

INTRODUCTION

In order to treat African indigenous literature in its own right, our main focus of attention should be on the established cultural traditions and historical experiences, together with those aspects of the social and political life of the Africans which are the most helpful sources of our inspiration and techniques. The transformation of African literatures from traditional form to high standard has its own well-founded historical reasons. It is necessary, therefore, to understand that the critical study of the African literary landscape requires setting out criteria for its evaluation. This view is gaining convincing ground in contemporary Africa that oral literature should not be judged by the criteria which have been used in the evaluation of non-African literatures and cultures, though considering universal similarities is of fundamental importance. In this connection, Palmer (1979: 2) argues that if the purpose of criticism is to display as accurately as possible the genuine quality of a work, then our aim should be to use criteria which will be the most useful in bringing out that genuine quality.

When we study folklore genres in a broader literary form, we reframe them to make our judgement and show their artistic functions in a particular light. By using certain reliable yardsticks, we can explore oral literature in order to construct the narrators' worldviews in a different way and develop our own sense of poetic beauty and identity. One of the central points I have given prominence is that oral tradition is also a kind of history about the past situations; and it is, therefore, not surprising to find it in the form of a historical structure which conforms to the generic Oromo model. Furthermore, literary tradition, like human history, is anecdotal in that it contains a particular amusing event which helps scholars construct new ideas and values. The way Oromo oral literary genres have been told thus inevitably reflects intriguing historical events, as well as the interests and motives of those traditional custodians (artists) who pass down the dramatic performances of their times to posterity. If our task is to enquire into the artistic sense and aesthetic world of African oral narrative, we must first and foremost convince ourselves that an oral text as an academic subject has its own poetic meaning and peculiar characteristics. Here, I have also suggested that a qualification of such belief is necessary because it avoids bewilderment and paves the way for drawing a concrete research strategy in this field of study. The new trend in Oromo oral

literary studies is to address the endangered treasured arts of the past within the framework of historical setting; and in the process, to unfold the untold stories. This may be seen, as it used to be, by certain individuals and groups, strange and disturbing. As many others, my effort is to recover the valuable literary culture that has been lost.

The aim of exploring oral literature in a contemporary setting is to transform it from abstract narrative to expressive form (intellectual discourse); and in this respect, it seems hard to make a distinction between the intriguing nature of oral art and modern art. In thematic and aesthetic terms, verbal art shares common ground with modern fictions simply because both are meant for teaching and entertaining through the medium of artistic language and images; which when combined, can create a social mirror and desirable effects. Through the historic moment, the language and character revelation may take a different form. We find in both, common characteristics: fitting descriptions, the portrayal of certain images relevant to social situations, within which the characters operate, and other creative techniques and devices. Surely it is possible to apply a modern style of writing to oral literature, but what is most important here is to try to distinguish the process by which each literary art comes into being, its specific function in a given space and time, and the context within which it is told or written. This is probably what makes us grasp the distinction between traditional arts and the elite literature (modern fiction). It is most likely that besides formal elements, the former involves national pride, ethical issues and identities; whereas the latter focuses mainly on formal elements such as characters, devices, plot, artistic merit and others.

The literate world has inherited a comprehensive body of knowledge from the pre-literate world of verbal communication. This compendium of oral tradition from whatever ultimate origin is practically universal in character both in time and space. Being subject to the skilled and the unskilled of those who pass down the tradition, Oromo oral literature has undergone continuous changes over the course of changing generations. These changes have significant effects on its functions and permanence as literary culture.

This work is the outcome of a growing sense that one of the defining characteristics of recent Oromo culture and literature has been its insistence on examining the *marginalized identity*, and

that literary culture as the quest for knowledge and identity empowerment, has come to be the focus of my concern. I have specifically chosen the representative genres and the historical moments as points of greater emphasis mainly because I believe that the comprehensive textual and contextual approach will inevitably lead me to a better understanding of the functions of this kind of literature, as well as its intriguing nature. The Oromo oral narrative is the representation of a new wave of cultural and literary movement that reflects post-modernism and contemporary critical methods in which the indigenous literary culture is resituated in the context of other modern literatures, without being dictated by the traditional assumptions based on rigid analyses; and which aims at developing the concept of cultural identity and democratic conduct. The work involves a broad interdisciplinary discourse of some of the vital issues concerning the greater sensitivity of representation, interpretation and evaluation of folklore genres. Oral narrative critics need to move beyond the stereotyped discourse and the worn generalizations about the image of the past. The aesthetic categories of Oromo verbal art still remain unknown to most modern critics, and it is, therefore, necessary to employ *New Historicism* or *deconstructive* approach to our study in which oral literary texts are regarded as a material product emerging out of social, cultural and political situations. My attempt is, therefore, to open up Oromo oral literary universe to readers, students and scholars and to explore the way the interplay of culture and oral literature has enabled the society to develop a complex social system characterized by collectivism and egalitarian norms. The exploration of the meanings and themes of oral narratives in a broader social context and the significant role the variant folklore genres play in maintaining collective wisdom, national identity, solidarity and traditional moral values are also points of great concern in this study.

The search for new ideas, the interpretation of cultural and literary events are ceaseless human activities and every step forward seeking alternative lifestyle and broadening knowledge demands a new way of thinking which enables man to re-assess the existing values and modes of behaviour. In every human civilization, the process of successful social transformation depends upon the creative needs of the new generations and their continuous effort to re-construct or recreate the wisdom of their ancestors, which inspires a greater sense of freedom, self-respect and dignity. This work presents a corpus of oral tradition of the *Gadaa* egalitarian movement without which the Oromo can hardly be understood as an independent nation in cultural terms. It discusses

the practical critique, the different ways in which oral literature can be evaluated and how this body of knowledge serves as a unifying and nationalizing factor when utilized by a marginalized nation seeking to establish cultural identity, emphasizing the investigation of the functions of various literary genres in cultural and historical situations. I think, the effort made to examine and clarify the new trends in scholarship and criticism will enrich our sense of the complexity of Oromo oral art and historical experience. Though each genre is discussed within the scope of its peculiar characteristics, my intention in broader terms is to discuss the universal and peculiar features of Oromo folklore and the way this body of knowledge functions as historical and cultural evidence. It seems to me most interestingly connecting the study of Oromo culture and literature in its general approach to a universal set of concerns; all of them related to human virtues and follies. In my argument, I have emphasized that the oral narrative tradition is constituted by poetic configurations and the effective aesthetic response can happen if the mode of analysis of these configurations takes into account the *interpretive dimensions* and *historical reception* as one of the vital criteria. The study of oral tradition requires an ability to give coherent shape to each literary genre by redefining and interpreting its artistic role so that it reflects contemporary needs and outlook. The primary object of the work is contextual investigation (*Critical Practice*) and appreciation rather than *Critical Theory*, though the two are always inseparable. Its focus is not on the actual oral performances, rather to explain the relevance, themes and aesthetic merits of those performances. The “Appendix” provides suggestions for the literary development and adaptation. In this section, I have tried to introduce Oromo “Literary Terms” for the first time just to suggest the way readers, students and researchers might profitably work on oral literature, and to show the practical relevance of tropes in Oromo literary discourse and the major role they play in a critical evaluation.

In the constantly changing circumstances, the Oromo oral narrative can continue to have a powerful effect if the succeeding generations not merely respond to it, but also appreciate its social value. The way in which the oral art *satisfies the expectations* of contemporary generations obviously shows its historical importance; and this importance is validated by its poetic character. The effective relationship between the narrator and the audience can occur as long as the former depends to a greater extent on the social meaning. This means, he or she needs to discover the interest of the consumers (audience) and project their non-stopping dreams, visions, and then reconstruct the horizon of the expectations. A better understanding of the way the oral narrative was

perceived in the past would help us to develop concrete opinions concerning literary tradition and then locate and/or select the representative genres that are of contemporary relevance.

The historical dimension of literature, its eventful continuity that is lost in traditionalism as in positivism, can meanwhile be recovered only if the literary historian finds points of its intersection....The task of literary history is thus only completed when literary production is not only represented synchronically and diachronically in the succession of its systems, but also seen as a special history in its unique relationship (Leitch, 2001: 1563).

The poetic patterning of Oromo folklore narrative entails two transformational dimensions: namely *syntagmatic* (horizontal) and *paradigmatic* (vertical) relations. Both the *horizontal* (interpersonal or producer-receiver relations) and the *vertical* (historical and cultural events) changes can reasonably be evaluated by considering the *diachronic* facts and the *synchronic* literary situations. The establishment of a cross-sectional analysis will certainly create a concrete background for our study. In a given historical time, a representation of literary culture can possibly be judged if our evaluative technique takes into account the horizontal and the vertical factors of the distant past and present, which determine the direction of the development of traditional literature.

Oral literature is a medium for transmitting historical knowledge and as an inseparable part of history in the making it has a timeless quality in that it reflects truths of all time of a particular historic moment. In terms of the reconstruction process, the Oromo verbal narrative deals with general historic conditions and cultural events, a sense of reality of those events that can validate the continuity of traditions and history, the relationship of the two, and the way they serve as literary tools that help manipulate the images of the past. In the analysis of this work, I have employed the following methods and approaches as the bases for my argument about its artistic value and timeless essence: 1) socio-cultural perspective, 2) literary diachronic perspective (historical dimension), 3) literary synchronic perspective, and 4) linguistic perspective. In chapter 1, I have broadly defined literary genres within the context of social and cultural setting. Chapter 2 is devoted to the historical factors (diachronic aspects) that gave rise to the transformation of Oromo oral tradition to literary form (written form). Chapter 3 explores the way oral art involves interpretive free-play or deconstructive criticism (synchronic dimension). Chapter 4 deals with how

socio-cultural environment is affected due to powerful sophistry and moral sinking. In chapters 5 and 6, I focused on linguistic characteristics and socio-cultural aspects. In chapter 7, I have endeavoured to examine in more detail the functions of protest narrative within the framework of historical situations (diachronic dimensions), emphasizing the vibrant voices of war times. In general, I have attempted to create balanced approach concentrating on academic discourse.

In the ‘*literary diachronic*,’ I have attempted to have a look at the past socio-cultural and political background of the Oromo with reference to the *Gadaa* democratic tradition, together with the factors that have contributed to literary stagnation, the changes or the shifting of discourse after the conquest of the 1880s, and the way those changes have reduced literary culture to a more static existence. As far as the ‘*literary synchronic*’ approach is concerned, my prime interest is to examine the dynamics of the oral text within the context of the current social and political order. In order to illustrate the idea of “*poetic free-play*,” I have tried to interpret/deconstruct the traditional values of the *Gadaa* time, the power relations, as well as the images of the remote past and place them in the modern social and political setting. This is how the diachronic approach is built on the synchronic explanation of the discipline.

The synchronic description envisages not only the literary production of any given stage but also that part of the literary tradition which for the stage in question has remained vital....Any contemporary stage is experienced in its...dynamics, and on the other hand, the historical approach...is concerned not only with changes but also with continuous, enduring, static factors (Leitch, 2001: 1259-1260).

In a linguistic perspective, this work examines the ‘*poetic character*’ of folklore literature and investigates the effects of the sounds- metrical phonology or phonological properties (syllabic structures and rhythmic patterns) and the systematic disposition of the constituents or *syntactic structure* in their parallel relations. The poetic character of the verbal art includes the *expressive feature*- the changing of abstract ideas into literary form, the *stylistic features*-essential ingredients of discourse analysis or the artistic use of language, *the formal principle/organic unity*-the interconnection of events and the revelations of characters, and the discovery of *cultural semantics* or contextual-centred *poetic meanings*.

In the assessment of a work of literature, we have to, first and foremost, clarify our minds and discuss the principles on which our judgement is based. Throughout this work, my emphasis is on the prominence of *interpretation/deconstruction*-openness to new possibilities or open-ended intellectual discourse, *reconstruction/recreation* and *adaptation* (adjustment to modern outlook); and in doing this, I have combined “*Critical Theory*” or an inquiry into the nature and value of literature with “*Critical Practice*”- an inquiry into literary merit or aesthetic quality. In order to avoid fuzziness, the theoretical explanation of each chapter is illustrated by concrete examples, and in such a situation, there is always analytical shift from theory to practice and back again. Moreover, I am less attracted to theories and theoreticians of the more abstract kind in which the issue of creative manipulations of the oral text is hardly addressed.

Oromo literary scholars need to have a new interest in the hitherto neglected area of study, the verbal art, which could serve as a broad academic subject that may help the young generation to evaluate how the traditional way of life of the past and the African sense of national character unfold in terms of building indigenous values and democracies. We can rarely see our concrete image and our place in a civilized world if we fail to go back in time and study who we really are and unless we succeed in appreciating the instructive experiences of centuries and their aesthetic force. In order for the Oromo to become culturally more dynamic, the creative work of the traditional past needs to be cultivated in such a way that it can capture the attention of the changing generations and serve the purpose of modernity. In other words, the *interpretive response* to Oromo oral literature is to address the interdisciplinary approach which enables us to explore the unknown territories of the human imagination, the search for identities and social meanings.

In his famous lines of African literary criticism, Lindfors (1972: 223) has compared African folklore with the vast uncultivated and mysterious terrain of the continent containing the undiscovered and neglected large quantities of valuable minerals. Like African diamond fields and gold mines, the Oromo oral tradition is a storehouse of knowledge capable of yielding great riches if it is critically studied and properly treated. It should be perceived as a social dynamism that has taken shape in a stylistic language and hopefully its critical study opens up more literary space, the possibility of making new ways of intelligent enquiries and looking for reasonable solutions. As a performance tradition, the verbal art is linked with empirical realities of the social structure in which the lore of the people functions as a vehicle for the transmission of values and a facilitator of

smooth and effective social interaction. Hence, what the whole of my argument reinforces here is the need for objective approach to the study of Oromo folk narrative and this simply means moving beyond the formalist criticism which does not give attention to the interplay between culture, history, politics and the verbal art.

During the twentieth century, modern literatures have undergone drastic changes, but these new trends have not been observed in the field of folklore literature in Africa, particularly in Oromiyaa for the fact that it has not been embraced by modern literary fiction or more appropriately by a literature of the elite. It is for this reason that oral literature remained in its old-fashioned form and has almost unable to move beyond the fixed way of traditional past. Until quite recently, Oromo oral literature was discussed with no serious investigation of the aesthetic qualities and creative aspects of the poetic language. In recent decades, that is, after the 1960s, the folklorists, especially the native researchers seemed to have realized the importance of focusing on the deeper thematic content and the cultural meanings of the oral texts. Moreover, a systematic survey of the whole body of literature may create a new literary dynamism that can contribute to the perpetuity of indigenous values and egalitarian traditions. It is, therefore, imperative to discuss the oral art in terms of historic and social forces, which are often neglected or avoided.

In treating this work, I have concentrated on the re-evaluation of the traditional narratives that have shaped the study of the Oromo in the past and my emphasis is particularly on some major cultural, political and historical factors concerning the study of oral tradition, together with the critical issues that govern its emergence and development as a field of scholarship. In order to arouse intellectual interest, I have selected some representative cultural traditions and folklore genres, which characterize Oromo identity and egalitarian norms. Oral literature has now been studied in a scholarly fashion in almost all parts of the world and this allows us to confidently state that we are dealing with a broad spectrum of issues and human experiences of the past and their relevance to the present time. Another dimension to the issue of studying indigenous narrative (oral tradition) in a contemporary context is not merely to evoke scholarly discourse that can generate the rediscovery of identity and values, but also to produce a document that helps to create an essential source for reference and further research.

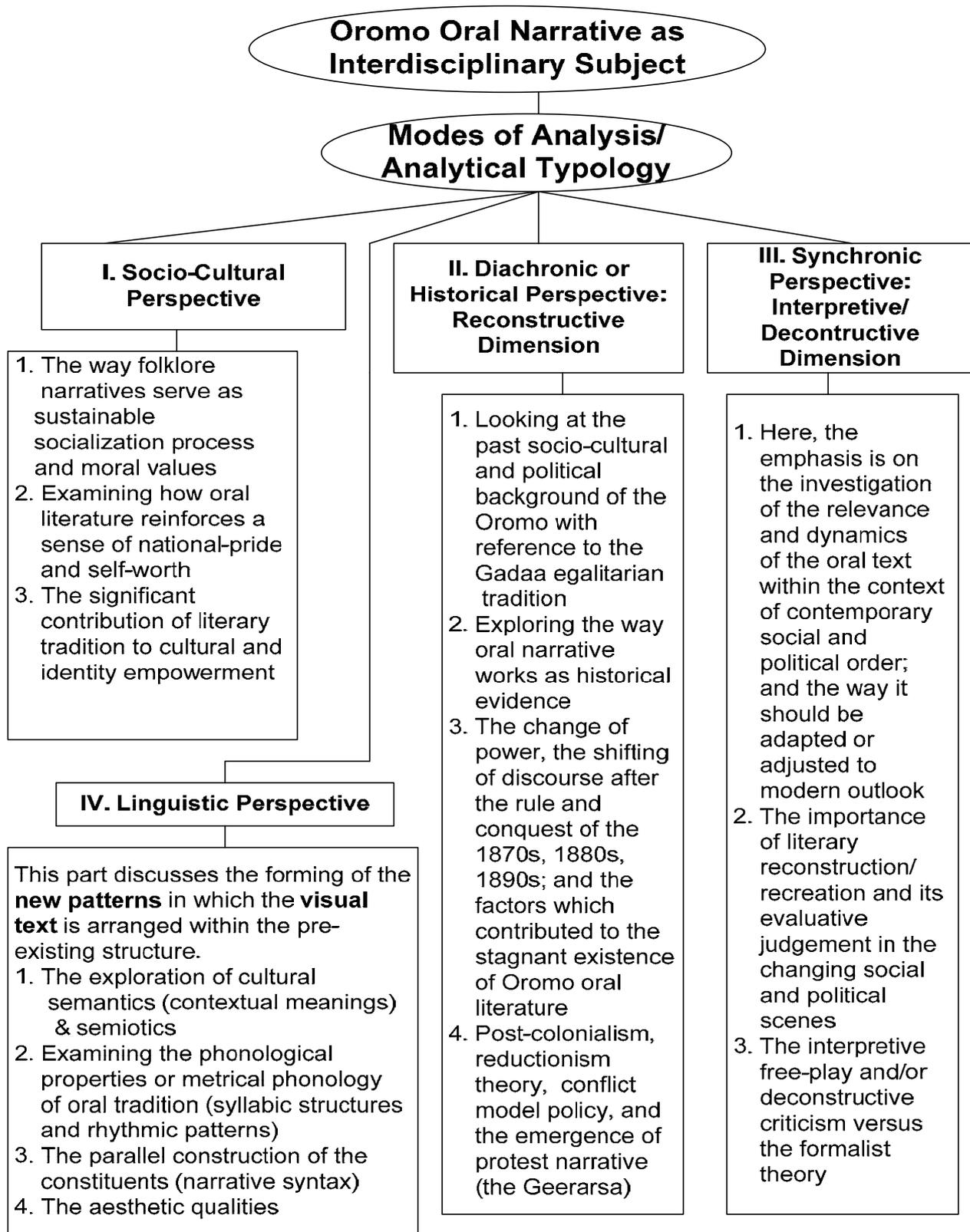


Figure 1 : Aesthetic Response to Oromo Oral Tradition

Oral Narrative Tradition as Field of Scholarship: Meta-
Communication and Meta-Linguistic Approach to Literary
Genres in Socio-Cultural and Historical Environment

1. The Features of Oral Literature: Literary Genres as Transparent Medium

In order to study the Oromo oral narrative as field of scholarship, each literary form needs to be examined in terms of its own particular orientation and cultural origin. To achieve this end, exploring the fundamental points underlined by Ben-Amos (1977), concerning the three basic elements or features of folklore forms, namely *cognitive*, *pragmatic* and *expressive*, is of capital importance. These sets of features, which constitute cultural conceptions and striking metaphors, are regarded by the native speakers as the primary qualities of each verbal genre. In order for the micro-structural interpretive approach to Oromo oral literary studies to be successful, it seems vital to identify the compelling literary tools which serve as the cornerstone of folklore research. In this chapter, I have attempted to discuss the above prominent concepts which provide us with a proper understanding of the functions of the genres, together with the creative genius of the oral artists and the circumstances within which that genius operates.

Folklorists have employed a variety of formal approaches to literature as a corpus of genres. In the analysis of form and content of a literary text, we need to identify to which genre the message belongs. A concrete cultural meaning is expressed in a particular generic term when it is placed in a given social structure. As the spoken word of oral literature came into existence in history, literary forms such as folktales, proverbial lore, riddles, folk songs, poems, etc., also came into being as part of human civilization and they are meant to justify the age of reason and artistic pursuits. “Genres have histories. We need to study such histories because it is important to recognize that the naming and identification of genre types is itself a historically relative process, and the application of genre names often shows...instability over the centuries” (Furniss, 1996: 266).

A genre may be defined as a cultural bound concept characterized by stylistic features into which the category of the work of art is based. It contains or generates the social meaning which is open to interpretation or deconstruction; and in this perspective, a genre involves diachronic and synchronic dimensions, thematic variation and aesthetic merit. In every society, the meaning of a

given genre depends upon cultural conventions and this is often indicated by the fact that a name for it exists in a vernacular language. In order for a researcher to capture the local or national meaning assigned to a text and put emphasis on the contextual factors, he or she should focus on the ethnic conception of the genre and its specific character. For this reason researchers are always obliged to take generic identification and grouping into account whenever they study folk-literature.

If the comparative study of oral literature is to involve contemporary world situations based on formal criteria or the use of language on the basis of traditional standards of correctness, researchers often prefer to construct classifications that would be valid both at local and international level. By and large every culture has its own yardstick for interpreting the natural world in its basic taxonomies of genres. Of all the reasons for selecting and/or employing a particular genre, the way it serves as a representative image, whether it is supposed to have national and international significance and its relevance to the changing social and political circumstances are what interests most folklorists.

In this section we shall examine the way folklore forms are perceived, the pragmatic aspects, that is, how they are performed in a particular cultural situation and the formulation or expressive feature. The elusive materials of folklore literature can reasonably be defined in terms of the formal genres into which they fall. Folklorists generally agree on certain broad stratification of folk literary genres. These may be divided into five parts; namely *folk rituals* (pilgrimage, Thanksgiving ceremonies/festivals, rites of passage), *witticism* (proverbs and riddles), *folk song narratives*, *poems* and *folktales* (fables, parables, myths, legends).

The investigation of the methods and principles that govern literary tradition in human communication and their functions in a specific cultural context are points of greater concern for folklorists. Whenever we study folk literary forms, probing into their identification as well as the exploration of expressive and social performance aspects enables us to grasp a vivid picture of events and characters, together with how the themes of Oromo oral literature raises the most intriguing issues.

The cognitive features consist of names, taxonomy, and commentary by which a society labels, categorizes, and interprets its forms of folklore within a wider system of discourse.

The expressive features are the styles, the contents and structures which characterize each

genre and the social features are the constituents of the situational contexts of each folklore performance (Ben-Amos in Lindfors, 1977: 2).

Ben-Amos emphasizes the way the categorization of oral literary forms occurs in accordance with the thematic domains of a text. A society usually classifies verbal communication into three ways: first, identifying and interpreting literary forms or genres within a wider ethnographic system (cognitive), second, performing them in a particular social context (pragmatic), third, formulating the oral art using poetic languages that are peculiar to them (expressive). The taxonomy of oral art becomes coherent and valid if stylistic, thematic and contextual aspects are taken into consideration. The proper perception of specialized phrases or expressions, their general functions in a particular verbal text, and the symbolic meanings of these groups in a given society are the defining features of forms of the verbal genres.

It is evident that the generic terms of African narratives are also closely connected with the concept of culture of a particular folk group. The semantic constituents the Oromo assign to literary tradition create certain specific features, which according to the native speakers are part of the aesthetic qualities of each verbal art. The symbolic meanings of a given literary form in the culture of the society define the characteristic feature of a genre and its significance. For example, if we examine the following three proverbs: 1) *Kormi qaata du'ee warri saaqama laala*, literally “the owners look at the stripes of colour of the bull, which died long time ago,” 2) *Abbaa oorruu jaldeessi keessaa baafate*, “the owner of the farmland is evicted by the monkey,” and 3) *gowwaan bakka ittibade warra seeya*, “a fool thinks that the place where he lost himself is his home,” we see that the Oromo emphasize the element of *figure-headed* in their term for *kormi qaata du'ee* (died years ago); and they stress the constituent of *oppression* in the expression *jaldeessi keessaa baafate* (evicted by the monkey). *Foolishness has no blessing* and the fools always lose because they are incapable of understanding the right way to go. In their name for the expression *bakka ittibade warra seeya*, literally “he sees the place where he lost himself as his home,” the Oromo emphasize the element of the absence of self-respect. Error of judgement and irrational behaviour are often rectified by evoking traditional values and norms. Thus, the symbolic meaning this proverb conveys has ornamental value in a cultural and social setting. The basis for placing forms of folk-literature in appropriate categories is the distinctive features of each genre, and each feature signifies its social value. In every situation, folk narrative is considered the facilitator of a general way of life.

Therefore, what counts most in the final analysis is the beneficial effect of traditional literature upon the audience (readers or listeners); and whether that effect brings about moral, cultural, social or political transformation.

On a *pragmatic* level (performance feature), functional differences are observable between the various folklore forms of the Oromo, and these differences can clearly be seen when they are performed in the specific cultural and social environment. The *suunsuma* (satirical/humorous poem) are told for entertainment when people are free from work; the *mammaaka/mammaaksa* (proverb) on occasions of argument, in times of seeking sound judgements, commenting on unfairness, criticizing or correcting erroneous views; the *Durduri* (the trickster tale/fable story) is narrated in the context of unfolding deception, villainy and social corruption; the *weedduu hujii* (work song) is sung to reinforce belonging together, solidarity and friendship; the *weedduu jaalalaa* (love lyric) is sung to provoke romantic love feelings; the *geerarsa* (heroic tale) is narrated in the context of promoting a sense of patriotism and a strong national feeling.

As far as the formulations of genres are concerned, the Oromo generally recognize folklore forms with rhythmic language, as for instance the *weedduu sabaa* (folk song), the *suunsuma* (satirical/humorous poem) and the *geerarsa*; whereas prose narratives are recognized as the *mammaaka* (proverb) and the *oduu/odeessii durii* (traditional story); both types are told by the adult groups, especially the experienced senior members of the society. Within these general categories they identify several genres according to contexts and themes. For instance, the second genres, proverbs and traditional stories, deal with discourses on serious public concern uttered by wise ancestors, literary historians and prominent political figures. It is an attempt to stress the importance of building the society free from error of judgement, corruption and misconduct.

The Formulation of Verbal Narrative: The Expressive Aspect

The specific terms assigned to different folklore genres make up a variety of abstract knowledge (accumulated experience) concerning the structures, the substance, styles and the entire construction of the oral art. In terms of the socio-cultural reality of folklore narrative and performance, generic terms serve as image forming references through which a system of cultural order takes place, and in which the new concepts are systematically related and interpreted within a

given historic time. The changing of abstract ideas into coherent and meaningful artistic communication demands the effective use of expressive aspects.

This abstract knowledge is also a source of ideas which enables speakers to generate folkloric expressions anew, expressing them in appropriate situations with adequate ability. But the translation [interpretation] of these abstract thoughts into dynamic communication requires the utilization of expressive features....Such features are inherent in the texts spoken in society. They identify a particular expression as belonging to a generic category and communicate ideas in culturally recognizable terms (Ben-Amos in Lindfors, 1977: 8).

Obviously, the folklore texts are endowed with what is known as expressive features; and these features which are already spoken in a society need to be carefully explored. The identification of a particular metaphoric expression of oral narrative as part of a generic category and the way it conveys ideas in culturally accepted terms, require a skilful explanation. One of the most obvious and recognized methods of formulating folk genres includes the exploration of rhythmic languages as for instance in Oromo *mammaaka* (proverb), *weedduu sabaa* (folk song) and the *walaloo* (poem); and the utilization of constituent categories (words and phrases) in parallel structures, and this will be discussed later in chapters 5 and 6. The rhyming words of verse lines in poetry and songs have musical tastes wherein such poetic terms differentiate them from other ordinary languages. The recitations of rhyming segments have a pattern of accents and beats and these should be thoroughly examined through the appropriate formulation of verbal arts. Therefore, the expressive feature defines oral tradition as the product of the verbal artist's imagination operating on his/her perceptions, thoughts and feelings. It deals with oral narrator's individual vision or state of mind.

The Formal Properties of Oral Art: Stylistic Criticism

In speaking or writing, a person actually develops a manner of linguistic articulation so that the audience can sense the aesthetic taste of a work of art. The style is thus the way the narrators or writers express themselves in poetic words. It is a variation in speaking or writing techniques in which the information or what has been said is presented so as to gain popular response of the living audience. Since every human utterance represents a concrete idea, the abstract work of literature

cannot be imagined unless a collection of words having no poetic sense are accepted as literary works. Stylistics is commonly thought of as the employment of linguistic techniques and methods to the writing or analysis of a work of literature. Macleod (2006) has stressed that stylistics is simply a way of letting us see how language is put to work in the analysis of literary works. In terms of discourse analysis, the main purpose of stylistic writing is to show how the organic unity and character of any literature is a matter of artistic use of language.

The poetic character of the oral text and the performance features which distinguish folk literary tradition from casual language comprise what is known as stylistic qualities of folklore expressions. On the one hand, the figurative vocabularies of oral art represent measures of derivation from the literal sense of communication, but at the same time they reflect attempts made to address the cultural convention and ideal norms of performance for each genre on the other. “While there is a personal style in the delivery of folklore, it is subject to the cultural constraints and conception of excellence in narrative and poetic performance” (Ben-Amos, 1977: 12). Therefore, the stylistic terms a folklorist scholar employs are the aesthetic ideas a society has about oral narrative. Folk singers are able to reproduce such ideas by the use of phonic features (or production of sounds), selection of words, and mimetic based on dramatic performance that generate social meanings (see Chapters 5 and 6).

African oral literature as historical art brings to light human glories, plights, conflicts, alternative values, the way people fight for survival and their search for new identity. Hence, the language of oral literary criticism must include contradictions and resolutions, good and evil, what is beautiful and what is ugly. Oral literary work becomes fascinating, compelling, and is capable of arousing aesthetic experience so long as we fully respond to its artistic creation in various ways. We weigh the qualities of verbal art if our response is the result of the overall impression it leaves on us. Thus, it is always necessary to evaluate ourselves whether we are capable of going through a multiplicity of aesthetic experience to obtain a fine achievement or whether we stand outside and act as subjective commentators who care not about the artistic integrity of the subject.

A major concern of stylistic criticism is to give due emphasis to the aesthetic aspects of literary works. It takes cognizance of the fact that a work of art must be objectively analysed and evaluated in terms of an aesthetically sound set of parameters, and that the

student of literature should be trained to take stock of these parameters if his study of literature is to be satisfactory and intellectually challenging (Ngara, 1982: 34).

When we talk of aesthetic parameters, we are mainly concerned with the artistic explanation of the subject and what is idiosyncratic about a traditional narrator. In this situation, stylistic criticism is not merely confined to conventional type of style based on linguistic sophistication and idiosyncrasies, which characterize the ingenuity or uniqueness of a writer or researcher. We can further argue that stylistic strategy is a pragmatic approach that defines the essence of oral narrative in particular and a work of literature in general.

Language is a medium in which the writer's fertile imagination becomes successful; and the expression usually forces the writer to broaden the limits of style beyond the surface level of explanation so that attaining the new level of utilization that evoke the essence of literary work would be possible. The writer or researcher who aspires to share the literary world with others often strives to achieve this end. The style an individual narrator, singer or writer employs can be defined in terms of its diction, the structure of syntax (the way parallel constituents are constructed and related), the characteristic use of tropes, phonology and other formal features that he/she thinks are pertinent to a particular literary text. In general, the "formal properties" or what is commonly known as 'stylistic features' are the artistic use of languages in folklore literature; and they serve as a vehicle for literary expressions. In this broad definition, the stylistic features may be called the *essential ingredients of discourse analysis* wherein the linguistic components and patterns in a given oral text are colourfully presented so that they produce the intended meanings, poetic sense and literary effects.

