



(Re)defining Ethiopian Literature: A Quest for Identity in the Age of Globalization

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Abstract

Ethiopian literature, Ethiopian identity and globalization, the three broad and often polemical issues were brought together in this paper in the view of addressing the need to instigate (re instigate) scholarly discussion on how Ethiopian literature should be written, read and studied while maintaining its Ethiopian identity in the present era of globalization. In the course of achieving this broad objective, the paper attempted to disclose main philosophical and literary issues that should characterize modern Ethiopian literature. Data were collected through document analysis and analyzed in a historical analysis method. The finding indicated that globalization have been affecting the aesthetic as well as thematic features of modern Ethiopian literature both positively and negatively since its emergence. In the early periods of its development, globalization was an opportunity for modern Ethiopian literature, for it enables writers to adapt western styles of storytelling, whereas it has become a trait for it starting from the third phase of its historical development, which is well known as post-revolution period. This dynamic effect of globalization does not only affect literary characteristics of modern Ethiopian literature but also has a significant effect on defining it. Based on the discussions held in the

analysis, this study, therefore, attempts to concluded by vigilantly forwarding the possible Ethiopian definition for Ethiopian literature.

Key Words: Globalization; Ethiopian Literature; Identity.

1. Introduction

Once up on my lecture days, in a senior class where I was assigned to teach a course named '*Theory of literature and criticism*', I asked my students a trivial question on purpose. I wrote the title of two well-read Ethiopian novels on the white board i.e., 'Fiker Eskemekaber' (love unto Grave)(1959) written by the well known Ethiopian writer Haddis Alemayehu and 'Tekusat' (fever)(2000) , the 'as is' (Endeworede) version, a rather erotic novel written by another prominent Ethiopian writer Sebehat Gebre Egziabher, and I asked them which one is their favorite novel. Most of them indicated the later as their favorite one. I asked them why? With almost similar tone they replied, "It reflects our feeling." I continued asking, "What is your feeling? And how is it reflected in the novel?" They answered my question with laughter. Though I understood what this laughter means in relation to the content of their favorite novel, I told them, with intentional objection, that they were wrong because, I said "This novel is not Ethiopian as the other one is." Following my remark, I was almost booed off the class by the students. However, after I calmed them down I gave them a chance to reflect their opinion on the issue I raised. Following my comment, a student raised his hand and asked me, "What is Ethiopian literature?"

What is Ethiopian literature? Did I give him the correct answer? I do not think so because I do not know what makes a literature Ethiopian in a strict sense. Incidentally, is there any definition for Ethiopian literature? What are the Ethiopian elements I was referring to when I said *Love unto grave* is typically Ethiopian? What makes students to praise *Fever* than the other novel? All these questions motivated me to write this paper in the view of instigating (or re-instigating) scholarly discussion on Ethiopianizing modern Ethiopian literature (Ethiopian modern literature?), here after referred to as Ethiopian literature, in the present era of globalization.

2. Modern Ethiopian Literature: Its history in brief

It is astonishing to learn that modern Ethiopian literature has a century old history which started following the publication of a novel entitled *Lebb Wallad*

Tärik by Afawarq Gabrayasus in 1908 E.C. (Gerard 1971; Mengistu 1973; Taye & Shiferaw 2000; Wright 1963; Yonas 1995). This pioneer novel introduced a new genre of literature to Ethiopia that had been characterized by its age old heritage of pious literature. Before *Lebb Wallad Tärik* fictional writing in the vernacular was not known except poetry. Writing poetry in Amharic in a modern sense is started by a man called Gebre Egziabher from Tigray (1860-1940) (Gerard, 1971).

It is because of this novel that Ethiopia was introduced with a new form of storytelling called, 'Lebb Wollad' in Amharic as an equivalent word for the English 'Fiction'. To see how this form of storytelling develops throughout its history, let us see it in relation to periodical categories that I borrow from scholars who write on Ethiopian literature such as Gerrard (1971),.

