያ፡

DECLARATION

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

Name Girma Zenebe
Signature 
Place Addis Ababa
Date of Submission April 22, 1994