The text and performance features which distinguish folklore from everyday language, and folklore communication from conversational speaking, comprise stylistic qualities of verbal expressions....While there is a personal style in the delivery of folklore, it is subject to the cultural constraints and conception of excellence in narrative and poetic performance. Hence, the aesthetic ideas a society has about folklore are expressed in the stylistic terms (Lindfors, 1977: 12)

The style of a work of art is a variation in which information is presented to create artistic quality and enthusiasm. In the *weedduu hujii* (work songs) and the *suunsuma* (satirical/humorous poem) of the Oromo, the poets and singers recite the lines in chorus with variety of tones of voice. In the first and the third, the voice of the oral artist is high in pitch, the former being faster in speed than the latter. In the second, the voice is mild; and in the fourth, low pitch is used. The phonic stylistic features—that is, the production of sounds with the melodious variety, the diction of words or phrases as well as mimetic features (or dramatic aspects) form great emotional excitement in the audience. In the *geerarsa* poetry (heroic tale), the stylistic feature takes a different form in a sense that the hero singer walks around with gesticulation and dramatic movement in which the actions suit the sounds. The recitation of the *geerarsa* is high in pitch. Therefore, mimetic style and the audible poetic expression create the essence of this poetry.

The aesthetic ideas about oral literature and its full appreciation are expressed in the stylistic vocabularies. A literary work becomes artful if varieties of techniques are applied to analyze the genres and the employed styles are culturally defined. The most important features of the narrative style of Oromo the *walaloo* (poems) and the *faaruu sabaa* (folk songs) are repetition of parallel constituents. Thus, the performance of various verbal texts, especially the rhyming poems, is stylistically defined by phonic aspects wherein the recurrence of parallel elements and the changing of the tempo (speed and loudness or slowness of voice) result in the aesthetic value of folklore. In the *mammaakaa* genre, the verbal artist employs a method of conciseness (see chapter 5) of a language in which the outstanding social problems are discussed in a veiled satirical vocabulary. In the *Durduri*-“trickster tales” (chapter 4), the mode of narration is based on creating suspense and the folk artist describes the events in a subtle technique in which he revolves around the chosen images; and each image represents the “falling apart” of the characters in the story; and this will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.

The Content and Thematic Variation

The content of a work of literature must be viewed in terms of a complex system of human relationship that has been established through language and is only definable within the scope of general aesthetic effect. Obviously, a language is not merely a corpus of vocabularies devoid of

thematic material and a synthesis of realities; rather, it is a social product and treasured possession of the living men in which words, phrases and sentences are systematically interconnected to describe the physical world. As Abad (1978: 7) has shown, the specific subject matter is the special product having the capacity of producing certain peculiar effects. In a narrow sense, the content of a work of art can be defined as the subject matter of discourse; that is, the whole idea or information contained in a literary text so as to express objective reality. In order for the themes to be selected as appropriate for folklore texts, factors that govern cultural conventions must be taken into account. This is so because the adequacy of the chosen themes is often the indication of the meaning a society gives to the genre, as for example in the Oromo *mammaaka* (see classification in chapter 5). It is clearly evident that not all traditional knowledge and socio-historical experiences are suitable for prose narratives and poems. Thus, the special emphasis and the recognition the native speakers give to a specific genre, together with its symbolic value in the culture determine its qualification to be selected as a theme in a verbal text. The stratification of the cumulative experiences into thematic domains is the direct reflection of social and cultural conceptions. For instance, in the portrayal of the animals' world (see Trickster Tales in chapter 4) as an appropriate thematic content of folk narrative, is related to the symbolic or satirical importance of a particular animal in socio-political situation. The animal characters such as the fox, hyena, lion, snake, rat, monkey, ox, and many others are used in fable stories (the *Durdur*) on the basis of their representative significance in the socio-historical context of the Oromo. Each prose narrative is ordered according to the culture and tradition of the society. Both the themes of entertainment and the ones that need seriousness (instructive genres) are usually free from cultural, religious and ritual constraints. Those subject matters which have religious and political meanings occur in rituals (*falata*), heroic poems (the *geerarsa*), trickster narratives (the *Durdur*), satirical and humorous poems (the *suunsuma*).

In literary works, the narrators or writers usually build the thematic material of a particular subject of discourse in different ways. In some cases, there is a general theme or motif upon which other minor themes are based. In such a situation, there exists unity in diversity. For instance, in Oromo fable stories “deception and the use of ruse” stands out as a dominant common theme, but each story has its own central idea that has been developed within the situational context of that particular narrative. This means the narrator has constructed the tales or stories in such a way that

they can have unifying connecting links as well as thematic variations; and this is one type of unity in variety.

“Folklore does not present the entire gamut of cultural ideas and actions of the society, but selected domains of themes which are deemed suitable for particular genres” (Ben-Amos in Lindfors, 1977: 17). This shows that a content of a literary text is the substance or subject matter, which is the core of the component parts. For instance, the genre of the *geerarsa* (epic poem) 26 portrays that the image of “land expropriation” and the *gabbaar* (serfdom) system reduced the population to wanderers. Thus, the central point in the term for the genre *bara baraan joore kaa*, literally “I became a wanderer every year,” constitutes the main part of the poem.

We have seen that the treatment of the themes of a particular subject of oral literature needs to be carefully explored because the choice of each theme and its relevance to a certain situation is always based on social, cultural and historical factors. This is to say each expression is the reflection of cultural communication. The substance of the genres which are related to crises, frustrations, euphoria, ruse, solidarity, political and religious implications occur in the contexts of cultural expressions such as love, panegyric, ritual, satirical and humorous songs; as well as proverbs, riddles, epic and fable narratives.

The thematic domains and the representation of characters are reflections of social realities and historical events. The method of using selective human and animal characters and their symbolic significance in the cultural life of traditional society characterize Oromo folklore. A great emphasis on the repetition and perpetual continuity of certain symbolic images create deeper meanings that convey the most instructive experiences; and this is how verbal arts achieve their aesthetic force.

The Formal Principle (Organic Unity) and the Problems of Formalist Theory

Any literary art needs to be united as one entity. Like the higher organism in which the function of every part of the body depends upon one another, the intended internal unity of oral tradition is attained so long as each constituent remains interdependent; and it is these interconnections of components and relations of characters that constitute organic cohesion or unity.

If however, the interdependence of elements ceases to exist, achieving literary perfection seems to have hardly occurred. The inner organization of a given text, whether folklore or modern literature, must encompass a diversity within its unity; that is, the greater the complexity of the integral parts, the more the literary work appeals to the readers and gains artistic excellence.

The term 'form,' which is interchangeably used with 'structure,' has been derived from the Latin word "forma," and is identical with the word 'idea' or a critical central concept in Greek. In its wider application, a form of a work of art is the "principle" that determines the way the external and internal structure are organized or arranged into a whole and this includes cohesiveness and patterning. It is a term, which shows the particular way a literary work is presented in accordance with the standard of correctness. As Abrams (1993: 72) has noted, "all critics agree that a form is not simply a fixed container, like a bottle, into which the content or subject matter of literature is poured." The form or structure is defined by several scholars and writers according to their specific preferences, field of interests and theoretical orientation.

Okpewho's research (1979) demonstrates convincingly that until recently almost all the genres of African traditional literature were studied exclusively by classical anthropologists and art historians. He has expressed his discontent that such traditional study was unable to go beyond identifying literary culture by its origin or distribution. Okpewho further argues that the inadequate attempt made by the traditionalists failed to get to the roots of the aesthetic principles on which the oral literature was executed. More precisely, what he calls the '*blanket theories*' that had been employed focused on exotic appeal with little or no substance.

The challenge facing folklorists lies in their failure to develop new ways of exploring the organic unity of oral narrative. Most critics and literary historians have failed to recognize oral tradition as a masterpiece and vital literature. One of the main reasons for its exclusion in modern literary work is the conventional approach, which does not give much consideration to the shifting of emphasis. Researchers and scholars usually agree on the "formal principles" of folklore narratives, but at the same time disagree on the extent to which they are applied in a specific social environment. This leads us to raise the issue concerning the discriminatory nature of the human mind in which the application of these principles often lacks balance. In such a situation, the formal principles such as unity are far from complete. The reason is that some principles are either denied or ignored by an individual writer; and in this case, aesthetic disaster becomes the result. If a writer

or researcher gives great importance to “formalist theory” of folklore analysis rather than focusing on the ‘substance,’ and if he/she applies this method as the sole criterion for achieving artistic quality, then that work of art remains unsuccessful as form in a true sense.

Modern research on literary narratives developed in relation to several factors: the gradual abandonment of impressionism in literary studies in favour of more objective methods, the rise of modern linguistics...and the prevalent ambiance of interdisciplinary in the social sciences, which encourage methodological and conceptual cross-fertilization (Bal, 2004: 25).

In the study of contemporary poetics, the concept of oral literary genre has in fact assumed new importance, not, of course, in the same way as the prescriptive set of rules or *minimal units* (*fixities* of ideas) of the traditional past, but the continuous shift in the method of critical theory to critical practice (expressive orientation) has brought about a drastic change both in the conception and the labelling of literary genres. In a modern setting, a folklore genre is understood as a set of cultural norms and people’s expectations and the structure of our reading and writing of oral texts should essentially be based on these broad concepts. The exploration of a particular genre in cultural and historical environment always allows us to perceive variations in the use of convention and come up with fruitful analysis. The structuralist (formalist) preoccupation with *static conception* of oral literature gives little or no account of its dynamic role. “Structuralism tends to present a static conception of its field of analysis which may be a necessary function of its effort to formalize its subject of study, with the result that its principles and categories- in the study of narrative, for instance often appear inadequate to account for the dynamics of texts” (Todorov, 1992: xvi). If the analysis of folklore literature is reduced to a few formulas or rules without foregrounding the notion of a narrator, it will gradually be changed into a cliché literature-the literature taken away or removed from its context and denying its narrator altogether.

“Contemporary criticism has grown dissatisfied with modern formalist and even post-modern structuralist impulses which have periodized literature into *static worldviews* and ignored the problems of poetic interrelationships in their commitment to the autotelic poetic structure” (Bové, 1980: 1). In a modern world where the work of art is viewed as something which is created in a vacuum, it is hardly possible to open up the horizon of social meaning which is explicated in a literary work. Formalism theory emphasizes the *self-referentiality* of literature foreclosing any

effort to understand the work of art in terms of history and the specific intention of the narrator or producer. It has failed to recognize the dynamic nature of our world and the way literature functions as a representation of that dynamism. It is for this reason that it has raised a force of literary scholars against its criticism.

Some Western intellectuals, especially the Americans, have confronted the theoretical problems of the modern and post-modern formalists. For instance, Walter Jackson Bate in “*The Burden of the Past*,” Harold Bloom in “*The Anxiety of Influence and a Map of Misreading*,” and Paul de Man in “*Blindness and Insight*,” have criticised the position that formalism which claims to be New Criticism is unable to develop a critical approach to modern literary studies and the diverse ways of analysis. These critics have emphasized the awareness of history and the poetic inheritance of that historical time. “In fact, to different degrees, they all deny the possibility of separating history and interpretation....A survey of their approaches to this relationship not only suggests some of the reasons for its necessity, but also points toward the failure of traditional positivistic histories to treat adequately literary language” (Bove’, 1980: 1-2). Like other verbal arts, the periodization of Oromo literary tradition into “*static monuments*,” and the problem of recognizing the necessary relationship between literary interpretation and history have relegated this popular narrative to local utterance. Bate’s research enables us to examine critically the responses of many *burdened generations of critics and readers* to their historical situations. His criticism not merely focuses on the problem of *interpretive response* to literary works, but how these responses have failed because of their deviation from the *most essential and the most painful* investigation. The immense foreign influence, the loss of self-confidence of the natives and their deficiency of explaining rich cultural heritage of the past have inevitably led to poetic decline in Oromiyaa. If we increase our ingenuity of expression and continue to explore our heritage, then, the coming generations will not be the *passive victims of circumstances*.

The formalists believe that focusing on the literary elements alone can lead us to discover the artistic quality of literary tradition and they do not often give attention to historical and social contexts. According to the formalist scholars, the underlying meanings of a work of literature is unfolded so long as its formal elements (plot, character, setting, diction, imagery, structure, point-of-view, etc) are met rather than considering other issues such as history, social, political or ideological. The overriding concern of the formalist critic is thus how language can effectively be

deployed in literature and its typical character is that it subordinates or avoids social realities and historical interpretation, or in a broader sense the contextual study of oral narrative. It gives more significance to the traditional rules, correct arrangement and the general appearance of the text. This theory, which originated in Russia, stresses the prominence of ‘formal patterns’ of literature by excluding its subject matter, cultural values and the extrinsic value of folklore language other than the correlation of linguistic constituents and symbols (or formal features). This has been one of the major problems in the study of Oromo oral literature.

The thematic features of oral tradition cannot be realized without taking into consideration the significant role culture plays in the forming of core images. The formulation of the sequence of episodes (plot) out of the subject matter and the relations of characters to the actions are always subject to the theory of literary creativity, social conditions, the pertaining of perceptions of folk art and the poetic form of that oral repertoire.

The development of the central idea of folklore from the fragmented whole into an ordered work of art and the interplay between the characters and actions characterize the structure of a story. In the organization of literary texts, an artist usually selects the core images from his/her repertoire. The validity of any oral art lies in the explanatory power of the chosen images, and in fact, this is central to structural principles and the nature of creativity the narrator wants to achieve in folklore communication. In this connection, Ben-Amos (1977: 19) says, “Core images have the potential expansion through repetition, elaboration, modification, thus becoming expansible images that can be expanded as often as the performer desires, and it is in the repetition of the image that such performances achieve their aesthetic force.”

In the first episode of Oromo trickster story of “*Malaan Duula*” (‘I Apply Wisdom’), the oral artist has chosen “*horii booji’uuf deema*” (‘I am going for expedition to hold cattle in captivity’), as his core image in order to show the way the protagonist character, the cock, has advanced the cunning technique to capture the hearts and minds of the passive audience. He continued using the same method in which the image is repeated throughout the first part of the story (1-4 paragraphs). In the second episode (5-8 paragraphs), he has selected “*addatti/kophaatti waamee*” (‘consulting them separately’), as the central image in the process of conflict resolution. The two expanded core components are thus the driving force for achieving the coherent whole of the story.

In the structure of the story of “The Reward of the Unwise” (chapter 4), it is clear that the component parts are united by the personality of the two characters. The image of “wealth” (grain), together with “ruse” of the former (rat) and the genuine effort of the latter (monkey) reveal the texture and the absence of unity of purpose in the story. The story unfolds an episodic account of treason and innocence. The protagonist rat goes from one delusion to the next, and the two deceptions and methods are different. These constitute the coherent whole or organic unity of the story.

2. Oral Narrative Tradition within the Context of Development

The Transformation of Verbal Narrative: The Representative Role of Identity in Education

The generally acknowledged development of African literary criticism shows that the growth of education has always been significant for social consciousness, and consequently the change in oral production. What emerges most clearly from a literate society is breaking up with traditional ways of looking at oral texts. More generally, the transition from pre-literate to the literate world and the process of change as a whole are meant for shaping oral literary studies. “Relatedly, it has been claimed that literacy removes the magic or ritualistic properties of language characteristic of oral societies and makes possible a new degree of...objectivity, as well as historical accuracy” (Grodén, 1994: 550). In the oral text, there is less syntactic embedding, but in a written text, we use explicit connectives and artistic construction. This entails a range of more specialized and contextually determined understanding in which the stylistic communicative skills and seeking to develop critical analysis of oral material suggest a range of new kind of literature or what may be called a “*New Dawn*” in oral literary tradition.

The African folklore has become a more powerful and popular narrative with the continual growth of modern writing in the continent. Education and the force of national feelings it has generated tended to make Africans more conscious of their cultural heritage and values. The collection and historical analysis of folk-literature were no longer left to conventional anthropologists. After the 1930s, the native folklorists and academics have contributed to some of the best works and authentic collections. Moreover, the writing of oral literature has increased more than ever before after the World War II.

Emphasizing the prominence of education and its decisive role in the political life of African Americans, Gates Jr (1997: 91) has noted, “So the political philosophy of black nationalism only

means that it will have to carry on a program...of re-education, to open our people's eyes, make us politically...mature." Education is the process of establishing habits of critical thinking, intellectual development and independent appraisal of human values and qualities. Greater social mobility, material advancement, the reshaping of human intellect, cultural and literary renaissance can take place if a society puts more effort into education. Education has not merely created the condition that enabled African oral literature to be cultivated, enriched, modified and transformed, but it has also been one of the dominant themes in the development of popular culture and in the making of a truly independent nation having democratic institutions. Given the preponderance of this theme in modern African setting, it is of great importance to point out how the African folklorists started writing folk-literature to discover more the African world.

Systems and institutions of education have been central to the development of literature and culture in Africa....In addition, the process of education and literary triggered massive transformations in African culture and society and these were to impact the nature of literary expression on the continent (Gikandi, 2003: 164).

Educating a selected number of Africans means the changing of the centres of African literary culture from producing oral traditions to written literary form. At the same time, the learning institutions modelled on the traditional method of teaching spiritual rituals and social philosophy of pre-literate societies also shifted from being the masters of oral production to the producers of modern literature. This is to say, with the gradual transformation of traditional education into modern standard, the radical change occurred in African literary landscape. The themes of folklore narratives of the pre-colonial world-that is, the issue of building egalitarian culture and values have not been fully combined with the themes of colonial and post-colonial literary fictions, though the two existed side by side. This means, oral narratives, instead of being transformed into popular literature continued to have less value, and even to be subject to the domination of the newly emerging modern African literature. The issue was no longer about the restoration of indigenous values and the making of popular tradition and history; rather about the effects of colonial rule, the crisis of African modernity and the alienating educational policies in the continent.

"With the general recognition in many circles of African studies as a worthwhile field of research, an increasing number of local scholars are turning to detailed and serious analysis of their

own oral literature and beginning to find some measures of encouragement” (Finnegan, 1970: 44). The development of Oromo verbal narrative to written form shows that both native scholars and western intellectuals have played a significant role in collecting and translating the accumulated verbal art of centuries; and they have done this to strengthen cultural prestige. Between the 1950s and 1960s, many European scholars, writers and pioneers were attracted to Oromo studies, especially the popular culture and folk art of the *Gadaa* period which were considered to be the worthwhile field of academic discourse. However, the successful research work could not happen in Oromiyaa because of the continuity of one-sidedness of the successive Ethiopian totalitarian regimes. In order to enhance the growth of oral literary studies, it is always necessary to free culture of the people to a considerable extent from the prejudices and misconceptions of the earlier overlords and writers who had no sense of valuing African literary heritage.

In discussing education and oral literary development, it is essential to ask why until the recent times, even though the Oromo continued to move forward educationally after the 1960s that literary culture is unable to develop as desired. In fact, there may be many reasons for that but the most significant ones are: first, Oromo intellectual elites despite being competent were the victims of imperial education and forced assimilation wherein they continued to be the cultural captives of the ruling group. The system of mental control reduced them to dependent existence and passivity. Second, that most of the educated groups were terribly affected by the ‘uncritical imitation’ of the alien customs and values, a situation which paralysed their ‘power of innate intelligence’-that is, their capacity of innovation and creative confidence. Moreover, most Oromo intellectuals were unable to move beyond the genteel literary activities of the traditional autocrats. In short, for several decades, Oromo educated elites failed to emerge as nation’s dynamic forces for they have disempowered themselves by concentrating on the pressure of work only for diplomas or degrees, a necessary access to lucrative employment.

During the 1970s Revolution in Ethiopia-after the downfall of Emperor Haile-Sellassie, the study of Oromo literary culture took a new form, though the nation continued to be disfavoured. The native scholars and writers are now working in a much better way and this together with the research of some foreign scholars has brought about the new boom in literary studies. Moreover, oral literature is no more considered to be part of the neglected field as before. In the same way as

many African countries, Oromo oral literature is now studied as academic subject in some universities in Oromiyaa side by side with modern African fictions; and one of the reasons for this is that the intellectuals want to incorporate some relevant ideas, techniques and tropes or figurative expressions from traditional narratives so that they can be adjusted to works dealing with modern way of life. In this regard, Okpewho (1992) singles out that though African societies have changed from what they were several generations back, and even though they still communicate with the world in which the language is not theirs, they obviously need certain basic elements in their literary culture that they can bring into the portraits of contemporary life. He has also stressed (p. 17) that as scholars became increasingly aware of the high level of cultural sophistication contained in African oral literature, it was equally inevitable that the study of oral tradition should move out of its old environment. The new trends in the study of Oromo oral narrative tradition have encouraged the new generation of researchers to raise some fundamental questions concerning the *macro-approach* to the narrative of indigenous literature and culture. The findings in this field indicate that Oromo literary tradition aims at helping the new generation to understand who they are, the value of the achievements of the past, and how the society has reached the current stages of civilization and the concrete steps to be taken to improve the social and cultural conditions. One of the most interesting developments in Oromo oral literature in particular, and the African oral art in general, is that its thematic variation and artistic beauty more or less go parallel with the modern African literature in a sense that it deals with history, politics, and the nature of creative process both in Africa and the rest of the world. Its integral level of study (macro-literary approach) helps us to look at the qualities of world cultures and literatures.

Bate has emphasized that freed of needless anxiety, and then assured of our ability to get beyond our place on the temporal horizon of creativity, we confront our past with boldness and directly face up to what we admire. It is the nature of knowledge to be unstable, dynamic and changing. It must ensure its continuance by considering the preservation of the achievements of the past and at the same time it must not allow the traditional past to be the stumbling block to the new knowledge and discoveries. It is evident that every discipline has undergone profound changes at different times in human history, but such changes have been internally contained. This means, they are seen as part of the development and normal instability of the entire knowledge. For several decades, the recurring themes of African literature, in one way or another, focused on the

destructive effects of colonialism. Obviously, modern literary politics has facilitated the paths for the growth of African national spirit; but it has at the same time failed to promote the socio-economic development, modern culture, African identity and democracies, which are fundamental to the freedom of the Africans in a true sense.

This part examines in brevity the background for the development of written Oromo literature and the substantial contributions made by the native writers and European missionaries. From 1884 to the end of the 1930s, a new generation of African writers and intellectuals began focusing on the problem and opportunities of colonial modernity. In the first half of the 20th century, the African scholars and writers turned their attention to the recognition of Africa as part of the modern world. In the first Pan-African Congress of 1900, the leading members raised the pressing issue of education and development in which African cultures and literatures were considered to be the most important part of the process of nations' movements towards modernity. The decolonization periods (1945-1960) in African history mark the increasing demand of the new generation of post-colonialism during which the most extensive development of African writing occurred in different forms. Oral tradition as one of the major ingredients in the struggle for asserting identity also has a strong patriotic content. As Wa Thiong'o has illuminated, the aim of modern education in Africa should be to orient the Africans toward placing their countries and continent in the centre. All other things must be considered in their relevance to addressing peoples' meaningful life, their contribution towards the building of *perfect national community*. Therefore, education in terms of *successful modernism* must always emphasize the significance of *African-centred consciousness* and *civilization* in which positive self-concept of the Africans can happen. Patriotism has been such an important feature of Oromo folk-literature because of its engagement with the issue of education and literacy, which have been crucial in the making of modern culture and civilization. When I write literary culture in a modern setting, I am primarily concentrating on portraying the way this great work of art helped the new generations to understand themselves better, look at the African continent and the world from their centre, not to look upon Oromiyaa from the world. We must always start with our root (our homeland) and then consider other literatures in relation to Oromo-centred models, without, of course, losing or undermining the significance of global literary concept.

As McCarthy (1993) argues, the complex issues surrounding race, identity, education and representation cannot be understood through the lenses of only discursive tradition. Rather our approach must be multidisciplinary. In models of *conflict pluralism*, as for instance the Ethiopian empire-state of 1889-1991, the discourse of identity and representation in education aimed at perpetuating inequality in the educational arena and became increasingly one-sided in which the paralysis of forbearance and understanding happened. One of the central and probably unifying themes of this chapter is a critique of the tendencies toward dogmatism, exclusionary theories and ideologies that have overtaken within hegemonic and subaltern groups in the curriculum and learning institutions. The problem of unwillingness to expand democratic discourse and tradition over issues related to education and representation inevitably leads to the widespread cultural and literary ramifications. This part foregrounds a wide range of theoretical and practical perspectives that centrally address the marginalized issues of racial identity in education in feudal and communist Ethiopia.

According to McCarthy, identity and representation refer to the question of *social power* and call attention to the complex relationships that exist between knowledge, culture, literature and power. In Oromo oral literary discourse, the issues of representation tend to raise questions concerning who has the power to define whom. It is important to notice that the powerless groups, whether the minority or the majority, do not have central control over the production of popular images of themselves or who they really are. This implies that in the multiethnic states where educational policy creates cultural barriers and power inequality, those who are underprivileged have no equal access to education and consequently to media to tell their side of the story.

Within a paradigm of educational theory, racial antagonism is conceptualized as a kind of deposit or disease that is triggered into existence by some deeper flaw of character or society. In this sense, both mainstream and radical conceptualizations of racial inequality can be described as essentialist and reductionist in that they effectively eliminate the noise of multidimensionality, historical variability...from their explanation of racial differences in education (McCarthy, 1993: xviii).

The essentialist approaches to racial or ethnic inequalities in education rely heavily on linear and mono-casual models that retreat from or avoid the careful exploration of the political, cultural and economic contexts in which racial groups encounter or confront each other in schools and

universities. The challenge before us is, therefore, how to move beyond tendencies to treat racial or ethnic relations in undemocratic pluralism as a stable and measurable or fixed category. The problem we are facing in the field of African indigenous literature is pretty much similar to this dogmatic view of old days. As I have tried to underscore throughout this work, what is human is always dynamic and transformational if it is favoured by the power of man and the power of time. From the 1980s to the present, the force of intellectual movement to give more space for education in Oromiyaa facilitated the path for re-defining identity and representation in Ethiopia and this eventually brought about the new direction in Oromo oral literary research and development.

Terry Eagleton (1997) has argued that English literature in the meaning of the word that they have inherited is an ideology. He has discussed the way in which the rising of English language as academic subject in the nineteenth century had political implication. In terms of class character, it was a symbol of domination. Likewise, the rising of wartime nationalist leaders of the 1880s, 1890s, 1900s in East Africa (Ethiopia), coupled with the powerful political orientation on which the dominant language had previously thrived, literature of the ruling group created great barriers among diversified racial and ethnic groups, especially the youths in schools and universities. From the 1880s to early 1991, the polarizing Education Act was imposed by Ethiopian autocratic rulers and this Act mandated the teaching of texts that were intended to reinforce the ideology of the government and its stereotyped notions of the races. After the 1960s, it is evident that Oromo literary culture, especially heroic literature focused on the doctrine and discourses of the ruling group as enforced by the state through this repressive Education Act. “The ethiopianist establishment went along with this approach [treating the Oromo as aliens] and virtually excluded the Oromo from their purview. This is one of the problematic residues of Ethiopia’s past on Oromo studies and a barrier that stands in the way of fruitful intellectual discourse” (Legesse, 2000: xii). The nightmarish world of subjugation and the effect of conflict-based policy on education were obviously disruptive and manifested in how racial polarization, official doctrine of discrimination, the silencing technique of the state, and the banning of Oromo writers terribly affected all the institutions of literary production. The 1960s, 1970s and 1980s wave of protests and uprisings were thus aiming at reshaping the culture and literary history.

Despite the strenuous effort made by Oromo cultural nationalists such as *Christian Rufo*, *Onesmos Nasib*, *Ganno Aster* (immigrant writers) and *Bakrii Saphalo* in the 1800s, and 1900s,

written Oromo literature was unable to emerge as nation's voice. *Onesmos* and *Rufo* struggled hard to promote the preaching of Gospel and 'religious literature;' but their lofty aspirations and intellectual works were banned by the Ethiopian government. *Saphalo's* unreserved endeavour to enhance Oromo literature, both religious and secular poetry, could not succeed as desired because of the one-sidedness of authoritarian rulers. His fruitful academic works were confiscated and destroyed (burned) when he fled the country in 1978.

It is in this historical context that the first Oromo bible [Bible] translation of the 1860s should be located. The first Oromo bible was supposed to contribute to a steady spread of 'Protestant Christianity' among the...Oromo....Therefore, it seems logical that the first *great undertaking in Oromo literature* was taking place in *Germany itself*, where already in the 1840s an *Oromo Wordbook*...had been published, as a result of interviews made in Bavaria with former Oromo slaves residing in Germany (Smidt, 2000: 1).

The Oromo immigrant writers have made immense contributions to written Oromo literature. Though his work lacks coherence, Rufo was one of the prominent immigrant writers whose religious literary work is rewarding. Smidt's research shows that Rufo was kidnapped when he was a child and sold to Muslim slave traders in his early childhood. After he had arrived in *Gojjam* (north Ethiopia) he was sold again, but escaped and became a shepherd in northern part of Ethiopia. He was sold the third time and forced to serve as an *ashkar*, literally a servant, in the same region until 1865 when he, together with other 100 Oromo slaves brought to the slave trade of *Matamma*. Despite the hardships he had undergone at different times, Rufo persevered hard to achieve his noble dream of promoting Oromo religious literature. His religious literary work gave fruit with the help of Krapf, who was the leader of Protestant Missionary. As Gikandi (2003: 508) has indicated, through the written word the missionaries succeeded in controlling the ideological persuasion of many of African intellectuals and writers. They were able to achieve this by initiating modern schools in which the African intelligentsia was educated.

The 'Oromo Spelling Book,' which was written by Onesmos Nasib and published in 1894 at the 'Swedish Mission Press in Moncullo,' near Massawa, has contributed to the development of written Oromo literature. In this small book, Onesmos had collected and printed different religious and non-religious literary work. He tried to organize some love songs, heroic songs, ritual and

traditional religious ceremonies including songs in honour of the *ateetee* or ‘*goddess of fecundity*’ sung by mothers. Since little was known by the Westerners about the literature of traditional Oromo society, the collection of Onesmos as the first form of Oromo written literature attracted the attention of many European scholars. Onesmos lost close contact with his people because of the situation in the country and he seemed to have been unable to explain fully the customs, norms and beliefs of the people in his work; and this created a problem for European scholars who wanted to interpret and elaborate on his collection.

Though the absence of encouraging multicultural balance has hampered the growth of indigenous literature, with the ever-growing resistance movements of the 1960s and 1970s, together with the spread of literacy during and after the 1970s, Oromo literary work began reviving. “In their nascent state, the vernacular literatures of Africa contribute powerfully to the spread of literacy. As they swiftly mature, they help their readers towards more sophisticated awareness of their own experience, emotions and values” (Gérard, 1990: 21). The growth of indigenous or vernacular literature is crucial to people’s creative work and a successful social transformation. The emergence of ‘*Bakkalcha Oromoo*’ (Glittering Moon of the Oromo/Morning Star), ‘*Warraaqa*’ (the revolution), ‘*Sagalee Oromoo*’ (Oromo Voice), ‘*Qunnamtii*’ (Communiqué), the ‘Kindling’ and many others as people’s voice, resulted in a greater social awareness and the boosting of Oromo literary studies. The mishandling of cultural dichotomy has severely affected Oromo society in different ways. As the result of this, written Oromo literature emerged in response to cultural barriers. “The emergence of the written art is just one particular consequence of a cultural encounter, usually characterized by conflict between two societies of unequal power” (ibid, p. 154). The transformation of Oromo oral literature to written form has closely been linked with the development of social and cultural awareness; and the growth of literacy compelled Oromo people to think of themselves as racially and culturally distinct. In the sphere of oral literary studies, the dynamic character has been observable in the spreading of literature among the Oromiffa speaking population when creative writing in the vernacular emerged during and after the 1970s wave of movements for democracy and change.

The transformation of Oromo folklore to modern standard facilitates the path for cultural nationalists to reconcile the traditional with modern values and is an important step for moving forward to the celebration of education and the cultivation of literary sensibility. The promotion of

literacy has always been the foundation of change and progress in human history. The widespread of literacy among the predominantly illiterate Oromo society has brought about literary renaissance and more profound social change. Education increases the mobility of the individual mind by widening the individual's experience and his imaginative capacity to enter into the new situation. It facilitates the path for us so that we can be part of the creative process and feel ourselves as members of the world community. Therefore, the process of creativity and oral literary development within the context of natural modernity means that we view ourselves in the world in terms of our own social environment, and maintain only those values and norms which are culturally and socially relevant to us.

3. Literary Efficiency and the Interpretation of Oral Literature in Its Own Right: Verbal Repertoire as Socio-Historical Evidence

Oral Literature Defined

Literature is as old as human language, and as new as tomorrow's sunrise....The first literature in any culture is oral. The classical Greek epics, the Asian narratives of Gilgamesh...the earliest version of the Bible...were all communicated orally, and passed on from generation to generation- with variations, additions, omissions and embellishments until they were set down in written form in versions which have come down to us (Carter, 2001: 3).