2.1. The Pre-war period

This period refers to the period before the second Italian invasion to Ethiopia (before 1935) . Literarily, this period is characterized by the emergence of pioneer works in different creative writings namely, poetry, novel and drama. As indicated above, poetry in its modern form and novel writing was started in this period. Similarly, modern drama, a genre which was almost unknown for Ethiopians before that time was brought to existence in the country in this period. In this regard a playwright called Girmachew Teklehawaryat, with his pioneer allegorical drama *Ye Awurewoch Comedy (Comedy of Animals)* take the credit.

This period can be referred to as a difficult period for Ethiopians to accustom themselves with foreign ways of storytelling. Because the educational and social background of most of the writers was from traditional church schools where historical and religious writings, grammar and kenne (poem) were well known genres, disengaging themselves from the tradition they had been through at once could have been difficult. It seems because of this that Ethiopia had to wait for about seven years to read its second novel which was written by Heruy Woldesselsie under the title *Wodge Lebie (My friend my heart)* in 1915 E.C. After the emergence of this second novel, Ehiopian literature started to develop with a considerable pace. Heruy added two fictional works almost within ten years and along with fictional writings both Heruy and Afework were busy producing non-fictions. A number of plays were written by Ethiopians such as Sahle Tsadalu and Yoftahie Nigusie. Motivated by the approach of Italian war in 1935, several poems of patriotic nature were written. Writers like Walde Giorgies Wolde Yohaness come to the front in this regard.

Generally, this period, was a period in which the foundation of Ethiopian literature was laid down, and without any exaggeration, it was a period in which literary works that are still being read and studied were produced. Though its promising advancement was interrupted by Italian invasion, Ethiopian literature at this period was able to gain its individuality. This individuality was maintained through different characteristics. Faithfulness is the first one. Literature in this period was characterized by its faithfulness to the nation's social, cultural and religious values

such as language, religion and the Throne. Most of the writers in this period were able to speak and write in western tongues, as they used to live in different countries for educational and/or governmental tasks. However, when they write stories in the western style, they didn't attempt to change the medium. They rather preferred to stick to their mother tongue. In addition to language they were also indebted to their religion and the Throne. They were not against religious values of the nation nor were they skeptical to the political system of that period, i.e., the monarchical system.

However, writers in this period were change seekers, which can be taken as the second characteristics of literature in this period. Through their works they preached the need to make change in some socio-cultural aspects of the nation. For instance, they criticized detrimental (harmful) social acts such as corruption, early marriage and women's rights.

In addition to the aforementioned characteristics, literature in this period was also characterized by thematic solemnity, which mainly focuses on National unity, patriotism and bravery and being Didactic, most of the works focus on moral and secular teachings

2.2. The Post-war period

Despite the fact that the second Italian invasion interrupted Ethiopians from producing their literary works, it was not able to stop their creativity. Because of this, soon after the victory, poems that celebrate the victory and the return of the king to his throne were collected from individuals and published as an anthology under the title *Yaddis Zemen Mezmur* (Hymns to the new era). This anthology, then, begins the second period of Ethiopian literature that is often referred to as "the golden age of Ethiopian literature". It was indeed the golden age because most of the writers that gave us our masterpieces were generations of this period. Kebede Mikael and Tsegaye Gebremedhen in modern poetry, Tekle Hawaryat Tekle Mariam, Tsegaye Gebremedhen, Mengistu Lemma in drama, Mekonen Endalkachew, Germachew Teklehawaryat, Haddis Alemayehu, Brihanu Zerihun, Abe Gubegna, Beka Nemo, in novel; Taddesse Liben in short story, are few of them.

These writers can be categorized into two groups: writers from older generation and writers from Younger generation. Prolific writers such as Mekonen Endalkachew, Germachew Teklehawaryat and Kebede Mikael are included under the first category and the rest of the writers stated above are considered as from the younger generation. The appearance of these writers from two generations did not create any incongruity rather it created a great opportunity to transfer Ethiopian literary tradition that the old generation started at the early periods of Ethiopian literary history to the new generation.