Oral tradition can hardly meet the interests of the changing generations unless its social function is broadly defined, interpreted and presented to the consumers with embellishment. Literature is a representation of life and a mirror of social reality in a given space and time. The term representation often plays a central role in the understanding of the work of art. The founding fathers of literary theory: Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, and modern literary scholars seem to agree that literature, whether verbal, visual or musical, is one form of representation because it is the reflection of human activities. The crucial issue here is then to take into account the critical analysis of the relationship between the representative genres and the society they represent.

The term oral literature is understood by different literary scholars as: folklore, folk-literature, traditional literature, literary tradition, oral narrative, literary culture, oral tradition and orature. Whatever the case may be, the fighting over the term is no more a relevant issue for us because this has been exhausted long years ago. For me, oral literature is all of these except 'orature,' and it is up to a researcher to decide which term to use. The term

orature, which is hardly found in the modern dictionaries, could be similar to what we call “oral,” but it may not match with the broad term oral literature which includes culture, norms, values, identity, tradition, history and politics. In one sense, oral literature as the integral part of cultural studies refers to the selected body of knowledge or lore shared by the community as the representation of collective image and a conventional mode of human thought characterized by social philosophy and folk wisdom. It is the representation of general human activities and the reflection of socio-political truths. Unlike the literary fiction, in writing oral literature, one must be able to have a clear picture of the past events and the way those events occurred in history rather than focusing on what he/she wants to make out of it on the basis of his/her speculation. Toelken (1996) has argued that folklore is perceived by some scholars as an outmoded subject simply because of the journalistic use and/or the absence of considering historical factors and contextual value of the discipline in which the term is misconstrued and misapplied as a literature that represents naïve thinking. On the contrary, folk literary narrative is viewed by the folklorists, anthropologists, humanists, linguists, ethnographers and sociologists as a great masterpiece and a storehouse of knowledge which needs sober investigation.

As already mentioned, folklore in its narrow definition refers to the lore of the traditional societies, but this does not lead us to the conclusion that it is an outmoded subject as the formalists and impressionists may think. Rather this traditional literature is the reflection of people’s history, values and identity; and for this reason, it never becomes obsolete with the shifting of times and attitudes. Like culture and language, Oromo oral literature as a collective symbol of identity is central to people’s proper self-concept, their role in history, their relations to natural milieu; and these relations indicate their continuous struggle to survive. The definition and self-definition of a particular society involve its creativity, its significant contribution to others and the way it influences the world. “A nation’s literature which is the sum total of the product of many individuals in the society is then...the reflection of that people’s reality” (Wa Thiong’o, 1997: 5). Folk-literary tradition has had immense contribution to the traditional African societies because it helped them to uncover the mysteries of nature and the universal human characteristics. It is a sum total of the by-product of different members of the society in that it is a manifestation of the general image of a particular people and an embodiment of that people’s way of perceiving themselves and

the world at large. In brevity, Oromo literary culture has unlimited boundaries in its performance and offers wider opportunities of interpretation and a greater freedom to comment, eulogize and criticize. As cultural and historical document, it powerfully describes natures, events, people's attitudes, behaviours and the metaphor of being and becoming of the Oromo. Oral literature is more than just a mechanical reflection of social reality because it is the outcome of the conscious act of people and their wrestling with the environment to make it yield the means of life. The word-images it embodies depict joys, tensions, conflicts and contradictions the society has experienced in the course of history. It is possible to argue that oral literature is a strategic tool for the Oromo in its consolidation, socialization and in the boosting of a positive self-image; and in aesthetic terms, the representative nature of the genres ensure its continuity and wider circulation.

If the researchers fail to analyse oral performance feature in terms of *functional approach* and *contextual prominence*, which in a sense include the historical explanation of the subject and the detailed exploration of the immediate environment or surrounding in which the body of literature takes place, she/he can never uncover the culture-centred aesthetic taste. Therefore, it is not surprising if such scholars or writers are baffled or unable to use the natives' password that can help them comprehend the dynamics of folklore language in a contemporary setting. The dissension over its definition is basically the dissension between the formalist and non-formalist approach.

Textual Dimension: A New Critical Approach to Oral Tradition

The cultural milieu, the historical period during which the oral tradition was narrated, the geographical and ethnographic setting, partially or wholly, determine the nature of linguistic choices open to the criticism of a particular oral text. If however, the imprint of history and culture is not considered for whatever reason, the study of Oromo oral literature does not make full sense. The Shakespearean literary genres belong to the Elizabethan period; Chaucer's poetic language can only appeal to us and be appreciated if it is placed in the context of Middle English; Homer's Iliad will be sensible to the readers if they capture the heroic time in Greece during the conflict of 1250 B.C. Likewise, a body of oral treasure of the Oromo can be appreciated if it is understood in the context of the *Gadaa* egalitarian ideal. One of the major conditions for valuing Oromo oral tradition

is that of placing it in the socio-cultural, geo-political, historical and ideological environment. We can draw a clear diagram of the generic structure of African verbal art by making a classification of its modes and styles of linguistic performance. All these are the relevant and fundamental points that guide us to make reasonable judgement or evaluation of folklore narrative. “So to do justice to any work of literature, we must study the social conditions, movements and conflicts of the period, the class relationships...struggles and resulting ideas” (Ngara, 1982: 20).

The textual investigation which is part of the New Criticism, is an oscillatory academic discipline whose aims is to lay the foundations for a more realistic approach that can effectively deal with questions concerning authenticity and attribution of interpretation, of literary sensibility and historical evaluation. The researches of years on the African indigenous literature shows that a partisan criticism can hardly be the best judge of excellence because the interest based on such evaluation often tries to force its own meaning on the text whereby menacing views often cloud the dynamic function and artistic sense of the work of literature. The Oromo oral texts have been transmitted from generation to generation in a variety of ways and the techniques employed by the researchers become valid only if they are applied in an awareness of the particular set of circumstances governing each event. “To criticize a work, we have to know it....We must, of course, know the language in which it is written...we must know what the work is, in the sense that we must have a proper text of it before us, not a text marred by misprints or deliberate tampering” (Daiches, 1969: 319). Daiches also added that “We can be good readers without an original aesthetic, but we cannot be good readers without the ability to judge for ourselves as we read” (p.171).

A work of art is not produced in a vacuum. Since it is the product of a search for cultural history, it must be examined within its artistic field, and this field involves the exploration of meanings in context, critics, traditions, cultural and ritual movements, philosophical thinking, political and social climate. Without paying attention to these factors, oral literary criticism can hardly give effective response to all spheres of intellectual enquiry. Therefore, the study of Oromo literary culture should focus on the plausible theories about the aesthetic creation and the way the artistic force produces literary influence. In the analysis of oral narrative, we must always ask ourselves whether the practical critics pay attention to an indigenous African point-of-view, an understanding of history, structure (organic unity), thematic contents, aesthetic qualities, metrical

phonology, imagery, metaphors, satire, irony, symbolism, allusion, allegory, plot and other similar concerns. These are the vital points to be answered in the process of making Oromo oral literary judgement. Unless a writer or researcher understands the kind of a society the narrator lived in, and unless he properly senses the historical time and the philosophical assumptions of the oral artist, there is always a danger of obscuring the fine lines of the oral text. This is what Palmer calls a *literary crime*. Surely this is a rational argument which literary scholars should consider seriously.

After the 1930s, scholarly studies of traditional African societies had taken a new form. It moved from a general cultural survey to a specific field of research on the character of African people. Many foreign travellers, pioneers and scholars arrived in the continent and began introducing themselves to the diversified ethnic groups. In fact, they were increasingly aware of the problem of shallow approach to African studies. Making general and vague statements about human nature was seen as ignoring the detail analysis of a people and their literatures; but only few genuine scholars succeeded in studying the African oral traditions in their own right. “Yet, like obstetricians or voyeurs, they have always stood outside looking in, observers rather than participants in the creative process that absorbs so much of their attention” (Lindfors, 1972: 224). As Lindfors has underlined, the sensitive parts of African folklore are often closed to the impressionists who are merely interested in establishing hegemony over the discourse, reading a work, reacting to it, and then record their reactions; and accessible only to those within a society who have grown up learning the password. An impressionistic approach to African literary work focuses on bland assertions, assumptions, suggestions, and in most cases such criticism fails to probe into the deep social context of African oral literature.

It is, therefore, the duty of scholars, if they truly understood the language and culture from which a piece of oral literature comes, to explain its literary qualities so that an outsider can appreciate it. This basic job of literary criticism was not made easy by the narrow interest in social context (Okpewho, 1992: 11).

From the distant past to the recent, most researchers were unable to get down to the deeper and appropriate analysis of the literary merit of Oromo oral art mainly because of lacking of the profound knowledge about its historical origin and functions. Especially, the imperial sociologists and historians who were the champions of distorting and concealing skilfully the reality about the

Africans often view the Oromo, their literary tradition and culture as unworthy; and they attempt to save much energy by either eliminating or avoiding treasured oral narratives. On the contrary, this body of literature is conceived by the native scholars and writers as the basis for social equilibrium; and hence they take trouble to explore the vital role and artistic beauty of each spoken expression.

“The stories live in native life and not on paper, and when a scholar jots them down without being able to evoke the atmosphere in which they flourish, he has given us but a mutilated bit of reality” (Okpewho, 1992: 1). In the absence of contextual-centred approach-the analytical framework that can effectively serve the empirical investigation of cultural and social events, oral literature remains lifeless. Without understanding the various aspects of people’s socio-cultural life and proper historical sense, it would be impossible to be the qualified writer of wisdom literature. When we study literary tradition, our primary goal should be to address the core issues that have contributed to the building of national heritage. Unless the *abstractionist method* of analysis is replaced by a concern for considering contextual factors and a vivid account of the actual situation, folklore studies can hardly be efficacious. As Bauman (1986: 2) has shown, folk literary tradition needs to be studied contextually and ethnographically, in order to discover the individual, social, and cultural factors that give it shape and meaning in the conduct of social life.

The emergence of a master narrative of Oromo literature is closely linked with cultural self-assertion and the quest for knowledge. More importantly, underneath this association, the cultural landscape of Oromo oral narrative is characterized by the multiple traditions, social milieu and contexts. It has been discussed in the preceding section that the study of this kind of literature requires a wide knowledge of verbal sayings of a particular people. Each verbal art has been told in a specific situation and the investigation of the deeper meanings of oral art depends on comprehending that particular event. In order to come up with some useful ideas, I have mainly focused on the contextual analysis of texts with emphasis on linguistic approach rather than sociological though the two are juxtaposed. In oral literary studies, textual and contextual analysis stands at the root of our method because the research on this type of narrative is basically the investigation of who people really are; and in fact, this needs the exploration of the origin of each folklore form. Unless the cultural symbolic meaning of each literary genre is discovered, it will be impossible to discover the aesthetic value of folklore language. Moreover, if the investigation of linguistic features of the oral texts is not combined with contextual interpretation and the analysis of

specific events, then our research on oral tradition will undoubtedly result in one-sidedness; and in this case, it is difficult to understand the true nature of the subject and its place in the modern world. Di Yanni (2000: 1360-1361) has indicated that...“a literary work [must] be read with a sense of the time and place of its creation. This is necessary...because every literary work is a product of its time and its world. Understanding the social background and the intellectual currents of that time and that world illuminates literary works for later generations of readers.” The most highly developed folklore study can be achieved if we succeed in juxtaposing the two approaches-putting the textual analyses on the right socio-cultural basis. Therefore, folklore narrative should be analyzed only within the scope of a given living environment.

“Texts framed into genres and performed in socially defined communicative situation, acquire significance beyond the literal meanings of their constituent words” (Lindfors, 1977: 1). The defining features of oral literary genres are different from ordinary utterances; and this can be identified through critical scrutiny of a particular text. In order for the genres to be culturally communicable, they need to be perceived as the distinct verbal entities that are linguistically expressed and validated both by the tradition and the social circumstance of its performance. The thematic domains of folklore are socially defined and the validity of a spoken word of each oral art depends on the writer’s ability to explain the figurative languages within a broader discourse of that social system. Thus, text-based analysis enables us to examine carefully the ornamental value of each literary genre.

Translation, Interpretation and Deconstruction

In any socio-political structure, the close link between literary and political movement reflects the nature of human relationship. Oral art must be adjusted to define the change in those relations in the course of historical circumstances wherein images, myths, and outlook are also interpreted to justify and help sustain that change. “*The universe therefore, is not wide enough for the range of human speculation and intellect. Our thoughts often travel beyond the boundaries of our surroundings. If anyone wants to know what we were born for, let him look around at life and contemplate the splendour, grandeur, and beauty in which it everywhere abounds*” (Longinus in Leitch, 2001: 152). One of the most important steps of the study of oral literature can take is the

comparative investigation of this field as cultural, moral and behavioural system. The traditional approach to oral literary studies seems to lose sense and it would be useful to advance beyond a certain low level of pedagogical utility. From the above extract, we understand that a broad approach to literary culture seeks to discover its various functions and enjoys the complex issues it offers. The modern and post-modern Oromo literary culture has taken a new shape after the 1970s vigorous movements and the ever growing needs for cultural and social transformation; the time when the shifting of political and literary discourse increasingly challenged the very language the classical critic was using to weaken national culture and literature. Furthermore, in the course of moving toward critical practice, the native writers and academics that have been trained in the New Criticism engaged in the issue of literary growth and cultural modernism in which Oromo oral literary narrative can be given more space.

The new research strategy that embraces contemporary concerns is believed to provide a more adequate intellectual criticism and a sense of poetic tradition upon which authentic literary heritage must be based. When we say verbal literature of modern and post-modernism is largely due to the work of New Critics, we mean that our study must focus on the re-examination and interpretation of the verbal text. In terms of literary modernism, interpretation as part of *deconstructive* criticism is in fact different from colonial *reductionism* and obscuring approach (destructive technique) to the indigenous literature wherein the misreading of the oral texts prohibits any possibility for further progress. Oral narrative, as we have seen, is an intrinsic history of literature that covers the cultural past, social conditions, the broad sweep of historical time and its events; and the diverse artistic functions it offers are revealed through the process of reconstructing the past images. Derrida claims that the *interpretive free-play* of his writing constituted the full realization of traditional scholarship and a ripened competition of critical understanding. He sees deconstruction as a normative process and a discourse of imperativity.

Muana (1998: 54) argues that scholarly practices must be both self-revealing and multi-vocal with greater sensitivity to those embedded discourses that illuminate interpretation. The writing of Oromo literary culture demands deconstructive method of analysis or what is commonly termed as interpretation simply because we are to the larger degree dealing with an *openness to new possibilities and a creative dimension* that involve redefinition, reshaping, modification and elaboration. Even though the social meaning remains the same, our creative act always allows us a

poetic free-play (reading and redefining without restraint) which enables us to go beyond the *fixities* and explain the metaphor of each spoke word or genre. This however, does not mean that deconstructive approach is revisionism as some Marxist writers and critics may think. “Deconstruction refers to a reading without restraint, a reading that amounted to a creative act, fully aspired as writing” (Lentricchia, 1995: 1). In the analysis of Oromo oral literature, it is almost impossible for a genre to have a single, fixed and definite meaning which obviously cloud our profound understanding of social and political circumstances. Folk literary narrative as a poetic metaphor essentially demands the discovery of broad social meanings and this implies that more meanings can be created each time in the act of reading the nation’s achievements. Deconstructive criticism is one of a potentially open-ended or unlimited interpretation of the same expression or genre in different contexts to communicate several layers of meanings. Our meanings can have strong influences and continue to address the timeless issues in our national culture and literary tradition only if we look at the situations from different angles and expand the horizon of our imagination. We cannot give a *static meaning* to what is dynamic and changing. “*Rather than seeing the world in terms of specific fixed and concrete entities, deconstruction sees it in terms of a dynamic process of differentiation*” (Waugh, 2006: 300).

Derrida’s research shows that interpretive criticism or deconstruction is not merely interested in the effective use of language in context, but also concerned as much with historical realities which are our references or sources for the argument concerning the necessity of interpretive free-play in a work of literature. Lindfors (1992:230) has also emphasized that the interpretive critic who studies traditional elements in contemporary African literature is more apt to be interested in investigating their artistic functions or their aesthetic...implications than in merely validating their existence. This is true because a researcher or critic has to go beyond what is obvious or simple into the undiscovered and more complex areas so that he/she can venture to use his tools to probe into the mysterious inner workings of African oral narrative. As we transcend the boundary of the fixed traditional explanation of the verbal narrative, we will be compelled to explore its instructive aspects without any restraint. Oral literature as writing entails serious commitment to the effective role of interpretation. In a written form, the verbal text is implied in a system of language and culture that open it to the work of literature. The interpretive technique through which the writer works makes the meaning of Oromo traditional literature more appealing. In this work, the

recurring terms such as interpretation, evaluation, reconstruction, deconstruction and adaptation, remind us of the fact that the value and contextual meanings of oral tradition are the outcome of the creative process, and that process occurs within a specific socio-cultural and political setting.

Oral literary evaluation, which is grounded in interpretive criticism, is also related to our reactions and rational response to the nature of the events that please us or traumatize us. This evaluation involves two kinds of judgements: (1) assessing its quality and relevance, and (2) our assessment of the cultural, social and moral value it portrays in a changing world. “However deeply attached the translator is to the proud heritage of a people, he or she is equally aware that some of the outlook revealed by the text no longer prevails....Translating the old texts in stylized language and techniques is one way of ‘*adapting*’ to the changed outlook (Okpewho, 1992: 301-302). The duplicity of old notions throughout human history does not bring about fundamental changes and literary development. Even though there is always a need to maintain the originality of the old oral narrative, it is at the same time equally important and inevitable that the researchers should present it in such a way that it reflects the changed styles of living and perception in contemporary society.

In any analytical approach to oral literature, it would be unfair treatment of a text if we attempt to avoid or ignore evaluative judgement. It is at the same time necessary to notice that textual criticism does not give us the freedom to misconstrue or misinterpret. This simply means the inseparability of literary construction and evaluation does not bring about a change of the cultural implication. Textual criticism and interpretation have more or less similar function in a sense that in the application of both, we are intending to evaluate a given verbal text without disturbing or distorting the conventional representation of its saying; and here lies the validity of construction.

Interpretation in a broader sense of literary transformation can also involve deconstruction in which a researcher goes beyond the fixed images and applies diversified approaches that can generate new vocabularies, styles and meanings. “The critic is right to think that the text should speak to us. The point which needs to be grasped clearly by the critic is that a text cannot be made to speak to us until what it says has been understood” (Adams, 1992: 1100). Similar notion is shared by Palmer (1979: 6) when he says if we are to display clearly the genuine quality of a work, then our criticism should be descriptive, analytic and evaluative. In order to ensure this, we must pay attention to the meaning, the authors, the subject matter and the relevance of the work. A work of art, especially folklore narrative, has to be constructed by the writer before it is presented to the

audience or public as a literary form. In a critical study of the verbal art, interpretation is used to construct the textual meaning or implication, whereas criticism with reference to a contextual approach is usually meant for building on what has been interpreted. It designates the general views about the work, its explanation, evaluation, comments, as well as the cultural semantics of each folklore genre.

Deconstructive criticism of traditional narrative relies heavily on intellectual investigation and profound understanding of the text rather than arbitrary and/or emotional response to it. The work of interpretation involves two major points: 1) relating the oral text to our experience; and 2) exploring the meanings on the basis of a specific social and historic event. When we interpret folklore literature, *we are more concerned with what it suggests or implies* than merely focusing on the traditional sense which does not give much weight to the new trends of oral art. For further illustration of this point, let us examine the following metaphorical verse lines.

awwaannifni baayyatee dammi durii badeeraa
kinniiifni/kanniiifni haadeebi'uu lafti marguu dideeraa



the locusts are multiplied and so there is no more honey of the past
 the land becomes grassless and so we need the returning of the bees

The satirical narrator discusses the rampant social corruption which, like the shaky situation of Wole Soyinka's Night Club (see 'The Interpreters'), epitomizes hopelessness and despair. The poem is deconstructed in allusive form so as to describe the destructive image of exploitation wherein the draining of national wealth (*dammi durii badeeraa*) becomes the effect. The *awwaannisa* (locust), which is the representative agent of disruption, suggests the irresponsible human nature and this social depreciation is contrasted with the image of social dynamism and abundance represented by the *kanniisa* (the bees).

In fact, one of the most important functions of deconstruction is that it expands the social and/or political implication of the subject, frees us from being dictated by the rigid traditional discourse and allows us to broaden our scope of analysis. By applying our intellect to bear on a folklore text, we can inevitably discover more powerful meanings that are underneath the literal sense. The making of such broad survey often leads us to gain a considerable knowledge and pleasure. As Di Yanni (2000: 404) noted, "Our occasional unwillingness to move beyond our initial

impressions [shallow ideas], our tendency to settle into traditional judgement and well-worn opinions [worn or repetitively used] further complicate our responses.” Obviously, such evaluation does not merely fail to investigate the artistic quality of folk-literature, but also devalues it.

In contemporary independent world, the development of the work of art of modern societies often influences and/or reinforces literatures of the developing nations. The reason for this is that understanding the literary environment in the civilizations of others has enriched the cultivation of those popular literatures, especially oral tradition. During the 20th century, an immense body of folk-literature of the pre-literate societies as well as the mass of writings on wisdom movements and great ages of civilizations have been translated into modern languages.

The translation of a verbal text is primarily aiming at securing its accuracy, authentic account, maintaining loyalty to the text, together with preserving it for the generation to come. In treating this part, raising the following three fundamental questions seems to be of great importance: what is translation? What is to be translated? Why translation? Translation literally means a text or work that has been changed from one language into another without, of course, damaging the substance. Translation is of two types: first, changing from vernacular language into another; second, changing the old version of the same text into modern language. A text is translated for two reasons: 1) to facilitate communication; and 2) for adaptation or recreation. It may be possible to avoid the hard task of translation if a researcher wants to use the language of Wider Communication (English); but the question is how to win the credibility of his/her work. For instance, the absence of the original Oromiffa text in the work of Sumner (1995) not only shows how the writer is attuned to more traditional approach to oral literary criticism, but also raises the question of authenticity because the origin of the collected proverbs is unknown. Though I am greatly sympathetic to such valuable intellectual efforts aimed at identifying sophisticated philosophical virtues in this kind of work, I do not encourage such an approach to oral literature which *does not solidly attach to the more recent tradition of scholarship that sets out primarily to probe into the essential originality of the oral genre*. In other words, the writing of folklore literature necessarily involves translation because without using one's vernacular language, the work of art does not give much sense to the audience (readers) who want to know the originality of a text. The search for authenticity and culturally acceptable equivalent in the vernacular language is crucial for the study of oral literature. This again takes us to the point that the original Oromiffa text and its translation should be seen side by side.

Literary scholars often prefer to translate oral tradition not because they like it, but because of the necessity of the strategy that the subject requires.

The literatures of centuries ago would keep on saying the same thing unless we find new expressions, modern techniques and contexts not to replace them but to enrich the old folklore languages so as to address the issue of modern thinking. Translating the oral texts in the context of adaptation or recreation is, therefore, an attempt to encourage literary *efficiency* and *larger circulation*. In a broader concept, translation as part of adaptability helps maintain the continuous modification, elaboration and relevance of oral narrative. With the growth of literacy and technological advancement, human communication becomes more complex and this obviously involves the constant formulation of new styles, new vocabularies, sentences, expressions and meanings. “The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention [supervening] of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly altered; and so the relations, proportions, values, are re-adjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new” (Adams, 1992: 761-762). As Adams has portrayed, in a particular social events, a researcher has to be aware of the fact that the writing of folklore will inevitably be evaluated by the cultural standards of the past. In this sense, to be evaluated does not mean to be amputated or to be judged by the disapproving techniques of the canons of traditional critics. Rather it is a rational judgement based on comparison wherein the two events (the past and present) are weighed in contemporary context. It is not reasonable to argue that modern folklore becomes more useful for it continues to be the stereotype of the old or because it completely fits in. Conversely, its fitting in must be seen as a test of its validity.

When I began translating and adapting the verbal arts within a contemporary setting, my primary concern is to bring out the poetic quality and charm. One of the main objectives of translating Oromo oral literature is *to avoid misconception and misrepresentation, which force the indigenous literature into the schemes of unrelated tones and meaningless music which seem attractive to ears but characteristically non-Oromo.*

The Continuity and Relevance of Oral Art: Literary Culture in the Changing Social Climate

From the oldest myths and legends to the post-modern fabulation, narration has always been the foundation for the development of modern literature. If this holds true, then the study of narrative is not just a work of pastime for literary scholars, especially folklorists in their broad perception of humanity, cultural identity and history. Oral narrative, therefore, unfolds culture-oriented fundamental ideas about realities and mankind, which are narrativized in a verbal and non-verbal communication. The critical theories and practice of oral narrative tradition is misconstrued if they adhere to or insist on the classical types of abstractionism and lose touch with a concrete illustration of relevance and the actual situation which is to be addressed in a particular oral text.

One of the crucial problems of oral narrative analysis concerns the way in which the narrators' expressions and thoughts appear in the text. What is orally told or uttered can be incoherent and even sometimes chaotic, while putting together a sequence of ideas or what has been orally narrated can appeal more sensibly to the human mind. In other words, the changing of abstract narrative to the surface structural form (expressive) is what makes verbal literature dynamic, artful and intriguing. In order to elaborate this point, I will try to address the relationship between abstract ideas or body of knowledge in its deep structural form with what Herman calls *representation of consciousness*. This point must be discussed at length because it constitutes one of the major challenges to the study of Oromo oral narrative both as critical theory and practice. Herman (2005) argues that the central problem of 'consciousness representation' comes down to the relationship between the representing agents (characters or narrators) and the one which is being represented. If the oral narrator represents a society's actions, thoughts, collective feelings, aspirations, interests, dreams, or in one sense, consciousness, one has to ask to what extent these representations will be relevant or important in the course of people's attitudinal change. In the contextual criticism of Oromo oral literature, we must always distinguish and/or be able to identify a kind of consciousness representation: the collective feelings, thoughts, interests, etc, that determine the nature of relationships between the narrator and the audience. It is also noteworthy that these relations may debilitate or enhance the growth of literary culture.

Oral narrative forms part of the communicative situation wherein a narrator transmits a salient messages to the consumer (receiver or audience), and in this respect, the latter must also be given his due in narrative theory. According to Herman, every oral text envisions a specific audience with a particular ideology and attitude. This shows that the readers or listeners form a counterpart to the implied narrator functioning as his/her second selves if what has been transmitted makes sense to them. We then conclude that the transformation of oral literature to modern literary form can happen only if there is effective relationship and close ties between the narrator and the readers or consumers; and if this positive communication is accompanied by the power of time that allows sustainable oral literary growth. The reliability and the quality of reading depend on similarity between the narrators' ideology and the ideology of the consumers. Herman (2005: 20) has emphasized that "the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author [narrator] and reader can find complete agreement." The perpetual development of literature, especially oral narrative tradition depends on this perfect social setting in which the producer and the consumers share common interests and outlook.

In Oromo society, folklore performance encompasses a variety of speakers, narrators and singers ranging from love lyric to heroic tales; each of who has his/her own social status and repertoire of storytelling or singing. These varieties are characteristically social, cultural, historical, political, regional, national, and in most cases well recognized by the people. Most importantly, what matters here is the ability each narrator demonstrates, his/her natural talent, and the way this talent gains cultural reception which empowers an individual performer to exercise the power of words in order to have influence on the relevant issues. Like other Sub-Saharan Africans, the Oromo oral artists accomplish traditional narratives in the form of entertainment-the *daboo song*, the *suunsuma*, the *hibboo*, seriousness-the *mammaaka*, the *durdur*, the *faaruu*, by panegyric or praise-the *geerarsa*, through verbal attack-the *suunsuma*; appearing in a specific culturally, politically and historically prescribed occasions. In so doing, each narrator or storyteller claims cultural hero and wins social and political recognition by drawing attention of the public. In a traditional society where a vehicle for transmitting knowledge is rather limited or even hardly possible, the oral narrators who are always at the forefront of social change, have responsibility for giving solid foundation for cultural and literary influence that might have otherwise been treated as *passing fancies* and allowed to die.

Oral literary discourse as the reflection of human intellect takes place in the complex social situations, which need to be discerned. Its educative influence can be expanded so long as it meets people's expectations. The analytical typology should not deviate from the way the members of a community perceive it simply because the formation of its representative genres, the interpretation and manipulation of those genres depend on the social realities. More concretely, the effective function of oral narrative ensures its acceptability whereas deviation from this threatens its perpetual existence. "A literary work is not an object that stands by itself and that offers the same view to each reader in each period. It is not a *monument* that monologically reveals its timeless essence. It is much more like an orchestration that strikes ever new resonances among its readers and that...brings it to a contemporary existence" (Leitch, 2001: 152-153). The skilful treatment of forms in social interaction, the capability of performing them in accordance with the existing social climate, and the meticulous scrutiny of the interplay between people's needs and folklore practices are the bases for the dynamic functions of the verbal genres. The expectations the society has toward the narrator or performer, the appropriateness of the subject in the changing socio-political and historical circumstances are points of primary concern in a contemporary oral literary studies. The social status of the community members, their knowledge, eloquence and personal quality secure the pertinence of folklore language to the situation. For instance, in Oromo society, almost all oral traditions are told or narrated by the senior experts and wise men who are models of the community and capable of promoting the social value of each spoken expression and/or genre.

As I have time and again emphasized, without giving weight to these factors, the analysis of literary culture cannot be successful and sensible. The contemporary Oromo literary studies shows that a number of significant and complex cultural and political events are assessed through the critical observation of oral narrators; and oral art is thus believed to be a reliable barometer of series of outstanding events and socio-economic conditions within which the society lives. Folk-literary tradition as a strategic tool for cultural growth and nation-building contributes to the society in its consolidation, socialization and self-contained process; and the representative nature of the genres guarantees its continuity and wider circulation. It is, therefore, imperative to exert all intellectual energies so as to bolster the institutions, which have enabled Oromo literary culture to sustain. The promotion of traditional literature to modern standard seems impossible unless the researchers make concerted efforts to explain the genres in their own right so that they play significant roles in

interpreting the cultural universe and values in the constantly changing world. A great deal of Oromo oral art is narrated in the form of ‘historical nature’ just to guarantee the continuity of those values.

Literary tradition is the product of culture and it may be perceived as a mirror through which the entire image of human relations is projected. The term oral art, which in its broader sense is also called folk-wisdom, refers to the accumulated patrimony of centuries of creative literary work, which is used as the vehicle for cultural inheritance and social transformation. “Oral tradition, therefore, implies a situation in which cultural transmission is carried out by word of mouth through direct contact between individuals depending largely on memory and habits of thought, action and speech for cultural continuity” (Obiechina, 1975: 32). Oral literary genres as the surviving artistic works of generations play a significant role in the lives of Sub-Saharan Africans in general and the Oromo in particular.

Many scholars do not know that oral tradition is an intellectual subject with its own substantial world-wide body of scholarship and one of the major modes of cultural expression. The continuity of verbal art as academic subject actually means the shaping of the attitudes of the born generations in such a way that they innovate best in their own way and sense their own world with open mind. Though we may not aspire to return to the traditional way of life of the past, we cherish oral tradition because it is the foundation of wisdom and civilization. It seems hardly possible for the new generations to grasp the valuable achievements of their great ancestors and trace back their collective selves, unless the body of knowledge (wisdom-narrative) is understood as a continuing search for meaning that causes the phenomenon of passing over and coming to one’s own culture with new insights and lifestyles. As the individual goes through passages in the life process and is challenged by transitional experiences, and so too oral narrative tradition. It is through this challenge the verbal literature gains sustainable social value which ensures its growth.

In the Oromo oral narrative tradition, it is essential to ask the following key questions which enable us to uncover its effective functions as well as the reasons for its persistence and relevance:

1. What aspects of oral literature are relevant to the context of modern culture?
2. How does oral narrative tradition contribute to the growth of democratic values and traditions?

3. In what ways are the folklore genres related to wider academic concepts? Do they involve intellectual investigations and literary sensibility?
4. Does the continuity of oral literature contribute to social and cultural transformation?
5. In what way does a folklore narrative involve national pride, ethical issues and nation's self-worth?
6. How does literary tradition serve as cultural and identity empowerment?
7. What is its universal significance as comparative literature ?

In a contemporary African context, the successful function and relevance of Oromo oral literature depends upon the effective exploration of these pivotal questions. The historical evidence shows that oral narrative as part of the growth of Oromo personality is so important merely because it encourages the movement towards greater self-awareness and enriches a new confidence in individual self. The coming into being of written folk-literature is also an expression of the cultural confidence in which the society remains to be cohesive, innovative rather than imitative. Therefore, oral literature as interdisciplinary subject is a vehicle for socio-cultural and economic growth. It is an appropriate yardstick for examining, analyzing, comparing and evaluating the past history of the Oromo and the current condition in which they are found.

A significant number of influential literary theorists, especially those who specialise in comparative studies, have observed that, at a global level, the literature of certain cultures and language communities hold the centre of attention as objects of research within the discipline of literary studies. In contrast, literatures of other cultures and languages have been marginalised and given little attention (Negash, 1999: 12).

Despite its instructive appeal and significant role in the transformation of the society, Oromo folk narratives have not been given much attention and are still unable to transform the institutions, which sustain them. The recovery of this creative literary work would ultimately mean to help secure social and political balance. This takes us to the reality that the true independent existence of the society and its rational way of life may be guaranteed if the lore of the people is studied from various angles. The social, cultural and economic growth can seldom occur if people are committed to rewarding only the classical theory of oral art by discouraging intellectual and industrial literature of modern times, without which the upward social mobility is unthinkable.

The relationship between literature and society has long been recognized; but it has not always been fully appreciated how far a particular society both influences the themes and subject-matter of its representative literary types and also profoundly affects their formal development (Obiechina, 1975: 3).

The modern civilization and technological advancement are the result of proper socialization process and the ability to give value to one's own treasured literary culture. One may argue that the growth of Oromo oral tradition increases the imaginative capacity of the individuals to enter into a new creative world of discovering facts more and understand their social environment better. This means, oral literary studies and its appreciation help awake the new aspirations and nourish the natural talent. The work of art as the basis for social reform is worth writing about. In his lecture "The Role of the Writer in the New Nation" (*Arrow of God*, p. 2), Chinua Achebe has stressed the importance of infusing the present generation with a sense of confidence and pride in African way of life. Obviously, Achebe is warning African writers and scholars not to disparage valuable African traditions in the same way as the classical thinkers of colonial period who were out of touch of African realities. In terms of national character, Oromo oral literature has immense significance if it is linked with *the best of the past and the best of the modern*. This is how its social relevance and literary merit can be guaranteed.

We value words for their meaningful appeal to human senses and feelings. The language of Oromo literary tradition is not merely a string of words just to provoke laughter and good sense of humour or entertainment. Rather it has a suggestive power beyond the immediate surface meaning. Thus, the language of verbal art, through images and symbols, gives us a vivid picture of the world of a particular society, and the living beauty it has inherited from its forefathers. For instance, the work song exhibits a strong sense of national bond and mutuality of feelings-*jiruun koo jiruu keeti* (literally, my existence is your existence), the trickster narrative criticizes social and moral sinking, the proverbial lore brings to light the importance of promoting democratic principles and values.

The oral tradition is rich and many-sided...the art did not end yesterday; it is a living tradition...familiarity with oral literature could suggest new structures and techniques; and could foster attitudes of mind characterized by the willingness to experiment with new forms....The study of oral tradition would therefore supplement (not replace) courses in modern African literature. By discovering and proclaiming loyalty to indigenous values,

the new literature would on the one hand be set in the stream of history to which it belongs and so be better appreciated; and on the other be better able to embrace and assimilate other thoughts without losing its roots (Wa Thiong'o, 1986: 94-95).

In order to value oral tradition as a popular art, one has to assess whether or not it can have contemporary importance, and whether it suits modern thinking and addresses outstanding issues of our time. Unless a literary genre is viewed within the changing attitudes of the society who generated it, giving a proper judgement about it would be impossible. In such a situation, a writer fails to weigh the functions of oral tradition in a balanced form. If the literary scholars are unable to explore the work of art of the great thinkers of the past in depth, they cannot be favourably disposed to its literary taste.

The creative role the oral narrative plays in a society is the overriding concern for the researchers. They seek to perceive the literary world of the narrator and his personality by exploring the way he treats his characters and then analyze his entire repertoire much as literary critic. In this case, the investigation of the artistic beauty of folklore narrative requires linguistic manipulation and literary style. In order to find its appropriateness to the existing circumstances, the writers need to probe into the way each oral artist constructs his narratives and then elaborate old perceptions, fixed images, symbols and conventional metaphoric expressions. Folk-literature also discusses cultural norms which form a consistent pattern in the society. Both humanistic and anthropologist folklorists conceive Oromo oral literature as aesthetic product of the society that mirrors its history and offers the projective screen that illuminates its lofty dreams and aspirations. The authorship of the oral tradition is unknown; and hence folk songs, poems, proverbs, tales and fables continued to be repeated by subsequent literary historians, storytellers and singers because of its noble contribution. In the course of its history, this corpus of narrative has been reproduced by generations of non-literate audience. Its survival, continuity and success depend on how reasonably it satisfies intellectual interest, socio-political and economic needs of the society.

Verbal art may be seen as the full power of continuous memory at work in the process of dealing with the account of events, situations, the transmission of cultural tradition and norms. In essence, folklore as an oral text is subject to its survival in the minds of the talented individuals. The storyteller or singer has at his disposal a large variety of conventional motifs and episodes that are used freely. Whether or not they are appropriately stated as part of his composition depends on his

artistic skill. Despite being narrated by the non-literate members of the society, so many well-articulated plots of Oromo folklore have continued to exist in their original form for centuries without losing their essential features. Though the oral art lacks systematic disposition of the genres, events and characters, the successful narrator gives credibility to his verbal text by using the realistic details of human condition. The experience of the oral narrator and the audience is itself the solution for whatever problem being raised. Thus, by seeking to understand the functions of folklore genres in relation to the sequence of its elements, we must look at the impact of the sequence on the audience (the society) in which a piece of oral text is found.

Folklore literature consists of both prose and verse narratives: poems and songs, myths, tales, fables and proverbs. Its study was more developed in Germany by *Grimm Brothers*, in the 1800s largely through collection and collation of verbal texts. In the late 19th century (in the 1880s), folklore societies were set up in Europe and in the United States; and folktale themes flourished and echoed among the neglected and isolated cultures and traditions. This historic time was marked by literary decline in Oromiyaa. The traditional narrative is obviously concerned only with verbal communication; and this depends upon the existence of a living people to carry on a tradition. If any item of literary tradition ceases to exist within the memory of man, it is completely lost. The spoken verbal tradition is transmitted through someone who narrates and reaches the audience. The folk narrator carries out the cultural tradition that he has inherited from others and delivers it to the living audience without the alteration of its concept. The recurring of the verbal arts and the effective participation of the audience actually enable the folk narratives to gain vigorous function in the society. If literary tradition is accepted by the audience or community, its continuity is guaranteed. In contrast, it is most likely that it disappears or remains stagnant if the succeeding generation is no more a zealous supporter of the cultural tradition of the past and if modern cultures and literatures are unable to embrace the values of the traditional past. Folklore genres reflect social realities and the experienced situations; and their study involves four major points: the narrator or performer, the audience, cultural milieu and the historical situations. The relevance or irrelevance, and the continuity or discontinuity of any verbal narrative depends on the perfect or imperfect unity of these factors.

Both of them [narrator and audience] are fully aware of not being alone in the world: they perceive themselves as part of human group that has a common past and a certain type of

adaptation to environment and human situation. The awareness of belonging to a *tradition* is extremely strong; an individual will hesitate to abandon the tradition of his father which will tell him how to behave in *actual situation* (Sumner, 1995: 343).

Folklore narratives continue to exist if they are recognized by the national culture of a particular people; and if the narrator and the audience are convinced of their timeless importance. This is to say, the narrator or singer transmits what he has inherited from his ancestors; and he does this on the basis of the existing situation and social order. In fact, the original image can be adapted to the changing circumstances so that the manipulation of this image will enable us to discover something new of what has already been known. Whatever the nature of tradition bearers, the continuous existence of oral literature depends upon sharp memory. As oral tradition passes on from generation to generation, it undergoes changes either from forgetting or conscious additions or substitutions. The more skilful tradition bearers take pride in the exactness of oral literature, the more it becomes sustainable in its original form.

Schematically, the existence and continuity of Oromo folklore literature can be best illustrated in terms of *syntagmatic* (horizontal) and *paradigmatic* (or vertical) units. When the narrator constructs certain ideas, he has to select striking images and then combine what he has chosen so that it can give social and cultural meanings. By combination, I am referring to the syntagmatic relations in which the narrator and the living audience or society interact. The term 'select' in this particular situation communicates paradigmatic relations of events wherein the exploration of what the society has experienced for generations and the cultural milieu together generate layers of poetic meanings. Syntagmatic within the context of narratology may be further linked with the transfer of meanings or metonymy whereas paradigmatic can possibly be associated with the expanding of meanings or metaphor. If the socio-cultural, historical and political events of the past are supported or embraced by the attitudes of the changing generations and the existing cultural tradition, then oral literary narrative continues to function as part of cultural values and social dynamism. On the whole, syntagmatic relations in oral art deal with interpersonal and it has social character in which the two organs of transmission, the narrator and the audience, constantly communicate in a given space and time. The paradigmatic, which is also referred to as unit of 'cultural semantics' shows the way the transmitted oral tradition is adapted to the existing socio-political reality and concrete historical situations. In a broader social setting, oral tradition may be

seen as the interconnection or combination of the cultural events and the experienced situations wherein the folk narrator and the audience are involved. In this connection, Sumner (1995: 360) has noted:

But the human spirit is not a pure intelligence appearing suddenly from nowhere. It is modelled by tradition, by life in society and by already experienced events. This human spirit perceives the intelligibility of a new situation by relating it to a situation known by itself or by tradition. This grasp of the real world by the human spirit is a kind of dialogue with truth: a truth already known by tradition, but constructed in the present situation.

We have examined that oral literary narrative is the outcome of the search for rational explanation to the physical world and its inhabitants. It bolsters indigenous values, institutions, behaviour patterns and attitudes. The perceived experienced events and situations are defined on the basis of social, cultural and political factors. Hence, the effective analysis of the functions of the Oromo verbal narratives depends on comprehending cultural reality and the existing situations. In the following diagram, I have constructed the entire image which enable us to visualize the entire relations between the verbal arts and the society. The nature of these relations and the *consciousness representation* created by the representative agent (the narrator) determine the literary value and the importance (relevance) of traditional narrative.

The Relations between Cultural Semantics, Social Reality and Oral Art

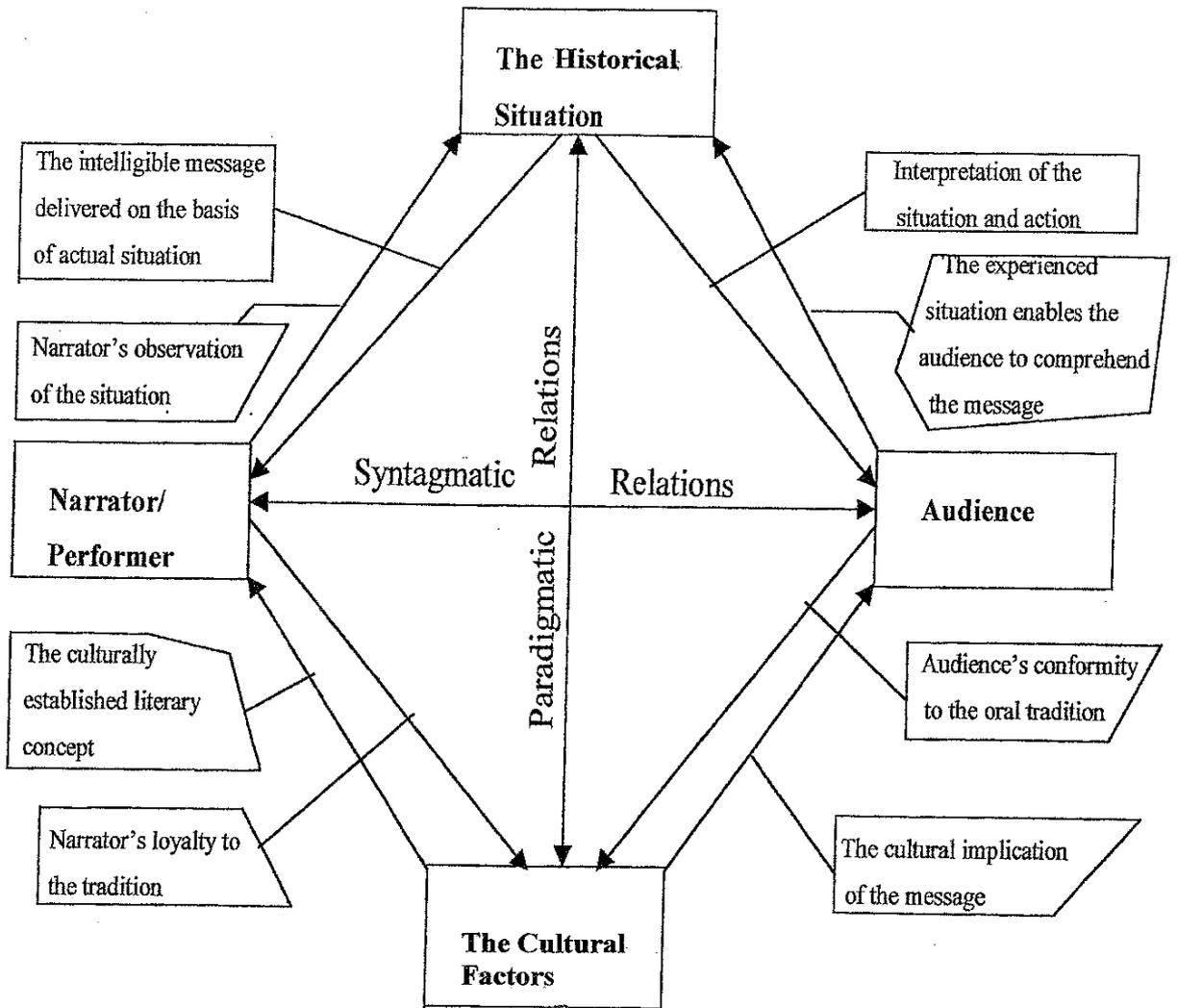


Figure 2: The Way Oral Literature Functions

4. The Comparative Approach to Animal-Centred Narrative: Sophistry and Ruse in Oromo Trickster Tales (Fables)

The Nature of Oromo Trickster Narrative

The performance of the trickster story (the *Durdur*) usually occurs during leisure times, especially at night before people go to bed. The children and the parents (sometimes grandparents) gather around the fire, the narrator or storyteller being in the centre. The composition of the audience will have a great effect on the performance of the *Durdur* narrative. The oral narrator usually changes his approaches, techniques and styles depending on the nature and the composition of the audience-children and adults. The reason for this is that the artist will focus on the particular striking techniques and devices, which according to him/her can give the core image not merely vividness and an animation that pleases the young generation, but also to impart the poetic quality it contains in a powerful fashion. In the process of objectifying the core images, the storyteller moves from simple plot to a conscious preoccupation with profoundness and style. Though the order of the artistic element lacks systematic coherence, the *Durdur* narrative becomes a fine work of art as an expert oral artist continues to shape it. He/she often endeavours to combine the episodes and the plots together so as to find both a single entity and artistic harmony.

Like the Danes' tradition of good night story ("*godnat historie*"), narrating traditional stories ("*oduu durii*") to their children is common in Oromo families. At the end of each story, the children try to relate the events to their natural social environment, discuss the theme of the stories, describe the characters, raise many questions; and parents offer them explanations. In this way, the society has succeeded in handing on to its children the collective wisdom of centuries. Through fable stories, the expert narrators have enriched the reasoning capacity and soberness of their children; and whatever stories they tell to them directly or indirectly related to moral and social issues as well as the universal character of mankind. For instance, the *Durdur* includes moral lessons, principles

of human behaviour, entertainment; and these encompass '*beast-fables*' in which the animals talk and act like human beings (given human characters or personified). The children who sit listening to an evening tale not only imbibe the wisdom of the ancestors, but also gain deep insight into human character.

In the representation of events and characters, there is a great emphasis on the marvellous and the extra-ordinary, the outstanding and the unique. The incorporation of human and animal figures in prose and poetry transforms them into symbols for the culture, which are then repeated in the traditional expressions with a constant meaning, creating the language of folklore for each culture (Ben-Amos, 1977: 17-18).

The contrasts between splendour and destruction, success and failure, evil and good, trust and betrayal emerge in the Oromo trickster stories (fables), which contain a great many of the elements of modern literature. Wealth, power, treason and the battles to achieve and hold on to dominant position are the main themes of the trickster stories in Oromo cultural tradition. This part discusses literary allegory in which the fable plot and the animal agents allegorize or represent the grotesque human behaviour and the *timeless challenges* in our world. It could be argued that the Oromo trickster narrative is an effective instrument and allegorical way of teaching moral truths wherein the animal characters are the paradigm of evil and good. They epitomize the underlying general truths about mankind, especially the antithetical human qualities, namely genuine concern versus sophistry and delusion. In this chapter, I have attempted to expand the beast-fable (trickster tale) into sustained irony and satire on the social, moral and political situation. The term fable is derived from the Latin word '*fabula*,' meaning telling or narrating. Fables, parables and allegories are interrelated subjects and forms of imaginative literature precisely because they are constructed in such a way that they all involve the interpretation of texts, together with the search for symbolic representation of characters and the hidden meanings of the key components beneath the surface utterance.

Literary allegory is a mode of narration or writing in which the agents and actions are constructed to make coherent sense. From this condensed definition, we see that the readers or listeners presuppose that a narrator communicates meanings in a subtle technique and indirect ways. The representative figures, objects, images or symbols the oral narrator selects or uses in the Oromo

trickster fable often generate multiple meanings that are peripheral other than those meanings which are immediate and obvious. Therefore, in the analysis of trickster fable, our interest is mainly to investigate the layers of meanings of a text that can inspire the audience. The complexity of meanings in the Oromo trickster narratives and the central issues they raise in a specific historical time may not impart significant messages unless the researchers make a critical judgement concerning the allegorical interpretation. From the late 15th century to the mid-19th century in Oromo literary history, allegorical narrative became one of the essential ingredients in oral literary discourse. It had a particular importance for the Romantic singers, nationalist poets and satirist narrators whose aims were to explain in a stylistic terms the antithetical events and intricate sophistries in our world.

For centuries, the African societies have lived in close contact with wild animals, which could be used as one of the main sources of comparative study of oral literature. In their long history of struggling to survive, the Oromo have invented a great deal of educational and fascinating stories concerning the animal's world in which each animal character is described in such a way that it epitomizes the motives and emotions proper to human being. Thus, the special characteristic of the trickster story is that it is intended to teach the disruptive effect of *the law of the jungle* through certain representative wild animals that are chosen to convey social and moral truth. In fact, this method of presenting instructive oral material for the purpose of promoting the wise conduct of life is ingenious, striking and most effective.

One of the most popular and best known African folktales is the animal-centred trickster story in which the character revelation takes the form of the predator and the prey. In the Cushitic Oromo of East Africa, the main trickster is the "fox," in Bantu societies of Central, East and South Africa, the hero trickster is "hare," in West Africa (Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone), the "spider," in Yoruba and Ibo of Nigeria, the "tortoise" is the protagonist trickster. The dominant characteristic of the trickster is that he is endowed with the ingenuity and the ability of spinning a web of intrigue; and he frequently uses the cunning techniques to gratify his greed and meet his malicious intent. Despite his incorrigible behaviour and mischievous act, the hero trickster enjoys the suffering and misfortunes of the deceived audience without, of course, feeling a sense of remorse. This is so because the trickery and ruse that enabled him to defeat bigger and stronger animals are viewed as virtues rather than misdeed and evil. In most of Oromo fables, the tricksters are the triumphant

heroes. This is often related to the human world in which the vermin and ingenuous characters often continue to defeat the naive and innocent in the political landscape where powerful trickery and captivating pledges create confusions and force choices.

Like the fascinating classic fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen of Denmark, the Oromo trickster tales have been used as the source of knowledge and amusements for centuries. Andersen's stories have retained a powerful appeal and freshness for generations; told and retold over the years without losing aesthetic qualities; they remain the living documents of wisdom. Though the substance and texture may differ, the Oromo fable stories can be compared with Andersen's work in a sense that they depict the universal truths that never diminish with time. This chapter discusses the nature and the objectives of fable tales, and the historical development of this imaginative literature. The presentation of the stories often takes allegorical structures in which the folk artist intends to give shape to the surface utterance and then breaks down these structures to investigate the themes running parallel to each text.

In the Oromo trickster stories, the narrator leaves the choice to the audience as to which of the characters deserves reward and which ones do not. He usually ends his tale with unresolved conflicts that are explicitly stated and to be debated or discussed by his audience. Therefore, the Oromo fables evoke spirited discussions and intriguing universal problems that provoke intellectual arguments. It is this peculiar function rather than any literary merit that makes them interesting. "The art of storytelling is such an important aspect of African life that most societies have an animal character as the designated teller of tales" (Gikandi, 2003: 417). A fable can be defined as a short narrative in prose or verse that exemplifies an abstract moral thesis or principle of human behaviour. Like the trickster fables of other Sub-Saharan Africans, most Oromo fables are beast-centred-that is, the animal characters talk or act like the human beings they symbolize or represent. In the stories, the universal behaviour of animal is compared with that of man. In the same way, the role each animal character plays in the animal world is also compared with that of the human world.

The unbalanced way of life of both the human beings and the animals has created unending problems. The relationship between the trickster, the predator, and the loser, the prey, has always been quite tense. The unfair game and the constant use of ruse of the former often generate mistrust, disharmony, hostility and the absence of co-existence; and yet they have lived and continued living together as *free and non-free* survivors, playing both the old and the new games in

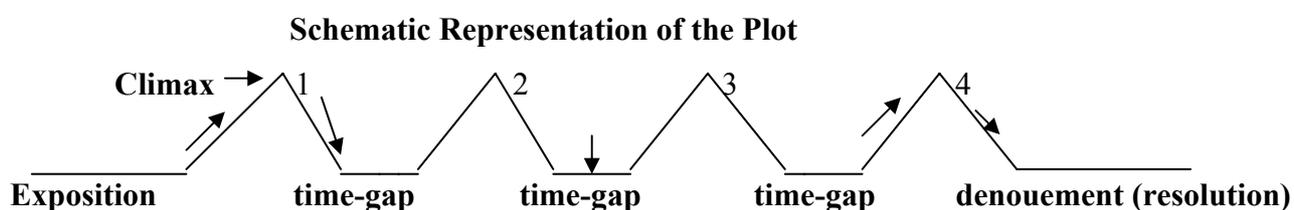
the world they share in common. A fable as an instructive subject depicts the petty tricks of the passing old and their destructive effects on human relations. In the four fable stories (1, 2, 4, 5), we see that the protagonist tricksters: fox, cock and rat, who are capable of manipulating the victims, complete their target in time, but the tricked characters: oxen, hornbill, snake and monkey often delay until they are taken captives and killed. The reality here is that in a socio-political situation where the fools and the shifty characters play games together, obviously, the former is most likely to suffer the consequence of living up to the expectations of the latter.

Plot Analysis and Styles

The plot in a narrative work of art is composed of its events and actions that are ordered and rendered to achieve emotional and artistic effects. The performed actions are the means by which the characters exhibit their moral and dispositional qualities. The plot of a particular literary work and the characters are thus interdependent critical concepts. As Ben-Amos (1977: 19) has put it, tales are not conglomerations of episodes and characters accidentally related, but that there are coherent, even though not immediately apparent, relations between the episodes and the characters of a tale. In much the same way as other folklore genres, the treatment of trickster tale involves the styles of composition and form, and these are extremely important for the fact that they constitute the major part of its essence. The stylistic analysis of the fables enables us to have deep insight into the pivotal functions and significant aspects of their structural organization. In a sense, this is how the investigation and reasonable explanation of the chain of circumstances can occur.

Though the methods or strategies of capturing the hearts and minds of the tricked characters may differ, the overall textual composition of Oromo trickster fables shows the recurring of common episodes. For instance, in the fable three, the trickster plays tricks on its rival characters one after another and convinces each of them separately and clandestinely so as to carry out the action of execution. The story develops from one scene to the next through sophisticated treason and deception. If we examine the plot of the same story, it consists of three major episodes. First, the journey to the expedition led by the trickster to captivate the cattle, the way the chosen image aroused the curiosity of the tricked members and how they joined the companionship of the villain

character one after another. Second, arriving at the destination of the journey and taking the cattle into captivity; and third, the process of eliminating the deceived characters. The thematic development of the story also involves episode within episode, and the narrator employs this style to show the variation of repetitive and intricate ruse. In the first major episode, we see the minor episodes in which the tricked group has willingly involved in the ambiguous journey or expedition to observe the way the game of the disabled character, the cock, will be played out. In the third scene, the dramatic elimination takes place one at a time. Within the relatively long version of the same story, we see short episodes and each event serves as amusing anecdote.



From this graph of episodic measure, the readers can understand that the account is constructed in such a way that there is a short decisive '*climax*' or turning-point before and after each '*time-gap*' of devising the techniques of polarization and elimination. For instance, the extermination of a lion is followed by a long break, a strategy which is designed by the trickster figure to create confusion and divert the attention of the remaining characters who will face the same tragic fate one after another. Each climax is also followed by the denouement, which shows the dramatic completion of each event or scene. The folk artist intentionally employs the time-gap mode of narration to reveal how the trickster eliminated the naïve characters peacefully-without creating tensions. The story emphasizes the problem of mistrust and disunity on the one hand, the destructive effect of being driven by instinctive feeling of jealousy and petty interest on the other hand. As I have indicated at the end of the story, the trickster Cock is a typical example of the villain character, Iago of Shakesperean tragedy.

Until the final scene, the trickster cock repeats more or less the same cunning method or technique with variations and the process of eliminating the passive followers takes us back to the first part of the journey. The verbal narrator attempts to portray the way the monster divides the deceived characters by putting them to trouble one by one. In other words, the aimless and docile characters who have chosen the road not to take one after the other were being eliminated in the

same way. The tragic irony is that *the ambiguous journey to the expedition* is turned out to be *the nightmarish journey of death*. Thus, the plot of the story develops from the journey to captivate the cattle through to the death of the unwise characters and the triumph of the villain. The story is constructed by the styles of composition wherein the events are chronologically ordered to constitute the whole. In the first and the second episodes, the characters act in superficial harmony. The third part of the plot depicts the disunity or falling apart, conflicts, crises and the peaceful elimination of those who are unwise: the lion, the snake, the hornbill and the rat, who represent the naïve human beings that play the losing game and whose destinies are in the hands of their adversaries.

The meticulous selection of the diverse images and an effort to develop episodic performance to produce educative production are what make Oromo trickster tales (fables) so interesting. As we keep our eyes on the basic structure of the developing plots and images, we at the same time capture the way the oral artist has developed other elements of style in focus as he/she shifts the narrative from one core image to the next; and in thematic terms, all the trickster stories have common concern. Similar to “*Ntsomi*” of Xhosa people of South Africa, in “*Durdur*” story of the Oromo, the overall thematic development, the relations of events and characters are of gently swaying nature in the sense that the events and actions repeat themselves, take us back slightly, and then move forward again to the climax. This type of movement, which is marked by *time-gap* and sophisticated trickery, has artistic value and is intended to depict intricate situations and tensed relations of the characters. It creates suspense, which is one of the central techniques employed by the oral artist. “Once the initial movement has been revealed, it is possible for the audience to participate, either physically or imaginatively, for it has the same...repertory as the artist, and it too sways, physically, imaginatively, sensuously, moving gently and repeatedly until the next image is introduced, and then the same process is repeated” (Scheub in Lindfors, 1977: 43).

The Ambiguous Journey: Malaan Duula

This story is almost similar to “The Impossible Imitation of African Trickster Tales” of Denise Paulme (see Lindfors 1977), in which the defeat is the effect of the ignorance of the

deceived characters. In the story, the trickster, the protagonist cock, has planned to meet its fierce ambition of getting rich. This hidden motive has resulted in severe retribution of those passive participants; the lion, the snake, the hornbill and the rat, which have joined the companionship of the troublemaker, the cock, without knowing what the consequence would be.

The problem of being dictated by the will of the trickster, the absence of mutual understanding and trust among them, together with the aimless pursuit of undefined goal characterize the audience. Thinking that they will win the game, all the members of the expedition, the imitators, keep allegiance to a monster of egoism, the cock, who has already declared himself wise (see the statement “I would apply wisdom”) and decided not to let them win victory.

The trickster succeeds, but the tricked audience who participated in the expedition without any concrete aim, defeated themselves. All the characters seem to share insincerity in common, but they may also have vested desires as to how to achieve their objectives. Perhaps the greediness and the hidden motives they have in common continued to be the cause for the disunity of hearts and minds of the fragile audience whose lack of mutual concern brought about their collective losses. The story can be compared with Paulme’s “Impossible Imitation” in a sense that it is the victory of the weak over the strong, the triumph of the lone over power and social pressures. The impossible imitation becomes the impossible victory. All the tricked foolishly perished. They all killed one another without understanding the whole drama and without discovering the ruse of the masquerading protagonist. The story powerfully explains the moral truth that, rushing into things without careful calculation and rational judgement is to face serious dangers.

The First Episode

Lukkuun horii booji'uuf ka'ee oduu deemu *leencatti* dhufe. Leenci, 'Eessa deemta?' jedhee gaafate. 'Horii booji'uuf deema,' jedheen. 'Mee akka itti boojitu laalaa,' jedheeti wajjiin deeme.

Oduu deeman, *bofatti* dhufan. Bofnillee 'Eessa deemta?' jedhee gaafate. 'Duulaaf deema,' jedheen lukkuun. 'Ijji tokko siballaadha, luttii tokko simuraadha, attamiin/akkamiin duulta,' jedhee bofni gaafannaan, "*Malaan Duula*" jedheen. Bofnillee 'Akkuma lukkuun horii itti booji'u laala,' jedheeti wajjiin deeme.

Oduma deeman, *huummotti* dhufan. Huummoon, ‘Lukkuu eessa deemta?’ jedheen. ‘Horii booji'uuf deema,’ jedheen. ‘Mee akkuma ati itti boojitu laala,’ jedheeti huummoonillee wajjiin deeme.

Oduma deeman, *hantuutatti* dhufan. Hantuunis, ‘Eessa deemtan?’ jedhee gaafannaan, ‘Horii booji'uuf deemna,’ jedheen. ‘Akkuma isin itti boojitan laala,’ jedheeti hantuunillee wajjiin deeme.

The Second Episode: The Shifting of Narrative Technique

Oduma deeman, bakka horiin jiru gayanii dhaabatan. ‘*Aabboo*, isinitu numaraafuu/hundaafuu hangafaa hafuura itti nuu baafadhaa,’ jetteen lukkuun leencaan. Leenci hafuura baafannaan [aadee jennaan], horiin dammaqee moonaa/mooraa yaa'e. Horii walitti qabanii oofatanii karaa badaa/hamaa bira haa darbanii/ lufanii eegeeti, lukkuun *bofa* addatti/kophaatti waameeti akkana jedhe, ‘Leenchi humni isaa hagana ga'u kun horii kanaan yoo galle, nurraa fudhataa mala itti laali,’ jedheen. *Lukkuun* itti yaaddeeti, ‘Ani mala arge,’ jedheen, *bofaan*. ‘Galgala yoo inni ciisee ibidda oo'ifatu eegii iddi,’ jedheen. ‘Kanatu nadhibaa,’ jedheeti *bofni leenca* iddee *ajjeese*.

Leenca ajjeesaniiti horii oofatanii deeman. Lukkuun *huummoo* waameeti, ‘huummoo, *bofni* leenca ajjeese amma nufixee horii nurraa fudhataa maal wayya?’ jedheen. ‘Maal goonaree?’ jedheen huummoon. ‘Mala arge,’ jedheen lukkuun. ‘Qabbana galgalaa yoo inni maramee ciisu, mataa isaa dhayii ajjeesi,’ jedheen. ‘Kanatu nadhibaa,’ jedheeti *bofa* mataa dhayee ajjeese.

Lukkuu, *huummoo* fi *hantuunni* waliin horii oofataniiti deemanii bakka bultii gayanii bulan. *Lukkuun hantuuta* addatti waamteeti, ‘Bofni aabboo ajjeese, huummoon bofa ajjeese, amma malli keenna maali? *Huummoon* nufixeeti horii mara nurraa fudhataa,’ jedheen. ‘Qoradhee mala arge,’ jedheen lukkuun. ‘Yoo *huummoon* rafu, jala seenii koola isaa irraa ciri,’ jedheen. *Hantuuni* koola huummoo irraa cirraan ka'uu dadhabee taa'ee hafe.