Because of this, most of the thematic and artistic traditions observed in the previous period persist in this period. Of course, the new generation that comprises personalities whose background is from traditional church schools and who have exposure for the outside world just

like the old generation, made their own artistic standard through those classic works we are still enjoying.

In this period, in addition to writing original artistically elevated creative writings, translating European fictional works was also actively performed. A number of novels, plays and poems were translated mainly from English language to Amharic. In this regard, Kebede Mikael's effort to translate Shakespeare's works such as *Romeo and Juliet*, owns a significant place. We have the Amharic version of "to be or not to be..." because of his translation.

Un disputably, in this period of Ethiopian literature, development in artistic quality is observed. Most of the creative works have comparatively elevated standard in artistry. However, they were not by any means different from their predecessors in relation to their content and purpose. As pre war period literary works, works of this period were characterized as didactic nature. Faithfulness and social criticism were dominantly seen in the works of these periods. However, around the last years of the monarchical system, a number of revolutionary literary works were published. '*Alewoledm*' (1970) written by Abe Gubegna can be taken as a good example for this.

The Post-revolution period

This period marks a new history of Ethiopia. The monarchical system that had been on power for centuries was changed to communist military system. Marxist, Leninist thinking dominates elite group. Writers with this socialist mentality came to the scene. In this period the dominant literary feature observed is socialist realism in which writers attempted to present the social, political and economic miseries of the society that were imposed on Ethiopians because of the buorzua. As a result, a kind of discontinuity is observed in the literary tradition of the country.

Although most of them were still writing in the vernacular, and were faithful for it, unlike writers in the previous periods, they were more faithful for Marxist Lenninist thoughts than religion, tradition and social norms. Most of the writers considered these values that their predecessors were keenly preserving as manifestations of backwardness. They rather preached socialism, and revolution. They were rather propagandists. They want literature to serve politics. Because of this Maladjustment became the dominant thematic preoccupation of these literary works.

One thing that deserve mentioning at this point is the interruption of literary traditions that the earlier writers tried to establish for years. As we saw in the above section, earlier Ethiopian writers were concerned in Ethiopian way of expressing social issues. When they were criticizing for instance, they did it through advice and/or suggestion . Whereas, disgrace, insult and mortification on social customs and traditions were features of literary works in this period. It seems why the dominant thematic preoccupation of most of the literary works in this period is maladjustment, disparity between socialism and tradition etc.

Generally, in this period we have seen literary works mostly of revolutionary in their orientation and Marxist in their literary form and content. Of course artistic advancement was observed in some literary works such as Bealu Girma's *Kadmas Bashager* (Beyond the horizon).

The present period

The period we are living now is different from the previous periods in so many ways. The countries political and economic systems differ from those used throughout its long history. Most of these systems are new and are the source of both hope, on the one hand, but also of despair in the country, on the other hand. In his recent Amharic novel *Rämätöhärä* (2010: 113), Yesmaeke Worku prefers to adapt Charles Dickens's (1859) words to explain present-day Ethiopia. He asserts that in present-day Ethiopia, it "... is the best of times, is the worst of times, it is the age of wisdom, it is the age of foolishness, it is the epoch of incredulity, it is the season of light, it is the season of darkness...." This writer's uncertainty regarding the essence of present-day Ethiopia seems the result of a number of contradictions in the political, economic and socio-cultural practices of the country. Politically, it is practicing a so-called "democratic" system; nonetheless, many local and foreign bodies often condemn it for being "undemocratic." Economically, the government boasts a 10-12% economic development figure each year, though the country is still one of the poorest in the world. Culturally, though there has been cultural development in some areas (for instance, in developing the culture of ethnic groups), information technology, popular western literary works and the film industry, for example, are westernizing the country more than ever before. In general, this period is one full of contradicting phenomena.