Lukkuu fi hantuunni horii oofataniiti mana lukkuutitti galan. ‘Yaa *hantuuta*, ati qondaalaa, nama mara caaltaa, *bofa aabboo ajjeese huummotu ajjeese, huummoo bofa ajjeese situ ajjeese. Hantuuta*, ati qondaalaa, meendhicha mooraan sitti godhaa gadi bayii kosii irra taa'ii *geerari*,’ jedheen. *Hantuuni* gadi bayeeti kosii gubbaa taa'eeti geerare. Achitti cululleen itti dhuftee fudhatte. Lukkuun mala kanaan jara hundumaa/maraa wal-ficisiiseeti loon fudhate.



The above extract can be summarized as follows:

The First Episode

The *cock* planned to go on an expedition so as to hold the cattle in captivity and met the *lion* on his way. The lion asked where he was going, and the cock replied that he was going to capture the cattle. ‘Let me accompany you so that I could observe how you do it,’ said the lion.

On their way, they met the *snake*. The snake enquired where the cock was going. He replied that he was going on an expedition. ‘You do not have one eye and one of your legs is also amputated; how could you manage going for expedition?’ asked the snake. ‘*I would apply wisdom,*’ the cock answered. Then, the snake followed him to see the way he would do it.

While they were travelling, they met the *hornbill*. The hornbill also enquired where the cock was going. ‘For expedition,’ he replied. The hornbill also accompanied him to see how he could be able to hold the cattle in captivity.

Then, they met the *rat* on their way to the expedition. The rat asked where they were going; and the cock replied that they were going for the expedition. The rat followed them to observe what would happen.

The Second Episode: The Shifting of Narrative Technique

Finally, they all arrived where the cattle were gathered. ‘Sir, you are our elder and we request you to roar,’ said the cock. The lion accepted the offer and roared. Being frightened, the cattle left the kraal and ran away for safety.

They rounded-up the cattle and kept on travelling. Realizing that they managed to overcome all the obstacles, the cock took time and shared his apprehension about the *lion* with the *snake*. He disclosed to him that the lion is a threat to them all and convinced the snake to eliminate him. Thus, he urged the snake to sting the lion while he was lying near the fireplace. Accordingly, the snake stung the lion and killed him.

Succeeding in killing the lion, they kept the cattle and continued the journey. Using the same trick, the cock secretly informed the *hornbill* that the snake which killed the powerful lion could possibly eliminate them all as well. He thus convinced the hornbill to knock his head down by its beak when he wrapped up himself. The hornbill killed the snake.

The *cock*, the *hornbill* and the *rat* owned the cattle and continued their journey until they reached the place where they stayed overnight. As usual, the cock secretly explained to the *rat* that the existence of the *hornbill* would be a threat to their future. He told him to remove his feather while he was sleeping. The rat did what he was ordained and the hornbill collapsed.

In the end, the *cock* and the *rat* owned the cattle and reached the place where the cock lived. The cock said, ‘you are a victor and better than all of us. *The hornbill killed the snake which killed the lion, you killed the hornbill which killed the snake*, and so you would be awarded the *meendhicha*, meaning ‘a piece of goat/sheep skin worn round the wrist as a decoration.’ He covered the *meendhicha* with a ‘tallow’ and put on the rat’s neck. Then he instructed him to sing heroic song (the *geerarsa*) by standing on the heap of decomposed cow-dung (*kosii*). Finally, the rat was taken away by the kite and killed while he was singing.

In this way, the cock won the game by using skilful tricks and succeeded in possessing the cattle. This trickster story teaches us a great moral lesson. The portrayal of the *mora*-a ‘tallow,’ is an indication of emptiness in which self-destruction occurred; whereas the *kosii*-‘the decayed cow-dung’ is a representation of moral corruption and social depreciation. This story can also be compared with Aesop’s fable of “*The Imitative Instinct*” (p. 49), in which the monkey sitting in a lofty tree saw some fishermen casting their net into a river and watched what they did. When they left the net and went some distance away to eat their meal, he came down from the tree and tried to copy them. But as soon as he touched the net, he got entangled and drowned. ‘Mine is a just punishment,’ he thought, ‘for trying to fish when I had not learnt how to swim.’ Though the situation varies, the last part of the story of the *Malaan Duula* (I apply Wisdom)-the way the foolish “rat” was deceived by the “cock” can be compared with Aesop’s fable of “*Pride Goes before Fall*,” in which the trickster “cat” lauded the crow’s singing voice. The crow up in the tree started singing and dropped the cheese from its mouth to the ground.

The story of the *Malaan Duula* is a short and dramatic narrative, which more or less, goes parallel with the trickster tale of “*Animal Farm*” of Orwell (1945), in which all the animals in the farm who agreed to take their destinies in their own hands under the leadership of the “hero Pig” called “Napoleon,” were finally killed when he turned on them just out of villainy. Though the narrative techniques used by the producers vary, the way the Cock (*lukkuu*) and the Pig killed their fellow groups is quite similar. In both trickster narratives, we see that all the animals that obeyed

the veiled motives of the vermin figures finally perished. “Napoleon stood sternly surveying his audience, then, he uttered a high-pitched whimper” (Orwell, 1945: 72). All his fellow animals were horrified and torn apart. The dogs shrieked for mercy, the four pigs waited trembling; and they all gave up hope. When they had finished their confession, the dogs promptly tore their throats out. The three hens who had been ring leaders of the rebellion were also slaughtered. Finally, the sheep confessed urinating in the drinking pool and they too were executed. Napoleon who was made a leader of the animals to lead them to be free from human domination eventually became the dominant figure and virulent killer. All the animals who trusted Napoleon and rallied behind him to attain freedom suffered tragic deaths. The slogans “all animals are equal, all animals are comrades,” failed to work. Like the *Malaan Duula* of the Oromo, the first optimism, expectations and the core image *comradeship* in Orwell’s *Animal Farm* are denied in the second part of his trickster story. The two fable stories share common themes in that they reveal the problem of egoism, the tragedy of pernicious trickery in the human world in which hostility, the falling apart of people and the irreparable losses of lives have become the effect. The subservient attitudes and lack of mutual concern of the characters (dogs, hens, geese, sheep) in the *Animal Farm* show that surrender and more confessions mean to give excess confidence and power to the villain trickster, the Pig or Napoleon, whose covert intention is to get-rid-of other animals. Likewise, in the trickster tale of the *Malaan Duula*, the naïve characters (the lion, the snake, the hornbill and the rat), despite witnessing the danger ahead of them, continued to accept and fulfil the divisive strategy and treacherous act used by the Cock. In both stories, the naïve nature of the dormant audience and their inability to challenge their adversaries gave more opportunities to the demonic protagonists to have absolute power over those who obeyed them.

The oral artist has attempted to satirize the crime of deception, jealousy and the denial of expectations in the violent environment through the passive and the vermin animal characters which allegorize the bleak prospect of the antagonistic world marked by social and moral corruption. The depiction of the cock as a representation of evil is to emphasize a vicious streak of sadism and irresponsibility in the unnatural world marked by bestiality and powerful treason. The cock as a protagonist animal character in the story is a symbol of the human being full of sophistry ideas and satanic appetite. “Evidences of the folktales can be found all over the world...and even if these narratives arise from different conditions, depending on place and time, they all have something

in common: they have origin in social need” (Dégh, 1969: 63). The *Malaan Duula* is a mirror image of delusion wherein the satirical travellers may be compared with the corrupt *Lilliputian people* of Jonathan Swift as they are heading for worse. The narrator perfectly used the protagonist character as a mask or ‘persona’ and simultaneously as a mouthpiece and butt. Thus, the journey or voyage to capture the cattle has ironically revealed itself as a journey to put in a trap those imitators who see life as a ready-made world and are driven by impetuous decision subsequent to which they suffered collective losses. The cock may also be compared with the villain character, “*Iago*” of Shakespearean tragedy, who was driven by savage desire and wildness, whereas his followers can possibly be seen as the representation of those innocent people (Othello, Desdemona, Cassio, Emilia) who were victimized when Iago emerged as diabolic power. Iago persuades *Cassio* to sue for Othello’s favour through the interconnection of *Desdemona*; then urged Desdemona to plead Cassio. He then told to Othello that Desdemona (Othello’s wife) is unfaithful to him and in love with Cassio. With masterful skill, Iago feeds the flame he has kindled, using many tricks and devices to advance his game. At last, at the height of his jealous madness, he created an atmosphere of suspicion, animosity and total mistrust. In the end, he succeeded in killing the innocent people: Desdemona, Othello, Cassio and *Emilia* (his wife who revealed his horrendous crime). The animal character, the Cock, which epitomizes Iago and his evil intentions skilfully spun a web of deceit to trap all the characters: the *lion*, the *snake*, the *rat* and the *hornbill*. Pitting one against the other, he eliminated them all to achieve his diabolic end. The above fable story has the instructive appeal of all time because it depicts the universal human folly and *the destructive effect of pursuing the satanic way of life and irrational act*.

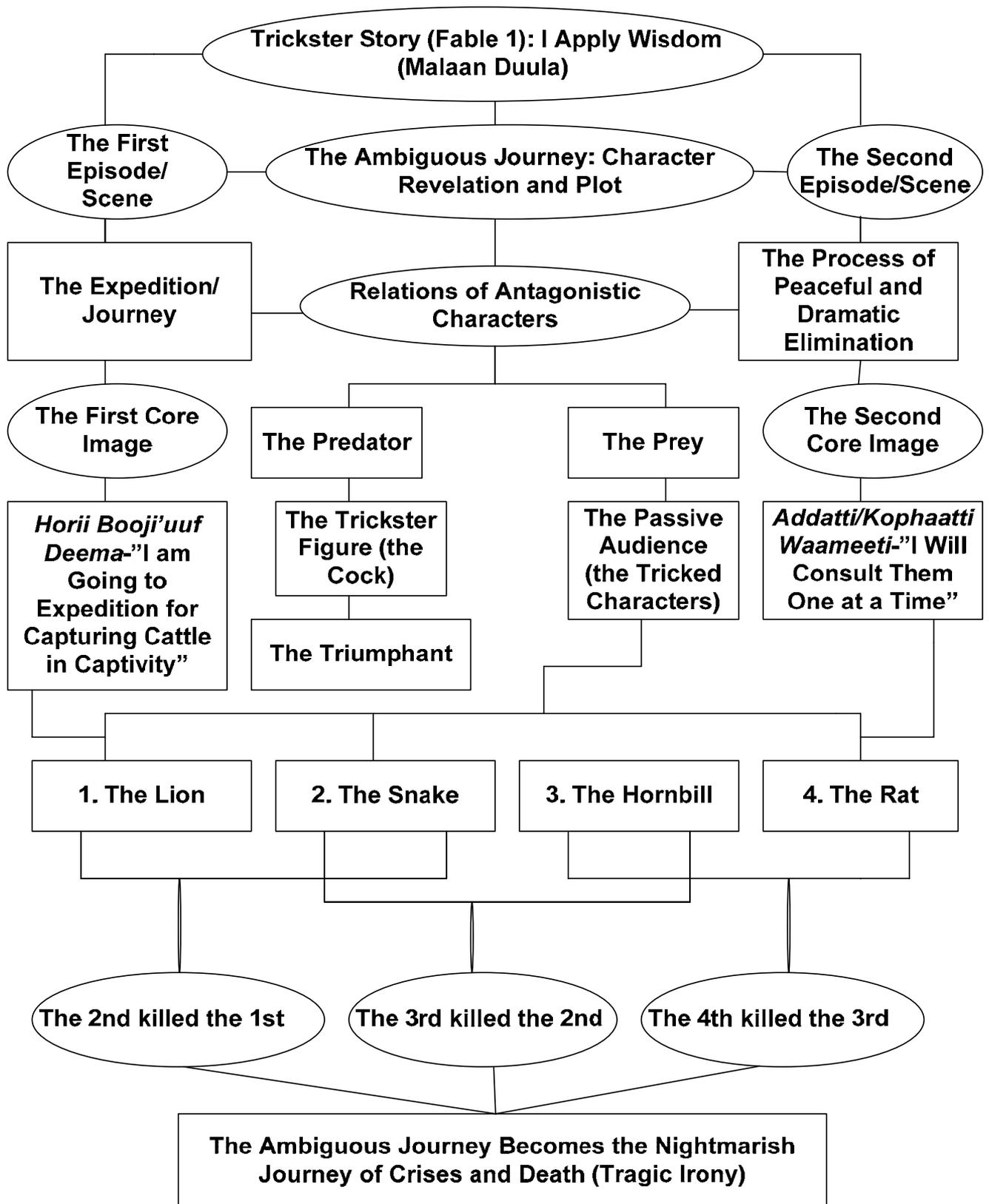


Figure 3: Character Revelation and Plot of the Trickster Story (Malaan Duula)

Take Not the Dreamer at Face Value: Mootii Saree

I often watch the ‘Animal Planet’ on television and carefully examine the way the American police forces and the animal lovers struggle to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of mistreated domestic animals, especially the dogs in the United States. A lot of cruel masters (owners) abuse innocent animals and keep them in bondage in dirty places or let them be wanderers without giving them food. As the result of this, many of them die because of hunger and lack of proper sanitation. It is not without reason that the scientists, the scholars, the researchers, the writers and the animal activists fight for the rights of both domestic and wild animals. It is not in vain that both the modern and the traditional narrators devote their time to make the voice of the animals be heard.

“Now comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it: our lives are miserable, laborious and short” (Orwell, 1945: 8). Is it not clear then, comrades that all the evils of this life of ours spring from the tyranny of human beings? (ibid., p. 10). This fable narrative brings to light how the domestic animals-dogs, that are made captives tried to organize rebellion; and in its content the trickster story of *Mootii Saree* (the king of the dogs) shares common characteristics with Orwell’s fable story of animals’ “*Rebellion.*” The oral narrator has tried to capture the image of the hopeless crowd of dogs emphasizing the way that image suffered in the public due to human unfairness. He projects a mood of melancholy descended on the denied crowd through the main character, the king of dogs, not merely to tell us the sordid life of these animals, but also to relate this scene with the deplorable human situation resulted from corrupting influences of the inefficient leaderships. The story has a significant place even in the modern world not because of its entertaining appeal, rather, due to its satirical power of presenting human errors. The aesthetic quality of the story lies in the subtle language the oral artist has employed to explicate *the sad reality of moral and social sinking.*

The *Mootii Saree* is satirically set to comment on a depraved society which has no defined purpose and whose destiny is in the hands of those who manipulate them. The story begins with the ‘king of the dogs’ which wants to be his own master in his own way, but lacks courage as to make his dream into reality. We see him voicing the grievances and encouraging his fellow dogs to disobey anyone who dishonours them. The unnamed king of dogs is also portrayed by the narrator as a hollow image, like Professor Oguazor of Wole Soyinka, who appears to be an exemplary figure

of Nigerian society, but proved his emptiness when he failed to demonstrate his genuine concern. When the trickster leader, who pretends to be the liberator suddenly vanished without any achievement, the gathered aimless audience (the tricked characters) also dispersed to join their leader who left them behind and ran away to gather leftovers.

Mootiin saree rakkoo sariin qabdu irratti haasawanii murtii dabarsuuf jecha, sariin maraa walgahii waame. ‘Diqqaanii/xinnaanii fi guddaan keenna/keenya hin kajeela. Yoo tuuttuu nuun jedhan, walmorka/waldorgoma kufaa-caba oriina,’ jedheeti dubbate. ‘Maqaan nubadee, salphannee, asii achi yoo tuuttuu jedhanii isin waaman, kajeeluu fi ajajamuuf hin deeminaa,’ jedheen. Oduu waa’ema kana irratti haasawaa jiran, tuuttuu jedhanii waamanii jennaan, sariin walitti qabe/walgahii waame dhiiseeti kajeeluuf biraa ori’e. Sariin martuu (hundinuu) waan walgayaniif dhiisaniiti kajeeluuf kufaa-caba mootii isaanii duukaa ori’an.



**Literally, the leader (king) of the dogs called a general meeting to discuss the issues concerning their problems and thereupon to pass decisions. He said, ‘both our children and the grown-ups sponge others.’ Whenever people say ‘tuuttuu’ (calling any dog without mentioning its name) we run madly just to compete with one another for sponging. We have humiliated ourselves; and hereafter, whenever someone calls you ‘tuuttuu’ you should not go for sponging,’ he added. While discussing this, somebody called saying ‘tuuttuu’ from the nearby and he abruptly stopped leading the meeting and ran madly to sponge off by leaving his companions behind. Then, all the dogs left the meeting and followed their leader to sponge off as usual without arriving at any decision.*

The above satirical narrative reveals the human folly. It is a heavy criticism against those who are incapable of managing their own affairs, have fallen behind with their aims and continued to serve the will of others in favour of petty interests. Moreover, the ‘Mootii Saree’ and its audience represent the aimlessness and moral squalor of the depraved authority and his followers on the one hand, the passive and dependent individuals who cannot rely on their own ability and care not what they do on the other. The term ‘tuuttuu,’ literally calling a dog without mentioning its name, is a derogatory remark that connotes disgrace and contempt. The story reflects the consequence of listening to empty pledges and offensive lies of the losing generation of crisis. The reasons for the stagnation of a society and its falling apart have their root in the neglect of several decades and the rewarding of the praise of folly. The oral artist emphasizes the problem of betraying public trust and

the way people's hopes and expectations have been disappointed because of the problem of putting trust in the unscrupulous leaders who have no direction.

The Retribution: The Reversal of Fortune

The arrogant beliefs in one's physical power and the total disregard for the existence of others have always been the cause for polarization and conflicts. The irrational act of the adventurers and the scrupulous works of the wise have never co-existed mainly because one is the destroyer of the other. This general truth about humans and animals is reflected in the story.

Tales that celebrate the trickster, whether in animal or human form, are universal in human folklore. Still the popularity of *Brer Rabbit* in the folklore of the slaves attest to the enduring faith of black Americans in the power of mind over matter. The spirit of *Brer Rabbit* lived in every slave who deceived his master with a smile of loyalty while stealing from his storehouse and making plans to escape (Mckay, 1997: 136).

This fable deals with a situation in which a captive ape manoeuvres its escape skilfully. The powerful predator, the lion, and the weak prey, the ape, are the two antagonistic characters, which are in a serious conflict mainly because the kindness of the latter is not reciprocated by the former. The ape, which freed the trapped lion, is now in danger as she received death threats from the cruel predator, which does not understand the value of compassion. It is not surprising to see him rushing to such an action without calculating what the consequences would be. The protagonist character, the ape, persevered hard to win her adversary through patience and careful calculation. The two characters, the tree and the cow, which the ape has chosen as mediators, are unable to resolve the dispute; rather they have aired the grievances they all share and advised her to give up.

The lion proudly remains confident to win the game and continued observing the situation without changing his poor strategy. He seems to have undermined or ignored the matter and is not even willing to say anything to settle the crisis. The trickster fox, which in the same way as the ape, suffered domination under the king of the jungle, has taken a decisive revenge on the lion when he has foolishly obeyed his enemy. Here, the punishment has come from his selfish attitude, which is the character of the irrational authority having a powerful arm; but it is devoid of wisdom and careful thinking.

The story powerfully emphasizes the absence of sensibility, the failure of relying on the use of force, the imminence of resistance, and the dangers of incorrigible behaviours of those who reward unfairness in favour of irrational gratification. The physical power of the lion puts him into more danger in which the savage desire finds its retribution in trap; and this is the reward of villainy. In the end, the king of the jungle has become his own victim.

Like the proverb, the trickster fable is a universal language of a traditional society and has been used all over the world as instructive subject. In his popular folktale (“*eventyr*”), Hans Christian Andersen has discussed the antithetical behaviour of his two characters, namely “*The Naughty Boy*” and a “*Good Old Poet*.” Out of compassion, the poet helped the boy who has been frozen and collapsed because of the harsh weather of winter and torrential rain. The generous poet has taken the boy by the hand, brought him near the fire, given him best wine and apple. But the generous help offered to him has not been returned in the same way by the naughty Cupid, who has no sense of concern for others. The trickster character, the boy, laid an arrow across, aimed, shot the old poet straight through the heart and ran away. The poet, who has been exasperated by the misdeed of the villain character says, “I shall tell that to all good children, so that they may take care, and never play with him, for he will do them hurt” (Andersen, 1996: 45). H. C. Andersen also discusses a similar situation when he portrays the kindness and thoughtfulness of the personified “*Rose Tree*” and the unfeeling behaviour of the “*Snail*.” The latter sees the world as nothing and giving something useful to the world is not its concern; whereas the former feels happy for blooming over and over again. In other words, producing fragrant roses and giving benefit to a human being is not only pleasing the Rose Tree, but also seen by him as a real blessing. The selfish Snail constantly opposes this quality of being kind to others. Though the characters in the stories are not all animal-centred, the two stories of by H. C. Andersen resemble Oromo fable story of “*Qamalee*” and “*Leenca*” (Ape and Lion), in which the kindness of the former has been undermined by the latter.

Qamaleen oduu deemtu, leenca goomoon/kiyyoon qabetti dhufte. ‘Bayuu dadhabee narraa bani,’ jedhee gaafannaan, banteffii baye. ‘Guyyaa lama guutuu waan as keessa qooqa (agabuu) tureef, baa’ee beelayeeraa sinyaadha,’ jedheen. ‘Eega (erga) sinyaadhu malee jette, jaarsaan walgayanneeti nanyaatta,’ jetteen.

Oduu jaarsa bira dhaquuf deeman, sa'atti dhufan. 'Yaa sa'ana, leenca kana goomoon qabee rakkatee narraa bani jennaan baneef. Goomoo keessaa baanaan, sinyaadha naan jedhee, mee dubbii kana nuu ilaalaa,' jetteen. 'Yaa gowwaa, ilma namaa waan namarratti dalagu/hojjatu hin argituu? Ana kunoo na'elmataniiti, aanan kiyya dhuganiiti, ijoolleedhan naguddifataniiti, naqalatani, foon kiyya nyaatanii, haa sinyaatuu,' jedheen.

Ammas deemaniiti, mukatti dhufan. 'Yaa mukana, leenci kun goomoon qabee irraa bannaan sinyaadha naan jedhe, mee dubbii kana nuuf ilaalaa,' jetteen. 'Yaa gowwaa, ilma namaa waan namarratti dalagu hin argituu? Kunoo gaaddisa kiyya jalatti roobaa fi aduu irraa dhooggee/dhoowwee, booda ammoo namuraniiti, mana naan-ijaarataniiti, barcumaa nagodhataniiti, deebisanii ibiddatti nagubanii, haa sinyaatuu,' jedheen.

Ammas deemaniiti, jeedalatti (sardiidatti) dhufan. 'Yaa jeedaloo (jeedo), leenca kana goomoon qabee irraa bane jennaan, si-nyaadha naan jedhee, mee dubbii kana nuuf ilaalaa,' jetteen. 'Leenca hagana/hammana ga'u goomoon qabee, ati irraa banuun dhugaamiti; mee waan maraafuu/hundaafuu, beenaatii akka goomoon isa qabee ati irraa bante, na'agarsiisaa,' jetteen.

Ka'anii goomoo bira dhaqaniiti, 'Mee akka itti siqabe laalaa, keessa seenii natti muldhisi,' jetteeti jeedalti leenca gaafatte. Leenci banatee keessa seennaan, goomoon itti cufame. 'Kunoo dhugaan tee baate,' jetteen jeedalti qamaleedhaan. Mala kanaan leenca hidhatti deebifteeti, qamalee du'a jalaa baafte.



The *ape* met a trapped *lion* while taking a walk. 'Please rescue me,' he enquired; and she opened the trap and rescued him. After being rescued, the lion said to the ape, 'I was in the trap for two days without eating anything. Since I am so hungry, I have decided to devour (eat) you.'

'Since you have decided to kill (eat) me, we better take this case to the mediator; and it is thereafter that you would eat me,' she replied.

On their way, they met a '*cow*.' 'My dear cow, I rescued this lion from where he was trapped. After being freed, he wanted to eat me; and so we request you to mediate us,' enquired the ape. 'You are so naïve; can't you see the unfairness of the human being? The people milk me and drink my milk, their children feed on my milk; but finally, they slaughter me and eat my flesh. So it is not surprising if he eats you,' replied the cow.

Then they continued their way to look for another mediator and met the ‘*tree*.’ ‘My dear tree, I rescued this lion from the trap; but he wanted to eat me after I helped him to be free. We need your help to mediate us,’ enquired the ape. ‘You are so naïve; can’t you see the human treason? I serve people as shelter and protect them when there is rain and scorching heat; but finally they cut me down to construct houses, to make chairs, and then they use me as firewood. So it is not surprising if he eats you,’ replied the tree.

Then, they continued searching for another mediator; and on their way, they met a ‘*fox*.’ ‘My dear fox, I freed this lion from the trap; but after being freed, he wanted to eat me. We need your help to settle this dispute,’ she enquired. ‘It is hard to believe (that) you rescued such a big lion from where he was trapped. Anyhow, let us go to the place where the trap is, so that you show me how you rescued him from danger,’ replied the fox.

They went to the place where the lion was trapped. ‘Would you please enter the trap and let me see how you were trapped?’ enquired the fox. Accordingly, the lion opened and entered; and the trap was closed. The fox said to the ape, ‘See! Justice is done.’ Devising such a clever trick, the fox put the lion in the trap again. In this way, she freed the ape from death.

In Aesop’s fable called “*Evil for Good*” (p. 53), we find similar situation, though the tragedy of death has not happened in the story of “The Reversal of Fortune”. *One winter’s day, a farm-hand found a frozen snake stiff with the cold; and being moved by compassion, he picked it up and put it in his bosom. But with warmth, its natural instinct returned; and it gave its benefactor a fatal bite. As he died he said, ‘I have got what I deserve for taking pity on an evil creature.’* The Oromo trickster narrative brings to light the relation between animal’s world and man’s world by depicting the quality of behaviour, which contributes to human personality. As a collection of instructive events, it unfolds the sanity and vanity of man. In the above story, the oral artist raises the moral and social issues, underlying the universal human callousness, which stands at the root of misunderstanding and conflict; and the necessity of resolving conflicts with *great patience* and *wisdom*.

The characters in the story: the ‘*ape*’ (protagonist), ‘*lion*,’ ‘*cow*,’ ‘*tree*’ and ‘*fox*,’ represent the human beings having either the degenerate behaviour of a savage man or endowed with the quality of being intelligent, rational, honest and generous. The interplay between the two antagonistic characters: the *wicked (the lion)* and the *genuine (the ape)* reflects the universal truth in

the unbalanced world. The ape (*qamalee*) symbolically represents the embodiment of sanity, reason, patience and kindness; whereas the lion (*leenca*) signifies a tyrant character devoid of concern, love and compassion. Being motivated by malicious intentions, the proud lion planned to devour the helpless ape, but he fell in a pit, which he dug for the small animal. In this way, the strong was victimized, but the weak survived through wisdom. This can be compared with a heavy-handed person who often suffers as the result of his bestiality and arrogant beliefs.

The cow and the tree allegorize the powerless critical observers and commentators, who immensely suffered in much the same way as the helpless ape, but have no courage and determination to solve the problems which affected them and the others.

In the Oromo folklore, the 'fox' usually plays the role of a wise man, self-seeking character, spy and an expert advisor. In this story, it represents a wise judge who makes rational decision.

This fable story is also very much alike Kenyan trickster tale of Lee Haring in which the 'crocodile' invited the monkey to visit him. The monkey enquired the host (crocodile) how to reach his stay (home) for he did not know how to swim. The crocodile told him to jump on his back and the monkey did. On their way to the crocodile's destination, the crocodile felt hungry and asked the monkey to give him his heart. The monkey replied that this was what they were going to do. He added that they had to go back because the monkeys usually leave their hearts at home when they become friendly to someone. The monkey thus convinced the crocodile that he could not be eaten for he was so weak. He at the same time promised the crocodile that he would get the heart as soon as they reach home. When they got the shore, the monkey jumped and climbed into a mango tree, picked a mango and threw it saying to the crocodile there is the heart.

The Disunity: The Insincere Generous

Attempting the road not to take and living up to the prophetic language of the trickster are always destructive. *Othello* has been misled by *Iago*; as the result of which human tragedy happened; and King Lear trusted his two evil daughters, *Goneril* and *Regan*, but he suffered the consequences. In fact, there are numerous tragic stories of these types. Most of the conflicts and tragic events of the past and present are the effects of complex contrivances of the trickster figures, which appear to be sincere but stab you in the back. These universal realities are shown in this

trickster story. “Rings shall vanish from our noses; and the harness from our back, bit and spur shall rust forever, cruel whips no more shall crack” (Orwell, 1945: 13). In the story, the three oxen are described as a symbol of rebellion. According to them, jungle is the place where small and large animals take refuge, live in peace and freedom; but they are not aware of the fact that the king of the jungle is more callous and irrational than their old masters, the human beings. “The animals were happy as they had never conceived it possible to be. Every mouthful of food was an acute positive pleasure, now, it was truly their own food...not doled out to them by a grudging master. With the...parasitical human beings gone, there was more for everyone to eat” (ibid., p. 26). In the beginning of their new life in the forest, they enjoyed freedom and managed to survive because of their solid oneness. But the common purpose, which previously united them is now denied as they allowed themselves to be trapped by the insincerely generous, the fox, which works as the agent of a lion, with whom she shares the leftovers. As the fox won the hearts of the oxen, uncertainty became their fate. Their unity was shaken and consequently, tensions and confusions consumed them. They did not know which was more repressive, fearful and terrifying-the harsh condition under human beings or the cruel retribution they had just experienced in the new hostile environment. In the old days, there had often been scenes equally terrible, but it seemed that it was far worse now that the tragedy happened because they trusted the judgement of their foe rather than relying on the decisive power of their own, the unity. They are unable to discover the secret of their missteps and so they all were doomed to perish. “They were all slain....And so the tale of confessions and executions went on until there was a pile of corpses lying before Napoleon [refers to the hero Pig] and the air was heavy which had been unknown there since the expulsion of Jones” (ibid., p. 75). The continuation of revealing the truth and/or telling the whole secret of their lives to the monster fox endangered the existence of the deceived characters, the oxen; and in fact, the tragic situation in the *animal empire* was more horrendous than the human world they experienced.

The irony is that the freedom of the jungle turns out to be a shameful disunity and death of the oxen, which have given up themselves to trouble in favour of the ruse of their adversary. “An expert in smooth talking, a shameless flatter whose words lull and seduce, he is to be mistrusted” (Paulme in Lindfors, 1977: 97). As Paulme has pointed out, the fox, which allegorizes controversial human beings, is the winning champion and the image of predatory chief. It enjoys the misfortunes of the tricked group.

Sangoonni loonii sadii: tokko ‘*adiidha*,’ tokko ‘*gurraacha*,’ tokko ‘*arrawa*’ (diimaadha). Dhara/shira ilmi namaa isaan irratti hojjatu dadhabaniiti/hifataniiti diddaa muldhisuuf jecha, gaaratti (bosonatti) galuuf murteeffatan. ‘Bineensi (busaayaan) xixiqqaan nu hin geenne hundinuu gaarumatti galaniiti jiraatan. Nullee haa deemnnuu,’ jedhaniiti bosonatti galan.

Guyyaa kaloo dheedaa oolaniiti, halkan sadiinuu tafaan (teessumaan) walitti garagalaniiti ciciisan. Yoo leenci itti dhufu, sadiinuu fuu jedhaniiti ufirraa ari’an. Leenci akka itti dhiyaatuun/kalaawuun dhabeeti/rakkateeti, jeedalatti dhaqee mari’ate.

Jeedalti sangoota bira dhaqxeeti, ‘Akkam halkan akka mishaa/gaarii raftuu,’ jetteeti gaafate. ‘Waan leenci tokko dhufee nurakkisaa buleef, rafuu hin dandeenne,’ jedhaniin.

Jeedalti sangoota lamaan, *gurraachaa* fi *arrawa* addatti (kophaatti) waamteeti, ‘Isin halkan dukkana keessatti hin muldhattani. Waan sababa sangaa adiitiif leenci asaa isin godhuuf (isin rakkisuuf), maaf isa ufkeessaa hin baafne,’ jetteen.

Sangoonni lamaan, *gurraachinii* fi *arroofni* (diimaan), sangaa *adii* ari’uuf mari’atan. ‘Sababa ati dukkana keessatti muldhattuuf leenci nu rakkisaa nurraa bayii kophaa keetitti (addatti) hiree tee barbaadadhu,’ jedhaniin. Isaan biraa deemuu waan hin barbaanneef, akkana jedheen, ‘*Yaa jarana, yoo nadhiifan hoo? ‘Walumaan tollaa’* na hin ari’inaa,’ jennaaniin, didanii ufkeessaa ari’an. Leenci sangaa *adii* kophaatti/addatti argateeti halkanuma san nyaate.

Guyyaa biraallee, jeedalti sangoota lamaanitti deebiteeti, ‘Amma hoo haalli akkam?’ jetteeti gaafatte. ‘Waan duraanii daran (caalaa) waan nutti abaase (hammaate) malee, wanti tokkos ka nuu siiqe/tole hin jiru,’ jedhaniin. Jeedalti sangaa *gurraacha* kophaatti waamteeti, ‘Ati halkan dhiisii guyyaallee hin muldhattu. Sababa sangaa *arrawa* kanaatiif leenci sirakkisee hirriba sidhoogga/dhoowwa,’ jetteen. ‘Maarree dhugaan baatee, sababa keetiif leenci hirriba nadhoogga atis narraa bayi,’ jedheen sangaan *gurraachi* sangaa *arrawaan*. Sangaan arroofni biraa deeme. Halkanuma san leenci sangoota lamaanuu nyaate.

Tokko ta’uun ufjiraachisuudha, tokkummaa dhabuun kufuudha. Namoonni mataa alagaatiin (nyaaphaatiin) hojjachuudhan fedhii alagaa jalatti bulan, tokko ta’anii, waan ufii ufumaa murteeffatanii, ufjiraachisuu hin danda’an. Mataa alagaatiin ajajamuun ofballeessuudha.



There were three oxen: the *white*, the *black* and the *red*. Being fed up with human unfairness, they decided to run away to the relative safety of the bushes/mountains as rebels in defiance of human treason.

They said, ‘All small beasts (animals), who are less strong than us, take refuge in bushes (forests); and we must leave for mountains as defiance.’ Having enjoyed eating plenty of grasses in the meadows all day, they lay together by joining their bottoms (buttocks) closer to one another, but facing opposite directions, when night fell.

When a lion came to them, three of them said ‘*fuu*’ (refers to oxen’s warning sound to intimidate their adversary) and chased him. The lion was unable to attack them. He thus went to the ‘fox’ seeking her advice. Following this, the fox also went to the oxen. ‘How did you pass the night? Did you sleep well?’ she asked. ‘We were disturbed by a lion; and so we could not sleep;’ they replied. The fox called the black and the red oxen for advice. ‘You two are not visible in the dark; it is because of the white ox that you were threatened by the lion. Why don’t you isolate him?’ she suggested.

The two oxen, the black and the red, discussed the problem and decided to isolate the white one. They said, ‘We were disturbed by a lion and unable to sleep for the fact that you are visible and your colours is easily identifiable in the dark; and so we request you not to be with us any more. Try your chance alone.’ He (the white ox) pleaded to stay with them and said, ‘My dear friends, *would you let me stay here? We survive if we stay together as unified force (walumaan tollaa)*; and please don’t isolate me.’ The two oxen continued refusing, and they expelled him from the group. He was devoured (killed) by a lion the same day.

The other day, the fox came to observe the condition of the two oxen again. ‘How was the situation?’ she enquired. They replied that there was no improvement at all. The fox called the black ox separately and said, ‘Let alone during the night, your colour is invisible even during daylight. A lion troubled you because of the red ox. The predator fox convinced the naïve character, the black ox. ‘It is because of you that we were attacked by the lion; and so you too should leave,’ he warned the red ox. The red ox also left; and both of them were killed and eaten by a lion the same night.

The trickster narrative is one of the favourable and popular devices in Oromo oral literature. In much the same way as the parable, the oral narrator teaches his audience about human character

and the universal truth through indirect reference (allusion), symbols, imagery and analogies. The oral artist uses beasts or animals as his characters not only to evoke a sense of gentle humour and add aesthetic quality to his narrative, but also to unfold the general human behaviour and unfairness through implied analogies and imagery rather than direct reference. This is a story of social concern which depicts the prevalence of villainy on the one hand, the melancholic state of life of those who serve the will and interests of their adversaries on the other. “This scenes of terror and slaughter were not what they had looked forward to on that night when old Major first stirred them to Rebellion....It had been a society of animals set free from hunger and the whip, all equal...strong protecting the weak” (Orwell, 1945: 75-76). The oxen ran away from the repressive world of man in favour of taking refuge in the bushes/mountains; but were unable to achieve their purpose simply because of their failure to stand together as they did in the beginning. The reversal of hopes and the loss of their lives are of their own making. The oral narrator has stressed the way the innocent characters have totally failed to understand the secret of the changing faces, unable to discover what was happening around them; and how they kept on honouring the words of the *satanic character*, the trickster figure, who was working against their existence.

In his fable story, “*Bitten but Not Shy*,” Aesop (1954: 61-63) has explicitly pointed out similar episode wherein the trickster fox had persuaded the ‘deer’ and driven him to death. A lion that had fallen sick was lying in a cave and told the cunning fox to use its persuasive technique and bring a big deer to come within the reach of its claws. The fox agreed and went off to convince the deer. ‘I have come to you to bring the good news. You know that our king, the lion, is my neighbour. He is ill and near to death. He has been considering which of the animals is to reign after him. The pig, he says, is a senseless brute, the bear, a lazy-bone, the leopard, a bad-tempered and the tiger a braggart. The deer is the best qualified for the throne because his height is impressive, a long-lived animal, *his horns frighten the snakes*. You have been nominated as king.’ The deer, which was puffed up with conceit accepted the offer and went to the cave to take the office of the dying king, the lion. When he reached the cave, the lion pounced upon him and tore his ear; but the deer narrowly escaped.

The lion asked he fox to have another try and they agreed. The fox succeeded in finding the deer with the help of some shepherds; but the deer staggered for a while not to accept the fox’s second offer. Anyhow, after lengthy negotiations, the deer was convinced again. In this way, he lost

his life. As usual, the fox stood looking on when the lion was devouring the deer; and snatched the heart when it fell out of the carcass as a *reward for his trouble*. The lion missed it and rummaged for it through all the fragments. ‘You may as well stop searching,’ said the fox from a safe distance, ‘*for the truth is, it had not a heart. What sort of heart do you expect to find in a creature which twice came into a lion’s den and within reach of his paws?*’ Both the oxen and the deer were deceived twice and lost their lives because of the ignorance that has clouded their minds so that they failed to perceive the dangers that beset them.

As Samuel Taylor Coleridge put it, a fox may be called “every man’s metaphor” for cunning and cruelty, and it often appears as the central character in the Oromo fables mainly because such deception and trickery are associated with the restraint of authority, the absence of justice and genuineness. Using her manipulative skills, the ‘fox’ misled the oxen as the result of which they fell apart and were devoured by their adversary, a lion. In the Oromo popular saying, the fox often represents a *false prophet* who speaks oracular language that produces a deadly venom which promptly kills. Thus, in the context of this fable story, the idea of fox serves as a warning to those who are tempted by the empty rhetoric of the phony characters, especially, the faceless adversaries who appear to be perfect prophets, but never honour their words. An individual, a group or a society who relies on the ability and the wisdom of its foe, is likely to damage itself. The theme of the story focuses on three major issues: first, running to bushes without having common purpose is meaningless. Second, whenever we deal with our foes, we have to think of their tricks; and third, united we stand, but divided we fall.

The Reward of the Unwise

The savage desire for wealth and power, spinning a web of intrigue, the calling for artificial solidarity and the duplicity of falsehood are the driving force of antipathy and conflict throughout the globe. The predators often chant friendly rhetoric not because they cherish genuine brotherhood and the common good that bind people together, rather to achieve their vested ambitions under this captivating rhetoric. *The Reward of the Unwise* is part of this recurring theme. The extraordinary delusions and bestiality of the human race are what is mirrored in this trickster tale. The rat, which represents this atrocious action, is a creature whose lifestyle is inspired by superior cunning and

fraud. She enjoys the misfortune of the tricked, the monkey, and has employed many tempting devices to spin a web of deceit to fulfil her purpose. Despite the worst crisis he has faced, the monkey is unable to learn from his failure; and has willingly accepted the second offer, which ultimately led him to another tragic episode in which he lost his life. Like that of the second, third, and sixth stories, the deception of the protagonist trickster succeeds.

Hantuuninii fi jaldeessi walitti firooman. ‘Gootaraa ijaaranneeti midhaan ganna ittiin baanu itti guuranna’ waliin jedhan. Walii galuudhan gootaraa ijaarataniiti midhaan itti guuratan. Gootaraan guuttamnaan, afaan qadaadaniiti (cufaniiti), ‘Amma kana ganna malee hin bannu,’ waliin jedhaniiti kabiraa funaanuu jalqaban.

Hantuunni gootaraa jalaan (battalaan) uree keessa seeneeti midhaan nyaatee fixe. Gaafa ganni gale yoo bananii laalani, midhaan hin jiru. ‘Situ nyaate, situ nyaate,’ waliin jedhaniiti wallolani. ‘Maarree abbaan dhugaa hin bayaa, cidii/galabaa nurratti naqanii/firfirsanii haa nugubanii,’ jedhe hantuunni. Akka murteeffatanitti galabaa irratti naqaniiti ibidda itti kaayan/qaban.

Hantuunni lafa qotatee boolla keessa seenee du’a jalaa yoo bayu, jaldeessi ammoo dhaabatatti gubatee du’e. Akkasitti bineensi xiqqoon, hantuunni, shira (dhara) jaldeessa irratti hojjachuudhan akka du’u goote.



The rat (mouse) and the monkey became friends. They agreed to construct a grain store so as to store up food (grain) for the winter.’ Having built the grain store, they filled it with a lot of grains. When it was full, they closed it and said, ‘We do not open it until winter times.’ Then, they continued collecting more grain.

The rat dug a hole underneath the grain store, pierced it, and consumed all the grain. When the winter set in, they opened the grain store, but there was nothing in. They quarrelled about what had happened and began pointing fingers at each other saying, ‘You did it.’

The rat said, ‘In order to find out which one of us is the culprit, let both of us put it to test in fire under the heap of straw.’ Despite heading to disaster, the monkey did not dare speak a word of protest; rather, he agreed with the decision and they were covered with pile of straw and set on fire. The trickster rat which already dug a deep hole in the ground vanished and was saved; but the monkey who did not understand the trick was burned alive and died. In this way, a small animal, the rat, tricked the monkey and became a victor. The *Reward of the Unwise* is a social criticism whose

subject matter corresponds with Nigerian fable story about a ‘*Thief*’ and an ‘*Innocent Man*’ (Okpewho, 1992), a situation in which the latter was caught as a culprit when the former asked him to help and gave him a sack containing stolen goods. A thief who stole some goods asked a passer-by to help carry them and he did. When they reached a gate, a gateman asked them who the owner was. The thief responded quickly by pointing to the innocent man (helper). The helper pleaded that he knew nothing about the goods he was carrying. He confessed his innocence and that he was helping the thief to carry them. The gateman did not believe him and said, “*It is expected of a child carrying a burden to know what the burden is.*” In an environment where powerful delusions and criminal behaviour dominate human societies, the innocents are always the victims.

The Reward of the Unwise explores the problem between the *genuine effort* and the *mischievous act* and how the latter damages the former. The comparison between the two antithetical points is revealed through the two talking beasts: the ‘rat’ and the ‘monkey,’ which epitomize the evil and the fool respectively. The latter is terribly affected for he allowed himself to be trapped. The story also depicts the disruptive consequences of dealing with those who are preoccupied with deception and the problem of trusting the people without knowing who they are. It raises moral concern in the form of criticism and discusses the antithetical theory of *appearance* and *reality*. The two satirically portrayed animal characters, the rat/mouse and the monkey, are paradigms of the renegade human characters whose petty desires often lead them to bitter recriminations, deep crises, strife and a falling apart.

Generalization

The trickster story could be seen as a global language which reflects outstanding social and political issues that need critical observation. It is an instructive subject of discourse whose analysis requires a comparative approach merely because we are often impelled to go beyond a limited boundary of every single event. Though each text has its own peculiar feature, comparing and thoroughly examining its implication from different social and political perspectives pave the path for realizing common feelings and interests of the world community. “Everywhere there is connection, everywhere there is illustration. No single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literatures” (Bassnett, 1993: 1). In terms

of transcending geographical boundaries, the comparative approach to folklore seems to create global cultural and literary understanding. The successful comparative technique as opposed to old colonial method of discourse emphasizes the balanced way of viewing the literary universe, the building of constructive and positive images of all cultures, traditions and the mutual intelligibility of the human race through the *civilized power* of the storehouse of wisdom, oral literature.

The systematic way of interpreting the contextual meanings of folklore plays a major role in the teaching of folk wisdom that has been traditionally preserved and handed down from one generation to the next through exemplary stories and aphoristic expressions. Every culture embodies meanings in stories whose mythic structures reflect the general attitude a society has toward life. In other words, culture puts a great deal of pressure on its writer to assert its central meanings that have symbolic values.

The *Durdur* fables raise moral issues in their plot and most of those issues clearly express deep social problems of the past and present which are far from over. In terms of instinctive act and lack of soberness, people see themselves as part of the animal world in various ways. Therefore, at a high level of social evolution, men are portrayed in the *guise of beasts* in order to comment on their *unnatural relations* as well as *misconduct*, which are the central points of satirical discourse in Oromo fables. As Hodgart (1969: 172) has indicated, the animal-centred fable is the basic type used by literary satirists and corresponds most usefully to the satiric devices behind human pretensions to grandeur. In the *Durdur* narrative, moral issue is treated either ironically to convey humorous attitude to the depraved way of life, or the moral lesson itself may be changed into satirical polemic; more precisely in the form of social and political protest. Like Aesopian fables and Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Oromo fable stories offer sober explanation of the pursuit for the irrational gratification of life and how the unnatural world created by predators threatened perfect social harmony. The folk narrator often uses veiled satire and this is an attempt to view the ugly aspect of humanity in terms of power structures. The representative examples of behaviours in the stories are meant for illustrating human follies, breach of justice and abuse of trust. The *Durdur* stories unfold the notion of *beast in me* and this suggests their deep satirical force. The moral and social principles they draw embody constructive advice and criticism that may lead to the best way to go. A feature that distinguishes a fable from other folktales, as for instance parable, which uses human agents, is that it stresses a code of behaviours in which the striking moral questions are frequently woven into a

story. Thus, the fable narratives tend to examine the detailed and critically observed social realism in which the subject of discourse is presented in the form of the satirical portrayal of the antithetical characters.

The Oromo *Durdur* has a good deal of social and political content. The oral artist narrates the story in the form of comparison so that the members of the audience can see the true pictures of themselves and that of others in the world with no balance. The talking animal characters in the stories are set in allegorical sense so as to relate their qualities and behaviours (bad or good) to that of human beings in order to evaluate their contributions to the world communities which they are the part. The role each animal plays in the animal world is often compared with the role each human being plays in the human world. The social crises and unfair games that we see in the contemporary world, together with the varieties of delusions and tricks that individuals employ to win those games can also be compared with the five stories.

The above five fables stories bring to light the prevalence of unfairness and contradictions in the antagonistic world of animals on the one hand, the absence of harmony between these animals on the other. The antithetical characters in the stories portray the complex problems the human beings are facing because of power imbalance, egoism, mistrust and the absence of mutual concern. Moreover, each talking animal or beast as satirical allusion signifies the human being, which is endowed with innate quality of behaviour that may contribute to peaceful coexistence or hostility. There are at least five types of beast-centred characters in the stories: first, the *powerful and cruel* (lion- fable 3); second, the *intelligent and winners* (ape and rat- fables 3 and 5; fox and cock- fables 1 and 4). Third, the *wise and wicked* (cock, fox and rat- fables 1, 4 and 5); fourth, the *genuine* (ape and monkey- fables 3 and 5). Fifth, the *fools and losers* (rat, dogs, oxen, hornbill, snake, monkey and lion- fables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). This is how the artistic beauty and literary taste of the Oromo trickster narratives are revealed through various stylistic qualities.

As we explore the whole chain of circumstances, all the trickster tales depict social realities in which fierce desires, unfaithfulness, distrust and treason have created the unbridgeable gulf between mankind. The abnormal ambition of winning personal glory is also reflected in all the stories. Thus, the plot of the four fables (1, 2, 4, 5) can be reviewed as the complexity of treasons in the human world, false friendship, superficial agreement or contract, violation of genuine pursuit, trickery and the final move of elimination. In the third trickster fable, the scene is somewhat different in that the

violation of genuine concern does not end in tragedy (death). Rather the trickery is concluded in a dramatic and peaceful way in which the powerless character, the ape, succeeded in escaping through ingenuity. In the second story, we see similar situation with the exception that the narrator uses a sense of ironic humour.

On the whole, in the Oromo *Durdur* narratives, we see two diametrically opposing images; namely the incorrigible characters who epitomize corruption and abuse of trust, and the tricked ones who personify the fools and naives. The five representative tales we have so far examined emphasize the qualities, which the Oromo find undesirable in the making of social harmony and a cultured society.

5. The Aesthetic Qualities of Wisdom Lore: Linguistic Features, Thematic Structure and Parallelism

The Major Aspects of Proverbial Literature

Origin and Functions

The proverbial narrative is a social metaphor and the representation of people's philosophy in which the whole range of human experiences, principles, instructive issues, revolutionary visions, dreams, great expectations and the aspirations to be empowered are brought to mind in allusive language. Its educational significance and poetic dimension need careful attention. The *mammaaka* may be called the collection of "Oral Law" or body of rules characterized by the love of wisdom, the criticism of folly, the promotion of sensibility and goodness. They are concise aphoristic statements concerning the behaviour and actions of men and are repository of social problems. Like other oral repertoires, proverbs must be viewed as part of the cultural evolution and social transformation process. They are ways of expressing public opinion and the vehicles for providing effective means of social control. The fact that wisdom lore reflects universal truths about the daily activities of people makes it popular in its appeal to people's imagination. The Oromo, like other black Africans, are linguistically sensitive enough to be able to tell what constitutes aphoristic statements to distinguish metaphoric expressions from the literal sense, and in their use of proverbs, they are intended to emphasize the problems concerning the social and moral issues. The researchers need to pay serious attention to these concerns.

"Literature contributes to ethical understanding...holding the mirror up to the community and the individual so that they can judge themselves, promoting explanatory models that help make sense of the diversity of life and imaging the unity that might be desirable in human life" (Lentricchia, 1995: 400). The development of Oromo proverbial literature is linked with the *Gadaa* historical project which aims at putting in place social equilibrium, the notion of a rational way of life and the common good. In terms of conflict and its resolution approach, the Oromo employ the

wise sayings in response to social dislocation, moral unfitnes and behavioural incorrectness. In general, the proverbial literature as part and parcel of the *Gadaa* historical account and social criticism, calls for a proper way of human relations, sanity and democratic conduct.

The study of Oromo proverbs show that almost in all cases, many scholars provide us with surface level explanations, translation into English and other European languages. Moreover, nothing significant has been mentioned about their aesthetic background and the situations in which the aphoristic sayings are performed. "Proverbs are by far the most popular...and have been widely collected and studied by foreign and African scholars alike. Unfortunately the value of most of the collections has suffered from the poor understanding...of the cultural and aesthetic backgrounds" (Okpewho, 1992: 226). All the events of proverbial texts have cultural implications and are strongly influenced by the present social circumstances. Thus, it is of paramount importance to assess the extent of these influences, the way they can be recognized as social products and whether or not the cultural interpretation of the text takes into consideration such influences.

If we meticulously examine the various situations in which the verbal arts are performed, we see that their overall effect is to help facilitate the successful growth of traditional ethos and norms. According to the traditional societies, the major role of proverbial lore was to unfold the value of ancestral wisdom, the philosophical way of thinking and a code of behaviour for the new generation. Though this is generally true and evident, it seems to me that this pragmatic way of looking at oral production may limit and/or exclude certain important aspects that oral artists want to achieve. The literary scholars need to be aware of aspects of wisdom narrative as an art form; that is to say, they have to take into account the prominence the society attaches to linguistic and literary features: metaphor, wit, irony, satire, humour, allusion, sarcasm, symbolism, etc. Indeed, all the aesthetic and poetic values have to be carefully examined. Unless further elaborated, the didactic and impressionistic approach to Oromo wisdom literature may limit us only to the aspects of moral truth. Besides moral sense, a narrator is very much sensitive to the aesthetic value of each selected genre.

A careful exploration of language in context will reveal that in the Oromo society the primary function of a proverb is aesthetic or poetic, rather than the literal sense of what has been spoken. The narrator often selects a particular striking figurative languages not merely to embellish or elevate his message with a poetic dimension just to demonstrate his superior sophistication and

sensitivity in the use of language, but also to elucidate his statements in a more precise, powerful and eloquent way so as to concretize his utterances. Most importantly, the varied emotional and intellectual reactions shown by the folk narrator to aphoristic expressions are conditioned more clearly by the quality of the imagery, wit and moral content.

In terms of hierarchical importance, the narrators and audience do not usually evaluate all proverbs equally, but are interested in using them on the basis of their levels of social value from highest to lowest (hierarchical scale). Obviously, some proverbs have more poetic or rhetorical value than others. Some are frequently used both in public and group discourse, whereas others are rarely employed in the day-to-day communication. Furthermore, the Oromo proverbs have specific functions in the society and are assigned to different purposes on the basis of their factual content and the validity of their messages. The structure of the hierarchy, therefore, needs detailed exploration. The more powerful the image of the proverb, the more widely it is in use. The Oromo oral artists often use selective proverbs in a wide ranging of discussions and public speeches in order to emphasize the theme of their argument and to illustrate their subject of discourse in a concise language so that they influence the audience. An eloquent speaker who is involved in politics, public discussions, legal proceedings, lengthy reconciliation process and debates often uses highly valued proverbs just to win folk-literary appreciation. More than that, the folk-literary evaluation of his speech is made by his audience. The expert Oromo oral narrator usually selects striking images not merely to embellish his speech and win admiration of his audience, but also to recapitulate the encapsulated points in a concise poetic statement.

In regard to the poetic quality of Akan proverbs, Dorson (1972: 186) has noted, “The importance attached to brilliance and imaginativeness in public speech leads those who aspire to enter traditional public life and hope to exert influence, especially in the courts and politics to cultivate the use of striking image.” Like the proverbial narrative of the Akan people of Ghana, the Oromo wisdom-lore is an important subject in the training of traditional legal practitioners who are required to demonstrate brilliance, dramatic setting of executing perfect decision, wit, sophistication in debates and speeches. For instance, during resolving disputes, the traditional experts (peace-makers) often use the highly valued proverbs so as to concretize the problems and convince the two parties to talk peacefully. The contextual information of wise sayings indicates that the Oromo sense of using proverbs is not to inspire, rather to criticize, satirize or reprimand a particular type of

unnatural behaviour. Most wise expressions of the society reflect philosophical views, which are the result of well-founded observations of human behaviour and the changing experienced situations. Therefore, aphorisms as the reflection of social dynamism are the result of social reality and the living facts tested by time and often used as references to resolve strife, social dislocation, error of judgements and other problems as they arise. As I have indicated earlier, whenever there are negotiations or compromises, the *hayyuu* leaders (the wise men) usually employ striking proverbs as instruments of executing justice.

Internal Organization

If we closely scrutinize the nature of Oromo proverbial folklore, we can possibly present them in terms of views or outlook, together with certain characteristic features such as structure, style and content. On the level of outlook, proverbs depict the deepest philosophical concepts of the very existence of the people by means of careful observation and thorough examination of human characters and experiences in a given time and space. In their composition, most Oromo wisdom narratives have complex structure wherein the main clauses and the subordinate clauses are arranged in parallel form either to express *sameness* or *oppositeness*; and we shall examine them later. Indeed, many Oromo proverbs are framed as comparison, contrast and metonymic (cause and effect) in their semantic relations.

As far as the *style* or technique is concerned, the wise statements could be analyzed from wider perspectives. The most obvious stylistic quality is their terseness in which figurative languages are used. In few condensed words, a proverb captures wider universal issues. As Okpewho (1992: 237) has pointed out, in a brief metaphorical way, the proverb conveys what it would have taken many more words to say in ordinary or plain language. Thus, in their style, the Oromo proverbs are framed in brevity in which metaphor, symbolism, satire, irony, etc., are concentrated in a single line. Each proverb has its symbolic and metaphorical quality wherein certain images are discussed in few words; and the discussed situations or events have deep cultural implications. In their *content*, all proverbs are aiming at conveying certain concrete messages concerning the society that created them or the general human condition. “By referring to obliquely a variety of similar events, the proverb is able to impart an objective message or lesson to us in one situation or the other” (ibid., p. 238).

The Pursuit of Moral Quality in Life

The human wisdom is the first of God's works in the creation of the world. The aphoristic sayings of the *mammaaka/mammaaksa* are the reflection of the search for this wisdom. The traditional Oromo society of the *Gadaa* period views wise expressions as the basis for human quality; and the proverbs as part of cultural legacy enable the society to achieve the true gratification of life. "Wisdom is a human achievement by means of which man's life can be fulfilled. The wise are contrasted with fools and just with the wicked" (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Volume VII; 1973-1974). The *mammaaka* is said to be the ancient extant verbal document of the Oromo. Though it is more secular than religious in its thematic structure, it has similarities with the wisdom literature of the Bible in a sense that the instructive appeal of the wise saying not only serves as moral guideline, but also contributes to the making of well-ordered and cultured society. Like the classical literature of the Bible, every statement of the Oromo proverb reveals the deeper problems of the value of life, of good and bad, and it represents a collection of moral ideas and principles based on experience and universal application. A proverbial text is the work of the wise men or *hayyuus*, who led the cultural and literary movements for several decades and in its centrality it may be perceived as the intelligent way of deciding one's destiny, the promotion of a strong sense of ethical issues, respect for humanity and proper execution of justice. The cultural and moral implication of aphoristic language is that the wise are those who commit themselves to truth and the search for knowledge.

The wisdom movement of the pre-conquest period constituted a special aspect of religious and cultural development of the Oromo and as the 'oral document' of the *Gadaa* cultural evolution, the *mammaaka* bears a clear impression of this distinctive character. The allusive narrative techniques serve educational purposes of building trust and human reason.

This part emphasizes that wisdom is attainable by those who seek and follow it as a guideline-that is, men can discover enough about truth so as to ensure the fulfilment of happy life. According to the traditional norms, the intelligent sayings of the *mammaaka* are conceived in terms of 'ethical laws,' and the rewards for their observance are also defined *in terms of human values*. Within the framework of moral guidelines, the *mammaaka* also explores how reasonable gratification is achieved and the importance of what is right and fair. As far as error of judgement and deviation from norms is concerned, proverbs are used as a tool for social control.

Words do not only have meaning properties which may be comprehensible or ambiguous, but they also bear various relations to one another on the level of meanings, syntax and phonology. Semantically, the relations of lexical categories can be analysed on the basis of comparison as well as contrast or antithesis. In dealing with semantics, we have to distinguish the situation in which it is applied. In a broader sense, the use of semantics involves two major areas of studies; namely linguistics (grammar) and literature. The linguistic approach to semantics suffers from two limitations: first, that it deals solely with meanings in a strict sense (standard sense), and second, it leaves aside or avoids all the problems related to connotative implications and/or metaphorical aspect of a spoken word. On the other hand, semantics in a literary discourse focuses on the study of poetic meanings other than the literal level of explanation traditionally constituted rhetoric or more precisely meaning to be found in tropes. As far as syntax is concerned, words are related on the basis of the character of clauses and phrases. In metrical phonology, their relation is based on syllabic structures, rhythmic patterns and speech sounds. In dealing with proverbial parallelism, the combination of all these configurations leads us to the exploration of the aesthetic background of the subject.

The Structural Analysis of Proverbial Lore: Semiotics, Narrative Syntax and Semantics

Literary theory and criticism have been dominated for a long time by the romantic prejudice...it is, therefore, natural that abstract narratology [narratives as the abstract sequence of events] made its first appearance in connection with the study of oral literature. Folklorists have always been looking for an optimal classification of oral literary products (Bal, 2004, Vol. 1: 26).

The Oromo oral narratives, especially the rhyming proverbs involve the diverse applications of the concepts and methods of *generative transformational* grammar- a particular theory that is intended to explain the overall rules of a language, together with *semiotics* or the general study of signs/symbols and *semantics* (the study of meanings). All these are of critical importance in helping the folklorists situate their object within a broader framework of analysis. Moreover, folk literary

tradition as form of literature in its own right takes into consideration the modes of modern writing such as metonymy, metaphor and analytical typology.

The interconnected *semiotic units* or symbols (S_1 , S_2 , N_1 , N_2 , NP, VP, etc) in phrase structural analysis represent certain phonemes (speech sounds, morphs/syllables), morphemes (minimal units of grammatical analysis or words) and phrases that are vertically and horizontally related. In terms of narrative syntax, the major defining symbols/signs S_1 and S_2 (if a sentence is a compound) and the minor semiotic categories give us a vivid picture of the hierarchical structuring (from abstract to concrete) of the parallel constituents (words and phrases) into combined structural units. The semiotic components S_1 and S_2 as we shall see later in detail in figure 4, thus constitute an *abstract narrative* level or *deep structure*, which can further be divided into the second semio-narrative level or *surface structure*; namely NP (noun phrase) and VP (verbal phrase). These derivative semiotic segments, as well as the surface organization of words and phrases at the level of syntactic operations generate *cultural semantics*, or what I call a *narrative competence* level. The term narrative competence here designates artistic communication wherein the discovery of poetic meanings occurs. In the syntactic structure analysis of the proverbial narrative, the abstract narrative or *deep structure* (DS) indicates abstract thoughts or a conceptual level of a language, which according to Noam Chomsky is the actual utterance or the *performance* level, whereas the transformation from the abstract ideas to *surface structure* (SS) or in this case, narrative competence, depicts concreteness and metaphoric relations of the syntactic components. This is what Mieke Bal (2004) calls a general domain of study or the integrated study-macro-approach, of all levels of narrative phenomenon or *narratology*. The narratological thinking or the interdisciplinary analysis of narratives serves as an interpretive mode of explaining the folklore genres in a contemporary context.

The Antithetical Relations of Parallel Categories

The similarity may be quite strong; the details may echo one another so closely that the device is little more than a simple repetition. But they may be so distinct that it takes a certain amount of intelligence to identify the closeness between them. Whatever the case may be, this device, whereby the oral artist brings together in a balanced relationship ideas

and images that may seem independent of one another is called parallelism (Okpewho, 1992: 78).

A parallelism may be defined as a component of literary style both in prose and verse in which the linking ideas are arranged side by side in sentences so as to maintain the balanced relationship of one element with another. The antithetical parallelism is a term used in semantics to show the study of comparison in which the differences of meanings happen. It is the placing of an idea or one of its parts against the other to which it is opposed. The antithetical relation of the lexical and phrasal categories is thus a striking exhibition of unlikeness or oppositeness of ideas, situations, events, things and persons, as for example the weather here in Europe is contrasted with that of what we have in Africa. In such a type of parallelism, the second part represents the same idea as that of the first by way of oppositeness. In this part, we shall examine the contextual factors and how each expression involves linguistic features in the proverbial folklore distinguished by rhythmic balance and the recurrence of certain phonological segments, together with the relationship between the constituents that conjure up the entire picture of the whole episodes.

There are numerous Oromo proverbs, and of these, I have chosen to concentrate on ‘fifty-three’ examples (aphoristic statements) on the basis of their validity and the quality of their imagery. In reading proverbial genres, it is of capital significance to notice that each aphoristic expression is followed by two different meanings; namely ‘literal’ or denotative and ‘metaphorical’ or connotative. In discussing each proverbial lore, I have tried to elucidate the distinction between these two semantic aspects.

The permanent differences which obstruct co-operative action and a sense of collective existence have always been the cause of social disorder and misery. The hierarchical nature of the Ethiopian feudal empire encourages the pattern of authority and subservience. This pattern of the horizontal relationship in the empire-state is basically contradictory to the cultural, economic and political structure of Oromo society. The *gabbaar* system (see Lipsky 1962), as we shall discuss in chapter 7, has created an inequitable social structure in which the eviction programme and forced labour recruitment of the era of feudalism (1880s-1970s) relegated the rural population in Oromiyaa to the vagrant life. **Abbaa oorruu, jaldeesii keessaa baafate** (P1)- ‘the owner of the farmland is evicted by the monkey.’ *Cunqursaana warra lafaa buqqise*- ‘the oppressed disowned of his belongings by the oppressor.’ Syntactically, the head nouns, *abbaa* “the owner” and *jaldeessa* “the

monkey” are parallel elements. On the level of semantic relations, they are antithetically set-that is, the irony results from the vivid contrast between the opposites. The idea of owning the *oorruu* “farmland” is also contrasted by *keessaa baafate* “being evicted.” The indigenous farmer has been robbed of the right of ownership; and the talking animal, the monkey, is a symbol of social oppression. This proverb is uttered in a situation where the true owners of the land are not only deprived of the right to eat the fruit of their land, but disowned of their property by the intruders as well. *Abbaa oorruu*, who is an epitome of the serfdom society, is a symbol of the social group, whose right is violated, whereas the image of the grotesque animal, *jaldeessa*, is identified with the oppressor who evicted the powerless farmer.