The Literature also suffers from this trauma. We cannot determine the peculiar characteristics and nature of Ethiopian literature at this time because of different reasons. One of these reasons is the irreconcilable differences amongst writers. Most of the prominent writers whose works can be referred to here as exemplars are the ones who had been the member of revolutionists in the previous period. Most of the creative works of these writers that are published at this time are the ones that did not see the light of publication in the previous period because of censorship and other socio-political reasons (We can take Sibehat Gebre Egziabher's novels as an example here). Because of this, we can hardly take them as the products of the present period. Certainly, their influence on the youngest group of amateur writers who neither attend traditional church schools nor has an exposure to the external world as their elders, is not significant. Consequently, the new 'Democratic' generation starts writing creative works 'democratically'.

Because the trend of Ethiopian way of creative writing was detached from Ethiopian writers since the third period, especially after the middle of that period where Marxist revolutionary writers dominate the floor of Ethiopian literature, these youngsters do not have a chance to know about that tradition. Without any exaggeration, most of the so called writers are book warmers not book worms. They do not read the literary works written by their elders. If they do with any chance they tend to criticize them for not being as trailer as Agatha Christie's, Erving Wales's or Sydney Sheldon's novels because these and so many others of similar quality are what they know very well as a consequence of translations (at the middle of this period before six or seven years, almost all novels published in Ethiopia were translations of such kind of popular works). The cinema, internet and English premier league effects are additional factors that worsen the situation. Hence, how is Ethiopian literature at present characterized? We can identify the following as observable characteristics:

- Detachment:- they are detached from the Ethiopian tradition of story telling
- Reluctance:- most of them are reluctant for their tradition, culture and social value
- Eroticism:- It seems that not to write taboo becomes a taboo itself
- Destructiveness:- destructing history, social set up,
- Unfaithfulness:- for religion, language,
- Egocentricity:- the authors write what they want to write not what others need to know
- Europeanism:- art for art's sake is pronounced by most of them

Generally, Ethiopian literature in this period signifies the climax of its downward development. However, especially after the past five years, it seems that the resurgence of Ethiopian literature is approaching. We start to see works with Ethiopian text such as a novel called *Dertogada* written by Yesmake Wokru, though they also suffer a lot from the detachment.

2. Ethiopian literature and globalization

Apart from the debates that recur around it, I, intuitively, accept globalization as "...a process fuelled by, and resulting in, increasing *cross-border flows* of goods, services, money, people, information, and *culture*" (Held et al 1999, p. 16). In this definition one thing is made clear, cross-border flows of culture. Since literature is one part of culture and also a means through which culture is expressed, accepting this definition may not make our subject of discussion far

from our working definition. According to the given definition, in globalization there is one important aspect that needs a mention here "cross-border flow of culture" that signifies the possibility of accepting others culture and giving once culture to others. In this case, globalization can be considered as an opportunity. However, in relation to Ethiopian literature it has been both an opportunity and threat.

3.1. Globalization as an opportunity

As discussed in the above sections, the new form of storytelling was brought to Ethiopia by personalities who had been overseas for political and educational responsibilities. Afework Gebreyessus, for instance, had been in Italy for so many years and even married to an Italian. What these people read in European countries fascinated and motivated them to try to narrate Ethiopian stories in the same manner. While doing this they only accept the form with cautious adaption to Ethiopian historical, cultural and social context. That is why the typical Ethiopian qualities of Ethiopian literature that we identified above in the first and second periods of its history were observed. In this case writers in this period were using globalization as an opportunity to advance the tradition of storytelling of the country not to change it.

It is important to emphasize here that the writers of the two periods aforementioned were not fostering to change the age-old tradition of Ethiopian story telling that was characterized by religiousness. They rather attempted to advance it in its purpose, content and form. Globalization helped them to secularize, to socialize and modernize their literature without changing its identity.

3.2. Globalization as a threat

Globalization started to be a threat for Ethiopian literature starting from its third historical period. As indicated above, post revolution creative works were under a great influence of Russian literature. Most writers, especially the members of the young group, had an exposure to socialist countries like Russia and Cuba. The rest who did not have chance to go to these countries, were also under the influence of these socialist literary works because they were exposed to a number of Russian literary, political and even economic books that had been translated to Amharic. Being influenced by them would have been easier if they had not accepted socialist literary works as archetypes of literary standard. Hence, being added to their revolutionary thinking, most writers in this period wrote Amharic Russian literary works, if my comment is not be said extremist. The Ethiopian values, traditions and features of our

literature were bulldozed by the Russians literary tradition. Writers of this period accepted what globalization gave them but it snatched their own values. Faithfulness for tradition, culture and religion were abandoned and condemned tagged with backwardness. That is why globalization started to be a threat for Ethiopian literature at this period and continue to be in the present period.

Of course, in the present period, the effect of globalization, in a strict sense, is far more than being a threat. If one attempts to get a name for what globalization is doing for the present time Ethiopian literature, it may not be an easy task because of so many reasons. To mention some, first, bounded to our working definition of globalization, the literature of this period should accept someone's culture to be influenced by it. In this case, we cannot determine specifically a culture or literary tradition that belongs to some other nation that influences it. Though we often call it 'European influence', with collective terminology, we do not get substantial European influence in it. We do not really get Shakespeare's or Dumas's or Dickens's etc. styles of storytelling in this period of Ethiopian literature. Second, it is hard to identify a collective ideology of these literary works to judge whether they are influenced by this or that nation. When we were discussing the period prior to this one, we said that most of the literary works were influenced by Marxist ideology that makes them carbon copies of Russian literature; whereas, the present period creative writings cannot be labeled in relation to one ideology. It seems that each literary work has its own ideology to tell for readers. And this is what I indicated as egocentrism while I was attempting to identify some observed characteristics of these works.

Hence, if we are not able to identify how and from which direction of the globe the present day Ethiopian literature is being affected by the threats of globalization, does it mean that globalization effect is non-existent in this period? I dare say no. In the contrary, globalization is severely, I should say, affecting the present time Ethiopian literature. And what makes the issue more serious is that the literature is not being affected by 'literary globalization', but by 'cinema globalization'. Present time writers, as I indicated above, prefer to watch cinema than read books. Hollywood cinema is their archetype for creative writing. They attempt to portray characters that are as heroic as *James Bond* or as romantic as *Titanic's Jack and Rose*. They want to tell people about everything 'as is' as they see it in erotic, if not pornographic, cinemas. They have no patience to narrate their story slowly and in an engaging manner so that they write trailer novels. Therefore, we can conclude that Hollywood

effect is the effect that we see threatening the present day Ethiopian literature in the name of globalization.

Quite ironically, Ethiopia is in its age of global exposure more than any other period before. Through economic, political and cultural relations with almost all continents of the world, it is becoming a land of opportunity not only to accept what globalization may give us but also to give what we have for others. In this regard we can refer to some artistic works that establish their own Ethiopian identity in the face of globalization. The first one is **Ethiopian Music** – Founded by Mulatu Astatke, establishes its Ethiopian identity with the name of Ethio-jazz. Second is **Ethiopian painting**- rooted deep to the traditional style of painting, it holds its own place in the world by the prolific works of renowned painters such as Metre Artist Afework Tekele. **Ethiopian handicraft** is the other one. 'Shema' and 'Tibeb' with their Ethiopian style and beauty is now being sold worldwide.

Nonetheless, we do not have Ethiopian literature we can take for granted locally, let alone globally. It is not using the great opportunities of globalization. Therefore, what should be done? As a concerned citizen and more importantly as a literature teacher I recommend the need to reorient our conception of Ethiopian literature towards Ethiopianizing it. And a kind of standard should be set to define Ethiopian literature. How? In what follows, I attempt to present my contention in brief.

3. (Re) conceptualizing Ethiopian literature

When I put the suffix “re” in bracket, I intended that my endeavor to conceptualize Ethiopian literature may not be a new one. However, as far as my knowledge is concerned, I do not get sufficient written documents about what makes Ethiopian literature Ethiopian rather than a bulk of research works that attempt to reveal its literary and social features in different periods of its historical development. To elucidate, let us see the major works very briefly.