It is only the working hands that can build sweet home and glorious life. A truly great man is not the one who was born in a wealthy family, but one who perseveres to make his own independent world which empowers him. **Abbaan daadhii dhugeef, ilma afaan hin urgaa’u** (P2)- ‘though the father drinks hydromel (mead), his son’s mouth does not smell sweet.’ Durummaan/qananiin abbaa kan ilmaa tahuu (ta’uu) hin danda’u. Ilmi akka abbaa isaa garii ta’uu hin dandeenne- ‘the son is unable to lead a prosperous life like that of his father.’ The second verbal component with negative marker, *hin urgaa’u* “does not smell sweet” and the linking adverbial segment of the first part of the proverb, *dhugeef* “though he drinks” are antagonistically related. The action of drinking the *daadhii* “mead/hydromel” is contrasted with *hin urgaa’u* “does not smell sweet.” The implication is that prosperity is not hereditary, but the result of hard work. The son may not enjoy the good fortune in the same way as his father. The *daadhii*, which is associated with richness and prestige is a liquor consisting of honey and water that, when fermented, becomes mead. It is a popular drink of the Oromo, which is drunk during marriage ceremonies, festivals and on special occasions. In this particular situation, drinking the *daadhii* “mead” shows abundance or wealth, which is associated with sweet smelling of honey. This gleam life of the prosperous father is contrasted with the destitution of the son which is realized by *hin urgaa’u* “does not smell sweet;” and this is an indication of misfortune and sordid poverty. This proverb is primarily concerned with social disapproval in which a son who is unable to be competent like his father because of his inefficiency has been satirized. In a broader social setting, those who are devoid of a *vision of the world in which there would be wisdom and dignity of work* can rarely achieve success.

The study of how we express what we mean, or fail to do so, has always fascinated me. I think we human beings are so often our worst enemies; allowing ourselves to be trapped between what we say and what we do. **Afaaniin 'Sheik Hussein' jedhaa harkaan gara mukaa** (P3)- 'pretending to call for Sheik Hussein, hands towards the tree.' Afaaniin waan garii dubbataa (amanamaa fakkaataa) miliquu, yookaan shira/dhara hojjachuu- 'mixing the divine language of a prophet with lip-service and treason of a renegade.' *Afaaniin jedhaa* "pretending to call/say" and *gara mukaa* "towards the tree" describe the reversal of roles of a character and the way he is affected by these contradictory roles. The major constituents, *afaan* "mouth" and *harka* "hands" are antithetically related on semantic level-what a person says or pretends to be and what he does are diametrically opposite. This can be contrasted with showing one face to God and the other to the devil. The verbal artist is commenting on unhealthy human relations in which untrustworthiness, deception and mistrust become the result. He also points out the significance of not revealing the truth to those whom you do not trust. *Afaniin Sheik Hussien jedhaa* "calling for Sheik Hussien" portrays offering lip-service, whereas *harkaan gara mukaa* "hands towards the tree" shows a shifty character and treacherous act.

Sheik Hussein is a holy place in southern Oromiyaa (in Bale province). Hundreds of thousands of religious groups make an annual pilgrimage to this holy place. It is named after *Sheik Nur Hussein*, a popular spiritual leader and nationalist hero of his time. The significance of this reference is to show the combination of prophetic vocabulary and unfairness in the same character. The folk artist stresses the problem of being torn apart due to misgivings and the false front people display to achieve their purpose.

We speak too heedlessly, too much, and then jump into a pattern of talk that takes us away from the truth because we have taken our ability to communicate for granted. Man can benefit much and loved much more by being honest than opting to show a deceptive front. There is no end to what can be learned from observations of human subtleties in manner and speech. **Akka ragaa itti siibaye argitee jennaan, akka itti simaalale argitee,* jedheen ka beekkate* (P4)- 'did you see the way I gave witness in favour of you,' asked a man. 'Did you observe how I was dumbfounded by what you did,' answered the other who knew his hoax statement. *Kan kijibuu barate, nama hundaa akkuma isaati kijibaa seeya-* 'he who has committed himself to telling untruth, sees the others as if they were his own image.' The separate verbal phrases...*itti siibaye* "the way I gave witness in your

favour” and...*itti simaalale* “the way I was dumbfounded” are parallel segments which show oppositeness. This aphoristic statement brings to our attention the detrimental and the crisis that results from those mischievous acts. Obviously, all are not friends that speak us fair; and praise in the face is sometimes open disgrace. A trickster may succeed in defeating the tricked fools, but if he cares not how to play games with his counterparts, he foolishly loses. The central idea of this proverb is that being preoccupied with delusion reinforces animosity and hatred. An attempt to win acceptability through systematic cunning often results in demeaning oneself.

As human beings, we must always think of what our future will bring us. Our fate to a greater extent depends on the way we make things smooth or hard. More concretely, as the journey of life goes on, people encounter problems of different kinds of which most of them are the outcome of their own making, whether unintentional or because of negligence. The private lives and social conditions of individuals are often in jeopardy partially or wholly due to their failure of controlling events. *‘*Ani hin jira see’aa (seeyaa), gogaan koo gabayaa jira,*’* *jette kurupheen* (P5)- ‘I claim that I exist, but my skin is at the market,’ said the duiker/gazelle. *Oduu hin beekin lammiwwan/fira ufii dhabanii salphatanii kophaatti hafuu. Ofeeguu dhabuu irraa kan ka’e, saaxil bayanii diina harkatti kufuu-* ‘the problem of falling in enemies’ trap, missing relatives without one’s knowledge and a feeling of remorse for the negligence’ are what the narrator wants to impart. The two contrasting parallel expressions...*hin jira see’aa* “I claim I exist” and...*gabayaa jira* “at the market” reveal the precarious situation in which a person is found. Morphosyntactically, the nominative *ani* “I” and the head noun modified by the possessive marker, *gogaan koo* “my skin” refer to the same situation. This wise expression is uttered when an individual is exposed to danger, consumed with fear and despair due to insecurity and loneliness in his/her life. *Gabayaa*, literally “a market” is to refer to public knowledge. It also means being exposed to danger. *Gogaa* “skin” may also suggest one’s close relatives. The two expressions illuminate the way the weak animal is scared as it is exposed to danger and this uncertainty of life is correlated with human condition wherein the existence of an individual has no guarantee because of the execution of his relatives. The oral artist is aiming at pointing out a situation where individuals or groups fall in a trap without their knowledge or because of their unscrupulousness.

The tragedy of our world is that human beings are often tempted more by sweet vocabularies and seductive tricks than questioning what is behind the front. The charming front and appealing

words must be tested by the concerned audience before making a choice to bring individuals to power. **Argaa tolaniif siree hin koran** (P6)- ‘though a person may be good looking, he cannot ascend the throne/bed.’ Bareenni bifaa qalbii qabaachuu hin tahu/ta’u- ‘physical fascination cannot generate knowledge and the ability to grasp power.’ This proverb urges the people to realize that good sense will show them that men are more than just the pretty faces or outward personality they try to show us. In this folk saying, the adverbial constituent...*tolaniif* “though good looking” and the verbal phrase...*hin koran* “cannot ascend” illustrate the two antithetical qualities in a person: the attractive stature on the one hand, and the failure of succeeding in winning political power because of inability on the other. The noun phrase, *argaa* “appearance” and *siree* “throne/bed” are also related in contradistinction to each other. The underlying issue in this wisdom saying is the significance of demonstrating ability than cosmic appearance. We also see the way the narrator has valued human virtue of working hard than relying on good stature. The main concern of the narrator is to discuss knowledge versus attractive looking wherein he stresses the problem of taking people at face value. This is a statement of warning to those who believe in false front rather than genuine effort and competence. The oral artist also airs his disgust for controversial people who are fond of playing clever tricks with decorative vocabularies but devoid of essential qualities.

In philosophical terms, the human beauty is associated with what man does, by the quality of the harvest individuals produce through tireless efforts, not merely by attractive colour of skin which is not a perfect measurement for human glory and honour. **Argaa toleef goromsii hin ottoomu** (P7)- ‘a heifer does not give much milk because of having attractive stature.’ Bifa toluun/bareeduun nama sirnaa ta’uu hin muldhisu. Waan gaarii dubbachuun nama dhugaa ta’uu miti/moti- ‘appearance is not the perfect yardstick for human excellence.’ The generosity of people cannot be judged by their colourful words’. The selection of concrete images and the veiled satire resulted from the parallel relations between the semantic aspects of these images characterize the highly valued aphoristic expressions. The satire generated from the systematic contrast between the antithetical features *toleef* and *hin ottoomu*, reveals contradictory nature in a person. “It is wrong to care too much about appearances and not enough about substance. The outside is the object of our perception, but what really matters is the inside” (Sumner, 1995: 327). Like the proverb six, the two ideas delineate opposing characteristics in the same heifer-appearance and its true self. This proverb, which is similar to the English proverb “do not judge a book by its cover,” emphasizes not

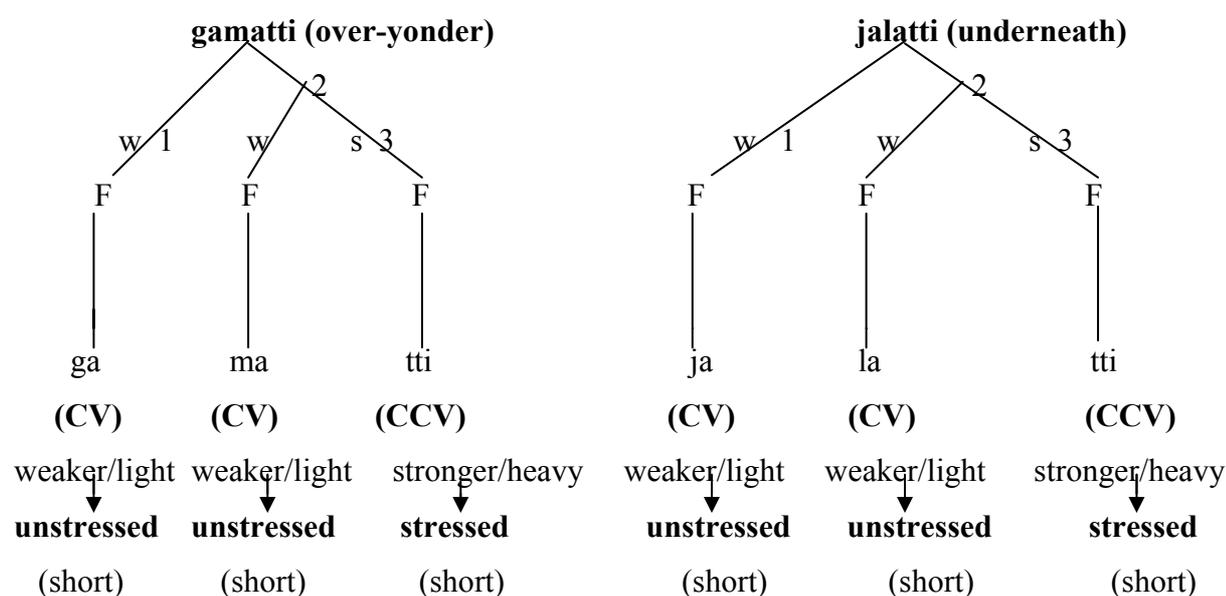
to believe all those who appear to be good-natured. It is observable that the first part of this proverb, *toleef* “though physically attractive” and the second part, *hin ottoomu* “does not give much milk” are expressed in the form of contrasting (*fonjolliffa*) theory of proverbial parallelism. The antithetical terms unfold the reality about human personality. The narrator tends to excoriate the people whose actions often contradict what they pretend to be. He admonishes us not to be tempted by the charming language of the masquerades. We cannot form correct opinions and rational judgements about people unless they are carefully tested through trying circumstances. In general, the way the oral artist tried to combine allusive style, humour, wit and what we may call suppressed irony is outside of the practical or standard meaning and the moral philosophy of the proverb.

The success stories of people show that those who become winners usually demonstrate their ability of dealing with many challenging circumstances. Almost all great achievements have their root in human wisdom of speculating what the future will look like, and then act to make right what is wrong. On the contrary, men often continue to be losers not only because they are incapable of foreseeing the future, but also cannot observe critically what is immediate to them. **Beekaan baar gamatti, wallaalaan uf jalatti** (P8)- ‘a wise knows events over-yonder/before they occur, but the unwise cannot see what is underneath/under his foot.’ Gamni waan ofdurana dhufu dursee hubata, wallaalaan ammoo waan isaa biratti ta’u arguu hin danda’u- ‘the wise men anticipate events in advance, but the unwise can hardly see the reality in front of them.’ The folk narrator describes the qualities of the two opposite characters: the wise men that are endowed with the ability of anticipating events beforehand and those unwise who have eyes but cannot see the reality which is in front of them. The adverbial components, *baar-gammatti* “over-yonder” and *ufjalatti* “underneath” are antithetically set. In the same way, the two epithets (modifiers), *beekaan* “wise” and *wallaalaan* “unwise” are also contrasting parallels in their semantic aspects. The opposing segments depict the distinctive character of each person and their place in the changing world. It is patently obvious that wise men learn from experience and from others; but the unwise hardly grasp what is happening around them. A wise man is rewarded, but the one who lacks wisdom received stinging rebuke. The way people are affected by lack of gaining deep insight into the real situations is vividly mirrored in this wise expression.

Oral tradition presents the living events, the continuous development of new ideas and images in the changing scenes. Indeed, the use of folklore, especially poems and rhyming proverbs in a

modern context, is partly the manipulation of linguistic properties and hence the marking of spoken words has a vital role in the achievement of artistic qualities. Prosody, which is the science or study of poetic meters and versification has for its subject the material of oral tradition and is concerned with rhythmic, syllabic and intonation patterns of an utterance. It deals with the analysis of speech sounds in a given time or characteristic rate (tempo). Therefore, on the level of prosody, *gamatti*, *jalatti*, *beekaan* and *wallaalaan* consist of both rhythmic and syllabic structures in which the Oromo rhyming proverbs, like poems involve rhythmic feet, patterns of syllables and stresses: heavy/super-heavy (stronger/stressed) and light/slack (weaker/unstressed). For further illustration, let us examine the *phonocentric* structures of the following rhyming segments (words) with the help of word-tree diagrams. By phonocentric structures I am referring to sound patterns of the rhyming elements and these include stressed and unstressed syllabic levels and standard rhythmic feet.

A Word-level Branching Structure: Metrical Analysis of Rhyming Segments



The above branching structure can be formalized as: **stronger/heavy = short; and weaker/light = short.**

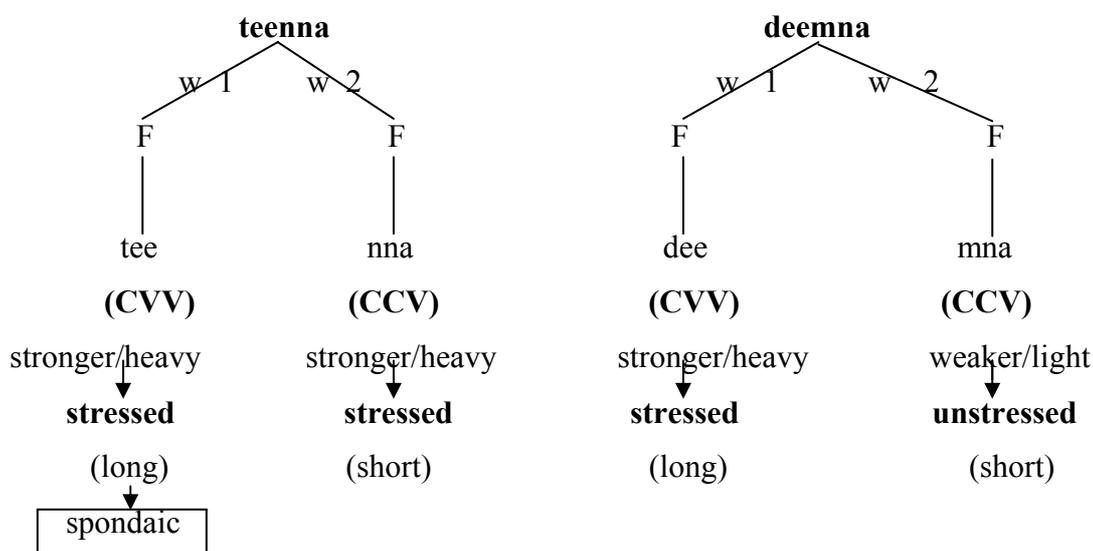
Explanation for the Symbols:

1. “W” stands for weak or unstressed syllable (morph), whereas “S” represents stronger or stressed syllable
2. “F” stands for “feet”
3. The ‘Roman Numbers’ indicate the nodes (points where the branches join) showing rhythmic properties or types of feet (*unary, binary, ternary*, etc), or in one sense, the structuring of pattern in the beats of stresses in the stream of sounds (rhythm) into a recurrence of regular sounds of metrical system.
4. In Oromo language, the *geminated* consonant phonemes are always *heavily stressed* (see note on transcription).

The past and present human history with all its imperfection cannot be corrected unless comparison is made between the active and the passive leaders who are diametrically opposite in their roles. Such comparison is always necessary because the leaders as influential figures may lead the nations to glorious times of abundance or they may contribute to chaotic situations marked by economic and social sinking. The Oromo have humorous expression for making such a comparison. **Biyya fardi bade [hin jirre] harretu garmaama** (P9)- ‘in a country where there is no horse/where a horse disappeared, a ‘donkey’ plays the race.’ Bakka namni jabaan/beekaan hin jirretti, dadhabatu/wallaalatu abbaa biyyaa ta’a- ‘in the absence of an intelligent/a wise man, the passive obedient enjoys unbounded power.’ The absence of a horse will give an opportunity to the donkey to play a game not in the same way the horse does, but in its own fashion. Satirically, the incompetent men appear on the stage without knowing the art of leadership. The syntactically arranged parallels-the first intransitive verb *bade* “disappeared” and the second linking transitive *garmaama* “playing race” reveal the reversed situation wherein the disappearance or absence of the strong or charismatic figure gave the chance to a weak to play the old game. In a broader social circumstance, in a country where human intellect is undervalued, the incompetent demagogue takes the lead. The related grammatical components, *farda* “horse” and *harree* “donkey” are also related by metonymic link between *bade* “disappeared” and *garmaama* “playing race” in a sense that the latter is viewed as the result of the former. The donkey has the opportunity to take the lead only if its challenger, an active horse disappears. The verbal phrases *bade* and *garmaama* characterize the contrasting situations in which the two animal characters are placed. The horse in this particular

situation is described as charismatic leader who is endowed with intelligence and wit whereas the donkey stands for a weak authority having no vision, knowledge and the quality of leading the nation. The satirical term *garmaama* (feeling of over-joy) refers to limitless privilege and freedom the inefficient authority enjoys. In a situation where the competent people lost voice, a submissive takes the opportunity of exercising power monopoly.

One of the worst traumatic facts in the Ethiopian empire-state was the land holding system of the feudal period (see *gabbaar* in chapter 7); the time when the oppressed people were not only exposed to man-made calamities, but also experienced sorrowful silence. “A handful of powerful aristocratic families and hand-picked retainers in league with the Emperor and the Orthodox Church dictated the daily lot of 27 million peasants, exploiting to their advantage the mountain kingdom’s meagre riches without troubled conscience. It was the way it had always been...in the ancient feudal empire for centuries” (Ottaway, 1978: 1). With the exception of those who welcomed the land confiscation system, almost all Oromo peasants were relegated to the level of semi-slavery by the self-styled Emperors. **Faradoon lachuu teenna, nulachuu lafoo deemna, ebada qalbii teenna** (P10)- ‘the two horses are ours; but both of us go on foot because of our ignorance.’ Namni mirga ofitiiif hin falmanne, bultii/qabeenya ofii biratti hiyyooma- ‘those who failed to protect their rights cannot enjoy the wealth of their soil (land).’ The three parallel ideas: *lachuu teenna* “both are ours,” *lafoo deemna* “we walk on foot,” and *qalbii teenna* “our ignorance” reveal the way the Oromo peasants served the overlords because of their weaknesses. Phonologically, the possessive marker, *teenna* “ours” and the transitive verb *deemna* “go” share common features- their rhythmic patterns and syllabic structures are the same. In the formal properties of folklore, this could be formalized as CVV.CCV- **stronger/heavy (dee-)= long; stronger/heavy (tee-) =long; weaker/light (-mna)= short; stronger/heavy (-nna)= short**. These phonocentric relations are schematically shown in a word-level branching structure as follows:



The oral artist endeavours to capture public outrage and describes the peaceful resistance against landed gentry with a sense of responsibility and great concern. This proverb was uttered at the time when the rural population in Oromiyaa was relegated to the status of sub-human level and escorted on foot the tyrant overlords who were riding on the horses of those whose rights were denied, the serfs. The bottom-line is that the enslaved farmers were unable to protect their birthright and dignity due to the loss of faith in themselves. The idea of denouncing oneself for allowing a system of serfdom to happen (*ebada qalbii teenna*) is a sign of staging an uprising.

We see many people in the world suffering from the crises of being unable to find the appropriate place in a social setting. Every wrong direction they take and the life of bondage they have chosen seem to have placed them in a different position because no kind of alternative appeals to their senses. The debasing life they have chosen as a paradigm of perfection often brings their terrible downfall. The consequence of seeing what is hell as paradise, what is perverse as sanity, what is ugly as beautiful, in short, choosing the antithetical way of life has affected a good number of people, both the civilized and the uncivilized. **Gowwaan bakka itti bade warra seeya** (P11)- ‘a fool thinks that the place where he lost himself is his home/origin.’ Wallaalaan jireenya dhugaa hin hubatu- ‘the unwise does not understand meaningful life.’ This is a heavy criticism of people who never learn from their failure and whose fixed way of living ends up in their own laments. *Foolishness has no blessing and fools are always the losers because they care not what to do and what to choose.* This proverb shares common theme with Aesop’s fable “*Sound and Fury*

Signifying Nothing” (see chapter 4), a situation in which a lion and an ass made partnership and went out to hunt. An ass, instead of saving the prey, helped its enemy, a lion, to catch wild goats. Then, the ass asked if he had not put up a good show at driving goats to them out of the cave. Instead of reciprocating the kindness shown by the ass, the lion, which was astonished by her foolishness proudly scoffed at her and said, ‘*I give you my word, I should have been frightened of you myself if I had not known you were an ass.*’ As Sumner (1995: 316) has indicated, “The main features of a fool’s behaviour noted by the Oromo are his confusion, his instability, his inability....The fool is confused in the perception of a situation. Night is day for a fool.” This aphoristic statement reveals the debasing human characteristic, which *has affected both the old and the modern fools who often imitate the impossible in favour of irrational pleasure*. In fact, he who is born a fool is never cured. Darkness is light for the unwise who lost the right direction. The instinctive imitators who have no sense of self-worth must expect to be laughed at. The two contrasting parallel categories (verbal phrases), *bakka tti bade* “where lost himself” and *warra seeya* “sees as his home” depict a bizarre behaviour of the confused human being who continued to pursue the misleading way which relegated him to a disgraceful condition. The Noun Phrases, *gowwaan* “the fool” and *warra* “home/origin” are interconnected by cause and effect relationship-taking the wrong place as one’s home is the outcome of the reversal of behaviour.

The Oromo proverbial literature could be seen as one of the best examples of modern satirical allusions in which human follies and weaknesses are brought to our attention in a subtle and dignified language. **Guddateef tiisifni qodaa hin buqqisu** (P12)- ‘though they are many in number, flies cannot open a vessel (jug).’ Gurmuu guddatuun/baayyatuun namummaa hin muldhisu- ‘the quality of people is not measured in terms of the number.’ The proverb raises fundamental issues that contribute to the lower status of man. The second linking transitive verb with negative marker, *hin buqqisu* “do not open” and the first adverbial phrase *guddateef* “though many in number” describe a reversal of roles of an inefficient person. The two parallel ideas illustrate the conflicting character of an individual and the way the two opposing qualities in him diminished his influence. The importance of human being does not lie in the number, but in the brain. This implies that the greatness of number does not make a man. The two parallel words, *tiisisa* “flies” and *qodaa* “jug,” represent the reality in the society. The former stands for the passive

and indolent groups who are burden to the society, whereas the latter denotes the wealth of the nation, which those who do not labour hard are unable to use.

In a social structure marked by inequalities and domination of one group over another, the silenced group has no possibility of speaking for itself, whereas the empowered section has harmful influence and can enforce its will without any restraint. **Ka qotiyyoon hin iyyini qacceen iyyite** (P13)- ‘the whip cracked while the ox didn’t.’ Sagaleen nama mirga dhabee oduu hin dhagayamin, kan namicha nama cunqursuu dhagayama- ‘the oppressed is ignored, but the oppressor has the right to be heard.’ The *qacee* “the whip” and the *qotiyyoo* “an ox” are contrastingly set in their semantic relations. The former allegorizes power and domination, whereas the latter shows the marginalized group, which is under the chains of misery. The whip usually gives sound (Oromiffa acronym for *iiyyite* or *dhukaate*) when a master (a farmer) flogs the ox, which is already tormented under the pressing yoke. The folk artist is trying to relate this difficult situation to master-slave type of human relations. The opposing parallel segments, the first intransitive verb with negative marker...*hin iyyin* “did not crack” and the second intransitive...*iiyyite* “cracked” indicate the way the heartless oppressor tries to win sympathy by making his voice heard. Satirically, the favoured have voice, but the disfavoured are voiceless.

Human beings and their institutions are still confronted with pernicious cunning and bestialities of the old world. For instance, if take the empty days of Minnie Cooper (Faulkner, 1999), we see that her lifestyle is inspired by deception and fraud. She believes that her vivacious appearance is her wealth and so she prefers to enjoy flirting with the depraved persons. As Minnie gets older without getting married, she seems to have been deeply affected by the result of a social crisis. The beauty of her young age is now declining and so she is no longer the centre of attraction. Her old friends have now deserted her; and consequently she fabricated the idea of raping in order to regain the lost reputation. Minnie accused Will Mayes, African American, of having committed the crime of rape. Mayes was put to death by lynching. The cunning strategy she has devised, instead of securing her social standing, worsened her public image. The following proverb discusses a similar situation. It depicts the irony of trickery in human history and the way those who are fond of creating abstract images eventually become great losers when the *crime of lying* faces an angry backlash from the deceived people. **Karaan sobaan darban, deebi’uun nama dhiba** (P14)- ‘one may succeed in passing the street (road) through deceit, but may not be able to return in the same

street in the same manner.’ Jireenyi shira/dhara irratti ijaarame hundee hin qabu- ‘the way of treason does not last long.’ This proverb consists of two separate major constituents (clauses), which are parallel in structure; namely *karaan soban darban* “the road passed through deceit” and *deebi’uun nama dhiba* “impossible to return.” Both clauses are composed of verbal phrases, which express unlikeness. *Sobaan* “deceiving/lying” is contrasted with *deebi’uun* “return,” and *darban* “succeed in passing” is opposed by *nama dhiba* “impossible.” Thus, the two ideas are related by antithetical parallelism between “passing the road through deceit” and “the impossibility of returning the same way.”

Lying does not necessarily solve human problems, and may even well create more crises for mankind; but if people tell the truth, then, public justice cannot hurt them. There are many tricksters who have enjoyed wealth and power through deceit and fraud; and at the same time suffered great humiliation when the old way of sophistry becomes unworkable. This proverbial folklore deals with issues concerning untrustworthiness in which tricksters employ varieties of mechanisms so as to win corruption licence. Here, the oral artist emphasizes that cherishing the method of sophistry frequently ends up in crises, disgrace and defeat of all time. The expiration of the old tricks (*deebi’uun nama dhiba*) means the tragic downfall of the trickster figures. The masquerades may enjoy short-lived championship if time allows; but the unfair games they play and every misleading step they take facilitate their nightmare journey of life. The irony is that the losing way of the trickery has no permanence or continuity.

In terms of spiritual values, the Oromo proverbial lore as part of moral principles imparts the importance of Godly way of life: walking in dignity, seeking knowledge, observing the decencies, forbearance, the omnipotence of God and its final judgement against the violence of spirit or what is known as demonic intentions. **Kooraa Waandhi namatti fe’e, finqilli/fincilli hin buusu** (P15)- ‘the saddle that God has put on someone cannot be removed through skipping.’ Dallansuu Waaqa irraa dhufe lolli hin deebisu (balaan xumurama)- ‘God’s retribution is irresistible and irreversible.’ The transitive verb in the first part, *fe’e* ‘put on/load or saddled’ is syntactically related to the second linking verb *hin buusu* “cannot be removed;” and in their semantic aspects, the oppositeness of the two is vividly shown. *Koraa* “saddle” in this particular situation is an indication of being burdened with problems or heavy punishment. *Finqilli/fincilli* in a literal sense is to refer to jumping or skipping of a horse or mule to express unwillingness or refusal; but figuratively it denotes revolt or

uprising. The main verb in the first part of the proverb, *fe'e* is synonymous to retribution; whereas the second antithetical segment *hin buusu* 'cannot be removed' shows the impossibility of changing or reversing God's anger and His decision. "Ethics has traditionally been a powerful critical term for literary study. Literature, especially narrative, is said to be ethical in a number of ways. As a representation of life in which we are not directly engaged, literature lends itself well to the indispensable pedagogical activity" (Lentricchia, 1995: 400). For this reason the ethical approach to literature is to show the modes of life characterized by social and spiritual stability. This proverb involves moral issue in which men who defy the way of God receive severe punishment.

In a situation where the mental universe of people is entirely controlled for whatever reason, by their leader, the image of that leader casts its shadow over them in such a way that even at the worst time of his life, a society continues to see him as an angelic power and a centre of great attraction. Ironically, so long as the front keeps on shining, the substance matters not. **Kormi qaata du'ee warii saaqama laala** (P16)- 'the owners look at the stripes of colour of the bull, which died long time ago.' Nama jiruu du'e waan jiru seeyan- 'the collapsing figure-headed is still seen by his followers as the centre of fascination.' A people often lag behind the time if they keep on admiring a figure, who lost the power of attraction and charisma years ago. The oral narrator is mocking at such folly of the human being. The two parallel verbal segments, *du'ee* "died" and *laala* "sees" are satirical explanation for adoring the diminishing image that does not make sense. In terms of social and political deficit, *korma*- "the bull," is a symbol of the diminishing image; and the first head word *qaata du'ee* "died long time ago" is connected with the collapsed authority that has lost power, dignity and fame. Therefore, the term "dying long time ago," *qaata du'ee* (first major constituent) and the action of "looking at the stripes of colour" of a bull-*saqaama laala* (second major constituent) are the parallel construction of the inverted image, which according to the oral artist is the crisis of judgement. Seeing the stripes of colour here shows the symbolic importance of that figure-head individual whom his friends and family members still admire as a powerful image. This aphoristic saying can also be uttered, if despite the destitution of the present, the charming face of a person who was wealthy years ago still remains unchanged; and if people are deceived by his front which has not yet wrinkled and/or faded. The oral artist aims at expressing his contempt for the erroneous views, mental distortions and the crisis of judgement. He is making a disgusted remark

about a society which is out of touch with the real world and continues to be controlled or influenced by the bogus image of power.

We may be pre-occupied with many ideas and great dreams to be achieved in our lives. But the implementation of those dreams could be the most serious challenge. People cannot build a great wall in one night; and neither do they accomplish all that they want to achieve in few days. Dreaming does not require so much energy, but concretizing that dream demands mental and physical dynamism. Many people fail to put their ambitions into reality because of two main reasons: first, that they do not know how to plan; and second, they crowd themselves with several complex issues and try to make the impossible possible without having the power. For whatever we aspire to do, we have to, first and foremost, evaluate our mental strength. **Luka lama qabaataniif muka lama hin koran** (P17)- ‘though one has two legs, he cannot climb two trees at the same time.’ Humna qabna jedhanii waan hin dandeenne godhuuf yaaluun rakkina fida- ‘one should not attempt what is not within his power.’ The two head nouns modified by the same numerical epithets, *luka* “leg” and *muka* “tree,” are syntactically parallels. Besides their identity of being accompanied by modifiers, the rhyming elements are also constructed in parallel form in their phonological structure. They have the same number of speech sounds differing in a single sound in the same position. *Luka lama* “two legs” refers to having dominant social status; and the implication here is that one should not hope to achieve the impossible by virtue of holding boundless power. The failure or success of an individual person depends to a greater extent on whether or not he knows his limitation and if he tries to act within the boundary of his knowledge. If people are driven by fierce ambition without considering this important factor, then their efforts do not often bear fruits. This general truth is underlined in the two phrases, *qabaataniif* “though one has...” and...*hin koran* “one cannot climb.” The narrator comments on the people who are preoccupied with a *broad utopian vision*, the negative effect of neglecting careful action, and the deficiency of focusing on specific issues because of lack of defined objectives. We should not be guided by instinct feelings so as to control everything which is beyond our knowledge. Within the context of change and development, *muka hin koran* “cannot climb a tree” reveals the problem of trying to achieve huge success or victory through unsystematic means. Having a political power alone does not necessarily lead to great success (*muka lama koruu*) unless man is endowed with an extra-ordinary ability.