As astonishing as its emergence is, scholarly study on Ethiopian literature is started not later than the emergence of the first novel some 100 years ago. An Italian scholar called Guidi contributed the first scholarly writing on the first vernacular Ethiopian novel. Starting from that time, until recently, Ethiopian literature had been studied by foreigners, mostly from Italy, German and English. This active involvement of scholars from the overseas in studying Ethiopian literature did not only help it get international recognition but also laid a basement for academic research on the subject that is persisted by Ethiopians up to today in a higher level, of course.

However, the orientation towards studying Ethiopian literature which was initiated by these foreigners has been on the what of Ethiopian literature. Most of the research works that we get even today are interested in investigating what is written in the texts, who write them and when are they written. Few are on the scene that ask the how question. Not more than two or three attempts I know that forward how should they be written, studied and conceived. In this regard, Mengistu Lemma (1992) worth a mention. In his article entitled: *'From Traditional to Modern Literature in Ethiopia'*, he addresses the issue how to modernize Ethiopian literature. He contends that the need to see back to the tradition is essential to modernize Ethiopian literature in an Ethiopian way. He strongly believes that Ethiopian literature is nothing without its tradition. As he contends,

[...] we are faced with the challenge of our historical situation. To meet it we have to effect a synthesis of our classical tradition in poetry with a modern approach and freedom of expression. In drama and novel, we have to raise the technical level of our creative endeavors to the highest cosmopolitan standards, while at the same time avoiding the ivory tower, the excessive preoccupation with experimentation as an end in itself, or a danger of being swept away from roots by the winds of ceaseless change in literary fashion blowing from abroad.

Mengistu's idea resembles with what I intend to raise in my paper except I am attempting to reverse the order. He wants to modernized Ethiopian literature but I endeavor to Ethiopianize modern literature. This disparity amongst Mengistu's and mine contentions emanate from the period in which we belong to. Because Mengistu was one of the writers, critics and poets in the second era of the literary history of Ethiopia, modernization was an issue on the table. And for him modernizing Ethiopian literature means secularizing it. However, secularizing Ethiopian literature is not an issue at the present time. Our literature at this time is not only secular but also atheist. Indeed, what is important at the present time is not secularization but Ethiopianization of this literature. The reality necessitates to commence scholarly discussion on defining and standardizing Ethiopian literature in the face of the present state of globalization in the country and in the world. Let me be an icebreaker.

4. Where should we start?

Ethiopian literature, as a product of a nation with over 3000 years of history and national identity, with tacit agreement, should be a representative of the

collective ideology of the nation. The collective ideology of the nation is found concealed in its collective social philosophy. In other words, our discussion on Ethiopianizing Ethiopian literature should start from Ethiopian philosophy. However, is there any philosophy named Ethiopian? Yes, thanks to Claud Summner (1985) who wrote more than four volumes of books on the subject, we, indeed, have Ethiopian philosophy by its own right. He said about Ethiopians and their philosophy comparing them with westerners:

Whereas, the Western world has a tendency to consider things as they are in their impersonal objectivity, the Ethiopian [...] world is clearly anthropocentric. The westerner takes as its starting point the world of external reality, which is distinct and measurable. The [...] Ethiopian does not break away from the world in which he leaves. He does not break away from the world in which he lives. He does not disengage himself from it, he does not stand out; he is part of it. His starting point is within himself, in his own personal experience. He does not try to express what is in his mind: he rather attempt to evoke it [...]The Westerner reconstructs and recreates the outside world with the framework of his own thought. The Ethiopian starts from what is already in his mind and endeavors to transmit it by suggestion [...] the westerner would like to conceive truth and to demonstrate it; the [...] Ethiopian seeks to offer himself to it and to have it desired by others. The western world is the world of things, The Ethiopian world is the word of persons.

In the above dazzling comparison between the Ethiopians and the westerners what we see at front is the relation between four basic elements: *the author* that conceives himself as part of the society he lives in, *the social milieu* with which the author is engaged in, *the form* through which the author attempts to transmit what is in his mind as a suggestion not as an insult of condemnation, and *the subject* that the philosophy is concerned about. More than the elements, what is aspiring to know is the bond that interlaces them. As far as my understanding of the above quotation is concerned, *Ethics* is the bond that connects these elements.

Ethics, which is defined as “[a] defining property of the novel in terms of authorial responsibility, [...] the characters’ moral imagination, the exemplariness of the theme and topic; narrative form functions as a vehicle for

substantive ethical content” (Newoton,1995:9), is what marks Ethiopian philosophy and what should be the one that marks Ethiopian literature too. In the early periods of Ethiopian literature, this ethical bond between the author, the society, the form and content was very strong. However, since the third period of its development, it seems that it has gone astray. That is why I said we do not have Ethiopian literature in its strict sense in these particular periods because most of the literary works lack ethics in their way of presenting stories. Most of the authors do not respect the socio-cultural norms and values of the society in which they belong. They tell us stories that do not have any significance for the society. Characters in most of the literary works cannot serve as role models for readers, for they undermine national values. The essential element is lost, so we can say that we do not have Ethiopian literature in its strict sense.

Ethics as a typical element of Ethiopian literature is found well employed in early literary period of the history of Ethiopian literature. Incontestably, Fiker Eskemekabre is a good example.

5. Ethics in Fiker Eskemekabre

Fiker Eskemekabre, a bildungsroman, written by a prolific writer Haddis Alemayehu, is master of the masterpieces we have in Ethiopian literature. A lot has been said and a number of research works have been written on it since its publication in 1959, hence, I do not want to make a detail analysis on it. I should rather confine myself in to showing a significant example from the novel how ethics is maintained in it.

With regard to the author, it is obvious that he accomplished his textual as well as social responsibility. He writes what he knew and what he had been through. He portrayed characters that we still take as exemplars for our love and social critic. The content addresses social problem that need some sort of amendment. Above all these things, the form, i.e. the language used to express events and incidents in the novel signifies the ethical bond that exists between the author, the society, the content and the form. Even the bond that exists between the novel and Ethiopia readers and listeners (because it was narrated through the Ethiopian national radio more than three times, incidentally most Ethiopians know the narration than the novel per se), is this ethical bond.

Let me refer to one example that may elucidate how ethics was the concern of the author while writing his novel. Fitawurari Meshesha's wife W/ro is portrayed as an adulterous woman. Whenever her husband went away from home, she had a custom to go to the neighborhood and spend some time with

an identified (probably one of Meshesha's slaves) person, coupling. When the author relates her adultery with 'Buna Terie' (neighborhood call for coffee drink) and he says 'Bunna tetertew hedu' (she has gone for coffee drink) a reader automatically knows that she has gone for an affair with her an Unidentified sex partner. The author preferred to express this erotic act with such an expression because he doesn't want to violate the social ethics of the nation. In Ethiopian tradition sexual affairs are secret and private. In formal situations, people do not talk such 'taboo' issues in front of other people. Haddis, in his writing, tries to maintain this social value. Imagine how would such an act of a character can be expressed if the author were one in the present time, who deliberately eroticize everything.

6. Conclusion

So far an attempt is made to reveal how Ethiopian literature benefits and loses from globalization throughout its history of development. The Ethiopian identity of Ethiopian literature should be regained is what the paper was promoting for. And at least as a beginning, the identity can be derived from the collective social philosophy of the nation which prioritizes ethics. Ethics is what makes Ethiopian literature Ethiopian. Therefore, any kind of definition of this literature should conceal the essence of ethics in it.

Saying this, before I wind up let me bring my student's question here again, 'What is Ethiopian literature?' At this time, I have got the right answer. And, if I were in the class, I would tell him that Ethiopian literature is the one in which the author, the society, the form of the text and its content are interlinked to each other with a strong ethical bond.

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