A testing circumstance has always been a measurement for knowing the various aspects of human character. There are many politicians and civil servants who have been trusted and loved by their impressive languages, but at the same time hated and humiliated when they are unable to meet the expectations of their people. An individual's public persona is quite different from the true picture of that person. **Nama argaa hin quufanii argan quufan** (P18)- 'appearance will not be enough/cannot be a yardstick unless you see/test a person.' Eenyummaa namaa kan muldhisu hujjiidha malee dubbii tolchuudhaa miti. Waan namni haasa'u laaltee itti uf hin kennin- 'man is not evaluated by his words, rather by his deeds.' The major parallel constituents (separate clauses), *aragaa hin quufanii* "appearance will not be enough" and *argan quufan* "unless tested" are contrastingly related on the level of semantics. In order to illustrate this wisdom statement, let me begin with two covered vessels. The first one is empty, decorated and painted with glittering material outside while the inside part remains unpleasant. The second one is not attractive outwardly but made of durable material and contains valuable items. The point here is that we should not simply look upon the vessels, but upon what they contain because all are not valuable that glitter. Likewise, a person must not be judged by his physical charm or by what he/she says unless he/she is put to test. Action makes a man, not what he speaks. The first segment, 'appearance will not be enough,' shows glossy surface; and the second contrasting parallel, 'being satisfied of seeing someone' depicts concrete action. Rational judgement is the work of wisdom loving, and its outcome will be progress and rational gratification; whereas making shallow judgement about humanity is to lose social esteem.

Mutual concern is one of the main components of human relationships. If however, humanity is dichotomized between the prey and the predators, master-servant interaction pattern, then bitterness will disfigure the relations. **Oduu kabaadhatu hin dadhabin, kabaatan dadhaba** (P19)- 'he who is being carried gets more tired than that of a person who carries him.' Waan isaa godhamee fi ulfina kennameefii gatii hin kennu- 'he does not give value to human effort (nothing satisfies him).' The expressions or verbal parallels...*hin dadhabin* "does not get tired" and *dadhaba* "get tired" are semantically opposite; and in the same way, *kabaadhatu* "the one who carries" and *kabaatan*, "the one who is being carried" are also contradictory in their relations. The former refers to the subaltern group who is forced to serve the master; whereas the latter refers to a brutish person who disregards the services and honours offered to him and turns a blind eye to the painful life of

others. The verbal narrator is scoffing at the sadistic pleasure the unfeeling people enjoy at the expense of their fellow men. It is difficult to meet the needs of those who do not know the value of mutuality of feelings other than pursuing their own unquenchable desires and comforts. The idea of carrying and being carried reveals the absence of equitable relations between people in which the luxurious life of the privileged becomes predicament to the underprivileged. The proverb powerfully discusses how distasteful human relations will be if genuine efforts are undermined or neglected.

Despite being civilized, we are still unable to surmount many ugly aspects we have inherited. This is so because many of us who proudly accuse others of making errors and atrocities are not brave enough to correct our own grave mistakes. We try to teach others without knowing what to do. In reading Oromo proverbial literature, we find this kind of controversy. **Qaalluun ta'ufii/ofii hin beenne, tanamaa hin wallaaltu** (P20)- 'a sorcerer/fortune-teller who does not know about himself, pretends to know about others.' Kan ufiifuu ufbulchee hin dandeenne, waan namaa beekuuf xaara- 'he who does not manage his own affairs simulates to teach others.' In syntactic terms, the parallel ideas, *hin beenne* "does not know" and *hin wallaltu* "pretends to know" are antonyms. Similarly, *ta'ufii* "about himself" and *tanamaa* "about others" are also in contraposition in their semantic features. There is nothing worse than demonstrating ignorance in action. Whenever a person points a finger at others, he must always remember that three of his fingers point at him. This implies that one has to evaluate himself before attempting to jump into the affairs of others. As the Bible teaches us, a person who does not see the speck (mote) in his eyes should not try to see motes in others. In his fable story, "*A prophet without Knowledge*" (p. 165), Aesop has discussed similar event which affected the fortune-teller who was sitting in a market place and making lucrative business. Suddenly a man came and told him that the door of his house was wrenched from its hinges and all his possessions carried off. He jumped up and with a cry of consternation ran to see what had happened. Another person who was watching him said, '*You profess to foretell what is going to befall other people, but you do not foresee your own misfortune.*' The sorcerers (*qaallicha/qaallittii*) are the cunning sophists who involve in matters which do not concern them and try to know the impossible without managing their own activities. They are often called *false prophets* precisely because they are committed to fabricating abstract ideas and play tricks with them in order to win popularity. In the Oromo society, the *qaalluus/qaallichas*

(sorcerers) are in my opinion the idle people who earn their livelihood under the cover of their prophetic ability and healing power. They appear to be wise commentators and fortune-tellers while they are still ignorant of what is good and bad, right and wrong. These diabolically inspired groups of people are different from the spiritual authorities and wise men (*Qaalluus*) of the *Gadaa* time. The complementary ideas...*hin beenne* and...*hin wallaaltu* are satirically set to unfold the masking nature of the trickster characters. The oral artist focuses on criticizing the odd mannerism of *the deprecating generation* whose main purpose is to talk about the fate of others without resolving their own moral and social corruption. *The demonic image of “Hekse or heksemester” (sorcerer) which the Danish society annually remembers by burning heaps of firewood is an epitome of the depraved “qaalluus” of the Oromo, whom the modern generation sees as the representation of satanic cults.*

The proverbial lore is a social satire which discusses human characteristics in allusive language. The indirectness of expressions is meant to teach the people through wisdom rather than offending their feelings. This quality, together with the artistic use of the language gives us pleasure if rigorous analysis is made. **Raaq lafa jiruuuf allaattiin samii irratti wal-lolti** (P21)- ‘the vultures fight in the sky for the carcass that lies on the ground.’ *Lugni jiruu ofii tolfachuu hin dandeenye, waan hin jirree irratti wal-nyaata-* ‘the cowards who are unable to fight for their benefit turn on each other in vain.’ In terms of meaning, the nominal phrases, *lafa* “ground” and “*samii*” “sky” are related in contradistinction to each other. The vultures do not usually kill the prey for two reasons: first, they are not capable; second, they have no courage. The verbal artist, who has observed the cowardly behaviour and inability of the vultures, has related this situation to the timid human beings, who are not efficient. According to the oral artist, like vultures, the aimless and weak human beings turn on each other for no reason or struggle to collect what is tossed to them by their masters as leftovers. In other words, the timid human beings who dared not fight their enemies because of their inabilities often quarrel with each other out of desperation and aimlessness. The oral narrator who examined the precarious life of the wandering vultures, attempted to compare these dependent birds with the indolence and cowardice of human nature.

The quality of men lies in their willingness to evaluate themselves, learn from their own errors or from the mistakes others made; not in the way they appear to be the best and try to teach

what they do not know. **Sareen ta'ufii/ofii hin argituu re'een eegee gadi qabadhu jetti** (P22)- 'a dog which does not see its own, tells (advises) the goat to put its tail in order.' Waan isa fokkisu oduu ofirratti hin argin, dadhabbi nama biraa muldhisuuf yaala- 'he points an accusing finger at others without correcting his own weaknesses.' This is a humorous expression in which the oral artist who has observed the hypocritical notion of people has made the stinging comment. The head constituents or Noun Phrase, *sareen* "the dog" and *re'een* "the goat," and the verbal categories, *hin argitu* "does not see" and *gadi qabadhu* "put in order," are all contrasting parallel components. It would be hypocritical of the masquerades to instruct others without keeping their houses in order. The dog as indirect reference is used by the narrator to correct the erroneous views of those who are interested in finding faults in others-*gadi qabadhu jetti* without correcting what is ugly in themselves- *ta'ufii hin argitu*.

As Harries (1989: 5) has pointed out, just as the individual goes through passages in the life process and is challenged to renewal by transitional experiences, so too our collective selves. To belong to the world actually means to be able to function effectively anywhere. Managing to live with different peoples requires great wisdom because they are endowed with peculiar behaviour, which may be noble and appreciable, or strange and shocking. Peoples of our planet have diversified cultures, languages and norms. We can live together in peace and perfect harmony so long as we value humanity regardless of what we all think; but it is most likely that we will be the losers if we try to define humanity in terms of our own interests. **Waliin ooleef wal hin fakkaatu** (P23)- 'even though they are together, they are not alike.' Waliin jiraachuun yaadaan wal-fudhachuudhaa miti- 'living together does not show the unity of purpose.' Semantically, the adverbial phrase *ooleef* "though they are together" and the verbal segment with negative marker, *hin fakkaatu* "not alike" are linked as opposing segments. It is also evident that these immediate constituents show oppositeness in their semantic relations. The narrator raises the issue of divided heart and the superficial oneness of people in which the pursuit of collective interests and genuine solidarity seldom occurs. The significance of knowing the quality of human character is also underlined. For instance, in the Oromo trickster tales (fables 1-5), the superficial friendship of the *predators* and the *prey*-the protagonist *tricksters* and the *tricked* characters, often ends with the triumph of the former and the anguish and death the latter. Our success or failure depends to some extent on whether or not we understand people's behaviour and are able to communicate with them

accordingly. If we expect everyone to be our type, then we suffer isolation or solitude because no one is the stereotyped image of the others. Thematically, this aphoristic saying conveys the idea that human difference is natural and unavoidable; and so the unity of purpose is not always expected even from those who are our closest friends. The two opposing points, *waliin ooleef* and *wal hin fakkaatu* unfold the probability of facing serious problems in a situation where capturing the hearts and minds of people is impossible.

A Comparison of Parallel Constituents

In a standard sense, comparison shows likeness of something. It refers to the considering of two ideas, persons, things, or situations with regard to some characteristics that are common to both, as for example the likeness of a hero to a lion in courage. The closeness or likeness in meanings may also be called synonymous if the term semantics is used in *grammatical context in the graded form*.

In human history, there are many people who became victims of their own misdeeds. For instance, in the early 1970s, Ethiopian education policy was revised in which the so-called “*Sector Review*” was arbitrarily introduced. The new policy was based on a widening of the gap between the upper rich class and the grass-roots. For this reason it created tensions, misunderstanding and divisions throughout the country. Moreover, it fuelled the already existing wave of intellectual movements, especially the uprising of university students against the feudal system. These, together with the Wollo drought and famine of 1972-1974, which was ignored by the government, eventually brought about the tragic downfall and death of the king who encouraged the wrong policy. The following proverb discusses ideas that are congruent with the above situation. **Albeen abbaan qare, abbaa qale** (P24)- ‘the knife sharpened by the owner has slain him.’ Namni dhara/shira hojjatu ofumaa ofballeessa- ‘treason takes the life of those who cherish it.’ The two parallel transitive, *qare* “sharpened” and *qale* “slain,” are arranged in the form of cause and effect relations-the action of sharpening the knife which is similar to spinning a web of deceit is followed by the event of taking one’s life or self-slaying of the incorrigible character. In the two words, *qare* and *qale*, the initial speech sounds (consonant phonemes) are alliterating; and there is *internal*

rhyming on the level of phonology. The proverb reminds the irrational thinkers that their bad intentions may harm them or turn against them. The vermin human characters who initiate problems or troubles will end up in it themselves, or in other words, if they are motivated to devise a plan to harm others, they become victims of their own making. *Albeen* “the knife” allegorizes treason or malicious intent, which brings about tragic consequences. This proverb can also be told at a time when a person who deliberately harms others suffers the consequence of being unfair. The tragic story of Mammo Mazamir, can be cited as a case in point. Mazamir, who was one of the brilliant intellectuals and patriotic heroes of his generation was accused of inciting violence against the government. He was sentenced to death by hanging without doing any crime. Before he was hanged, he said to Emperor Haile-Sellasie, “Sooner or later, you will be judged in the same way.” Four years later, the king faced similar tragic death. In human history, those who cherish misjudgement often pay a high price for their mistakes; and in a sense this underlines the theme of this aphoristic statement.

Advancing self-centred attitudes and too much infatuation with materialistic life are often the cause of conflicts of different kinds. In the event of colonialism, the ‘core image’ used by the harbingers had been Christianity and the Bible. This central idea was followed by expansion and the claiming of territories of the colonized peoples. In the late 1980s, the core image of socialism in Ethiopian was the formation of “Farmers’ Village” (*Yemandar Misrataa*) and “Settlement” (*Safaraa*). Ironically, this notion was expanded to the eviction programme of the *gabbaar* period of pre-socialism. In general, the use of some tricky core images as we shall see in the next proverb, frequently leads to negative developments. **Bakka ciisaa argannaan diriirfataa bootte** (P25)- ‘having succeeded in getting the place to lie on, she cried (demanded) for more space to stretch her leg.’ *Bakka kenneef irraa tarkaanfattee/darbitee qabeenya nama biraatiin jireenya garii jiraachuu barbaaddi/hawwiti-* ‘she seeks more comfort and wants to go beyond what is hers.’ The two phrasal categories-the first and the second major constituents (clauses), *ciisaa argannaan* “getting the place to lie on” and *diriirfataa bootte* “cried/demanded for stretching” describe the same situation. The second Verbal Phrase-*diriirfataa bootte*, reveals the undesirable intention a woman demonstrates to attain what she actually does not deserve. This *mammaaka* is concerned with general truth and moral principles or rules of behaviour that state how people in a country should behave. It explores

various aspects of people's character including the serious problems regarding egoistic attitude and its adverse effect on human communication. A destitute woman has been offered a piece of land but the compassion for her is not reciprocated. Having resolved her social problems, she decided to possess more land. This wise saying has been told during a time when a helpless person who has been offered generous help turned on against the people who protected him. A mischievous woman who wants to occupy more space or land is satirized for her unkind behaviour. The negative effect of being driven by malicious intent of getting more comfort without toiling hard is the focus of the narrator.

We may be knowledgeable, wealthy or heroes, but if we are affected by misfortune, we are no more what we were. The point is then, those who lost paradise must be tested by hell or what we call sordid life of destitution. If we want to survive through wisdom, we have to learn how to lower ourselves not to continue to be in hell, but to defeat the conditions which forced us to experience that bitter life. **Baraa fi furguggee gadi jedhaniiti jala lufan/darban** (P26)- 'a year of misfortune and a hurled wooden missile (whirling stick) can be escaped by bowing down.' Bara jiruun namatti hammaatte, rakkina nama qunname jalaa bahuuf obsinii fi murannoon barbaachisaadha- 'in the face of difficulties, showing great patience and courage is needed.' In grammatical sense, the major elements (verbal phrases), *gadi jedhaniiti* "bowing down" and *jala darban* "escape" are expressed in comparison and one reinforces the other. The head-words (nouns), *bara* "year" and *furguggee* "wooden missile" are allegorically set to refer to serious setbacks or adversities. It is also patently obvious that the two parallel verbal groups are metonymically related to each other-the action of the latter (escaping) may be understood as the result of the former (bowing down); and they are interrelated by cause and effect or causation. The compared verbal categories suggest the significance of showing patience and endurance in times of difficulties. During such hard times, we need dogged determination and great strength. If people allow themselves to be caught in trouble or misfortunes, they continue to be lifetime victims of problems. *Time does not reward those who keep on neglecting the value of forbearance and continue meditating to achieve independent existence and smooth life in a non-ready-made world.* The failure in one's aim or the building of a successful life depends upon whether or not people carefully deal with the trying conditions. The race against time cannot be successful unless we are ready to tackle serious challenges. If however, we

are unable to bear our misfortunes bravely, the prospect of creating our own world might be more bleak.

If a person has a dream to be rich, he/she must at the same time teach himself/herself how to be tolerant and careful. **Baraan barruu horan** (P27)- ‘possessing the cattle with stripes in abundance is achieved through time.’ Horanii jireenya gaarii jiraachuun akka salphaati waan argamuu miti- ‘enjoying prosperity requires perseverance of years.’ Social and economic transformation is the result of strenuous effort, efficiency and wisdom. This proverbial lore emphasizes the fundamental idea of keeping up with time without forgetting the danger of the impetuosity in the world where success is impossible without critical thinking. *Baraan* “through time” and *horan* “prosper” are congruent ideas, which communicate the truth about wealth and time; and, of course, attaining the abundance of wealth requires hard work of several years. Here, the folk narrator warns us not to build up false hopes of becoming rich overnight. The fact about human progress shows that achieving a meaningful life requires painstaking effort, determination and courage; together with the effective use of time. Step after step the ladder is ascended. The epithetic term, *barruu* connotes the valuable assets, which in this case imparts a large number of qualities of cattle and such qualities of cattle are considered to be a status symbol for the nation. *Barruu* literally means the fascinating stripes of colour(s); and this indicates both attractiveness and the best race of cattle, which is connected with the prosperous life the Oromo society experienced during the golden age of the *Gadaa* period.

If we trust whoever tells us intoxicating stories of the opening of the golden gate, then it is unlikely that we see the ‘*New Dawn*’ in our lives. No one in the world became a free man by accepting the changing faces. **Chee jedhan, harreen marumatu gurra dhaaba** (P28)- ‘all the donkeys erect their ears to whoever instructed them.’ Nama dadhabaa/wallaalaa abbama argetu itti fayyadama- ‘a weak (submissive) person is easily swayed by everyone.’ The worst thing that can happen to people is the inability to be their own masters. This takes us to the point that the loss of human dignity has its root in the lack of a positive self-concept. The narrator employs a biting satire to ridicule the people or groups who are always ready to obey or serve anyone who wants to use them as instruments. The inability of building confidence, devoid of reasoning power and the blind acceptance of command of everyone are mirrored in the proverb. The term ‘*chee*’ is connected with the commanding tone of the donkey’s master. This proverbial narrative underscores the disgracing

effect of servile mentality in which being enslaved by others' ideas reduces people to unnatural thinkers. Thus, the two corresponding words, *chee jedhan...* and *marumatu gurra dhaaba* describe the way people are easily manipulated due to their readiness to lower themselves. The phrase *gurra dhaaba* (erecting ears) is used as an allusion to passive obedience.

Time changes, and so does our social standing in our groups or societies. The rising and fall of individuals is the result of the shifting of time and each time shift brings a negative effect to those who commit themselves to atrocious acts. **Dhartinii fi dhaleen gaafaan gadi** (P29)- 'a packed lunch/meal and treason are short-lived.' *Wanti hundee hin qabne, bara dheeraa hin jiraatu-* 'anything which is not based on well-founded reason does not last long.' The immediate Noun Phrase categories-*dhartini* "treason" and *dhaleen* "packed lunch/meal," are compared to delineate the way the evil deeds gradually dissipate with the changing time. This proverb takes us back to the heinous crime of the villain character, *Iago* of Shakespearean tragedy, who incited *Othello* to such rages of unfounded jealousy against his wife, *Desdemona*, that eventually *Othello* killed her. But in the end, the flame of treason he has kindled consumed him when *Emilia*, *Iago's* his wife, unfolded his horrendous crime. As time stood against him, his colourful vocabulary of falsification eventually vanished and the truth won. The phrase *gaafaan gadi*, literally "short-lived" is used by the oral artist to explain such series of events in which the trickster humiliates himself in favour of intricate ruse. This kind of proverb is often told when people want to speak or comment about the inevitability of the discontinuity or temporal existence of something, which is not supported by good reason.

Social and economic growth of any society is based on the formation of a perfect nation-hood characterized by the building of mutual trust, which is the foundation for natural human communication and harmonious relationship. A tendency to entertain opposing views or creating an atmosphere of mistrust results in the disintegration of national bond and the withering away of a sense of collective responsibility. **Garaan wal hin beenne, malkaan martuu/hundinuu kaku'u** (P30)- 'those who do not know each other take an oath now and then at every riverbed.' *Warri wal hin amanne, wal-sobaati waliin jiraatan-* 'those who are unable to build trust try to seek solace in deceiving each other at every step.' The first verbal segment with negative marker, *hin beenne* "do not know each other" and the second linking noun phrase *kaku'u* "oath" are parallel comparisons. As far as phonotactic relation is concerned, the terminal elements (-**aan**) of the rhyming noun

phrases, *garaan* “stomach/heart” and *malkaan* “riverbed,” are the same. The problem of mutual understanding, the sophisticated swindling techniques of the tricksters and an attempt to win superficial companionship through empty pledges are the centre of this folk saying. The two correspondingly set ideas clarify the way those who do not trust each other rely heavily on the duplicity of false oath. The hypocrites often try to conceal their hidden interests by swearing an oath of allegiance now and again to rationalize guilty of falsehood.

We do gain much knowledge from experience as we do in schools and universities. Great men and women of the past and present are not only those who are on the top of career ladder because of their scholarly achievements, but also those who have accumulated enjoyable experiences during their life times. When we talk about experience, what automatically comes to our mind is a pleasant situation, hardships or challenges we have gone through, the instructive lesson life taught us, and the knowledge we have built as experts. Contrary to this, there are some people, both educated and uneducated, who never learn from what they have experienced. In most cases, such people are doomed to failure. **Gigissee si dhageesisee roobee si agarsiisee, haamtuu qabaa mana sii kabaa** (P31)- ‘I made you aware through thunder, and then showed you by raining; but I do not have sickle to cut grass and cover your house.’ Waaan ta’uu barbaachisu hunda sitti muldhisee waan fudhachuu dadhabdeef (dhagayuu diddeef), rakkina siqunnamuuf siwajjiin hin jiru- ‘you have failed to live up to my words (piece of advice); and so I share not your problem any more.’ *Gigissee* “thundered,” *dhageesisee* “warned,” *agarsiisee* “showed” and *roobee* “rained” are all related by causation and the three intransitive verbs are the result of the first linking word-*gigissee*. The two verbal phrases, *qabaa* “have” and *kabaa* “cover” elaborate the same situation-the action of thundering and warning. The first three verbs share similar terminating elements and the rhyme -“see” is common to all. The verbal segments, *qabaa* and *kabaa* do not only share common rhyming elements (-**baa**), but also have identical syllabic structure and rhythmic patterns (CV.CVV), which can be formalized as **weak/light** = **short/extra-long**. In terms of minimal pairs, the two initial consonant phonemes “q” and “k” differ in a single sound in the same position in the two morphemes. The continuity of human folly has always been the cause for unending challenges and deep-rooted problems of centuries. Despite its destructive effects of the past, men have still kept on making serious mistakes for the fact that they ignored the warning signs of trouble ahead.

The proverb thus stresses the way negligence results in lamentable consequences. It has instructive value for headstrong men who never learn from others unless the problem knocks on their doors. If people close their eyes not to see the danger in front of them and are unwilling to listen to reason, they continue to harm themselves.

The true existence of people means their freedom of expressing their ideas without restraint. If we remain silent despite being burdened, nobody gives us a tongue to speak for ourselves. Many nations of the developing world remained in bondage for several decades mainly because the succeeding generations have been taught how to adjust themselves to the pressing yoke and become captives through fear. To prefer a deafening silence is to live in the darkest corner of the world where hell reigns. **Guddaan keessan hin dubbatu, diqqaan/xinnaan keessan hin guddatu** (P32)- ‘your knowledgeable men (grownups) do not speak, and your children do not grow.’ Yoo abbootiin garbummaa fudhatan, ijolleen isaanii jireenya hin qaban- ‘if the adults or grown-ups (*guddaan*) reduce themselves to subservient status, their children (*diqqaan/xinnaan*) have no future.’ When we read the rhyming elements of this proverb, we can discern a peculiar characteristic of the syntactic parallels and the *phonic* aspects of those parallel segments; namely *dubbatu*, *guddatu*, *guddaan* and *diqqaan/xiqqaan*. In the four lexical categories, it is also possible to observe the simultaneous presence of rhythmic and metonymic patterns in which the whole constituents are horizontally and vertically related. Therefore, besides their *phonic representation*-the measure of poetic elements consisting of rhythmic patterns and a sequence of feet, there is obviously a peripheral meaning. The term “*feet*,” which I have used in the word-tree diagram, is derived from the classical origin of what is known as *metrical language* as something which is associated with musical tempo and dance. In the aphoristic statement *guddaan keessaan hin dubbatu, diqqaan keessan hin guddatu*, it is possible to break the sentence visually so that we can juxtapose the thematic centre with syntactic structure. In a single pattern of restructuring and exploring the *visual* configuration, we can point out in more detail the parallel relations or the formal materiality of the proverb. Moreover, we can explicate the interplay between the *acoustic* aspects (sound and a sense of hearing) of verse lines, their rhyming or rhythmic structure-*phonic patterns*, as well as the metonymic function of the parallel categories. In general, the schematic diagram of *generative structural system* can be used to illustrate the effective relationship between the acoustic materiality of language, its systematic structure and its contextual meaning.

“The study of linguistic units and their principles of combination would not be complete without an account of what these units mean, what they are used to talk about, and what they are used to communicate” (Harnish, 1995: 213). In the study of rhyming proverbial parallelism, the central point is to examine carefully the structural relations of phrasal and lexical or word categories. On the level of syntactic relations, there exists parallelism between the two segments (clauses)-*guddaan keessan hin dubbatu* “your grown-ups do not speak,” and *diqqaan keessan hin guddatu* “your children do not grow.” The Noun Phrases *guddaan*, the allusive term for “grown-ups” or in a literal sense “big,” and *diqqaan* “children” or literally “small,” and the verbal phrases, *hin dubbatu* “do not speak” and *hin guddatu* “do not grow” have parallel structures; and at the same time, the two phrasal categories are also metonymically related. Besides being accompanied by epithets or modifiers (possessive adjectives), *guddaan* and *diqqaan* share common characteristics on phonological aspects; or in other words, their rhythmic feet and syllable structures are the same. The hierarchical combination of the above proverb can be schematically illustrated in Chomsky’s ‘*Generative Structure*’ or ‘Phrase Structure Trees’ of Immediate Constituent analysis.

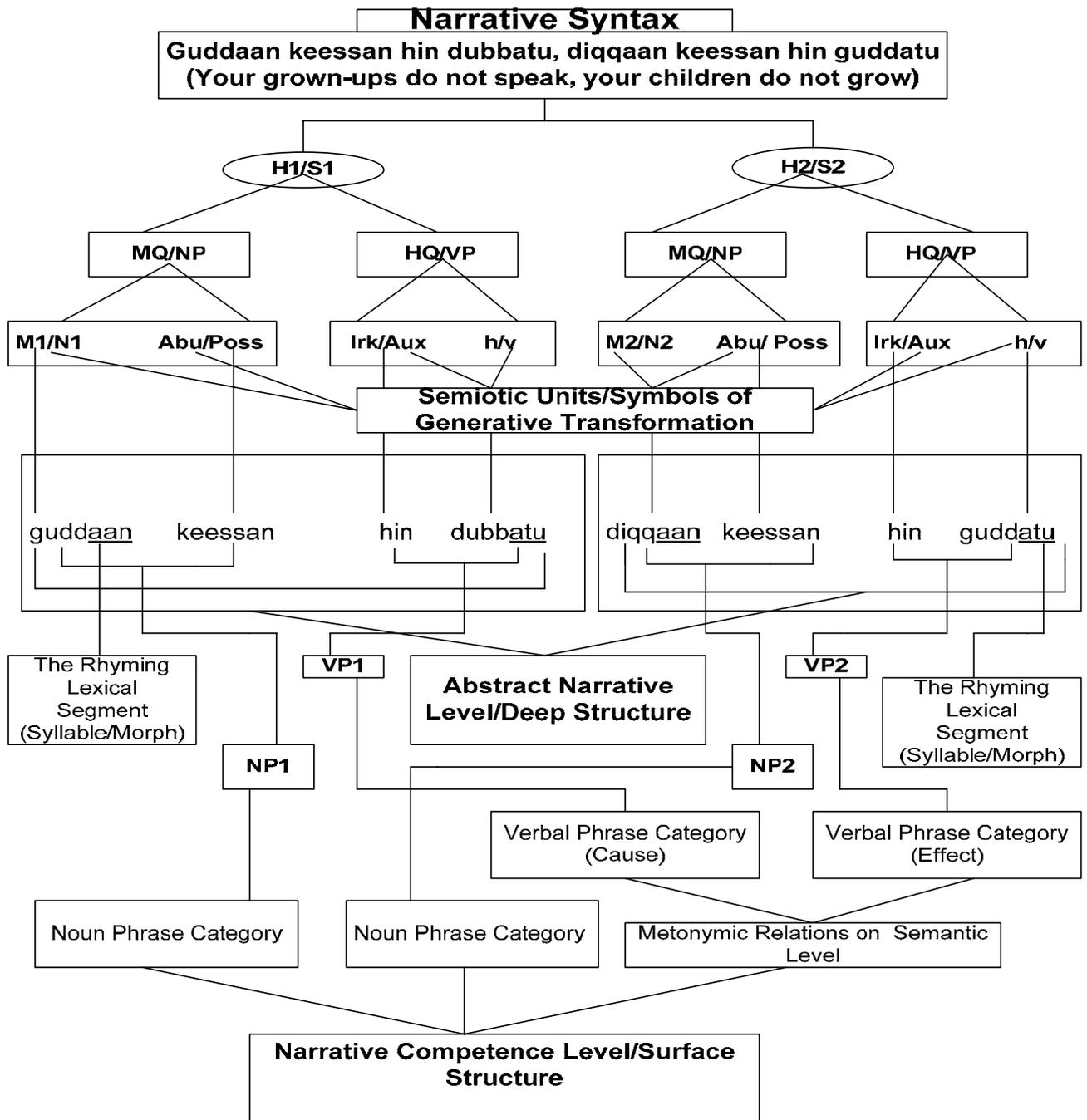


Figure 4: The Constituent Structure Analysis of Proverbs

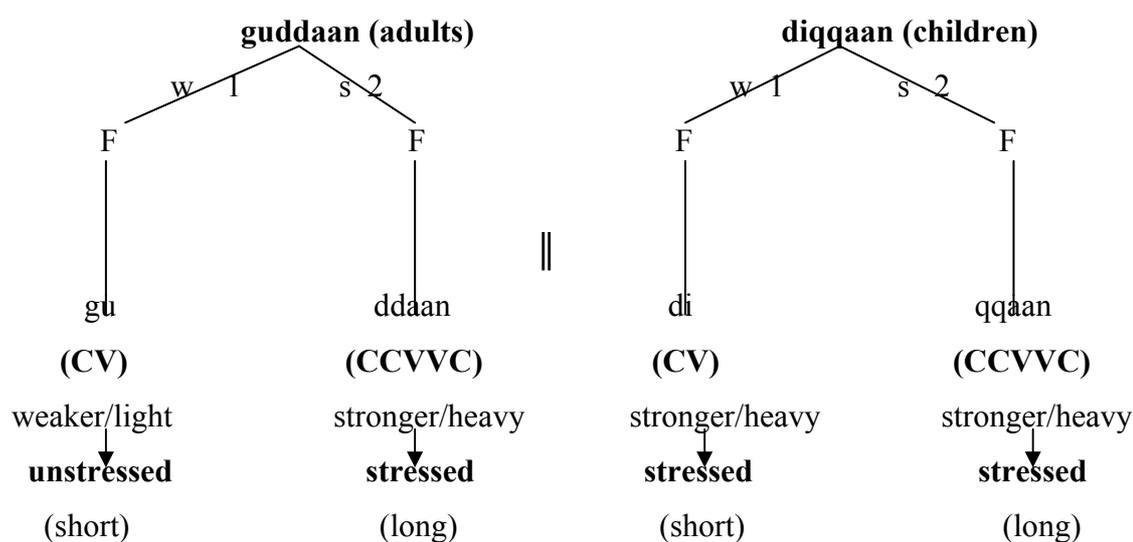
Illustration for Semiotic Representations (Signs)

1. H/S = Himiinsii/Sentence
2. MQ/NP = Maqiinsa Qoodubbii/Noun Phrase
3. HQ/VP= Hiiktuu Qoodubbii/Verbal Phrase
4. M₁ /N₁ =Maqiinsa/Noun (guddaan/grown-ups)
5. M₂/ N₂= Maqiinsa/Noun (diqqaan/children)
6. Abu/Poss = Abbummaa/Possessive
7. H/v = hiiktuu/verb
8. Irk/Aux = Irkisee/Auxiliary

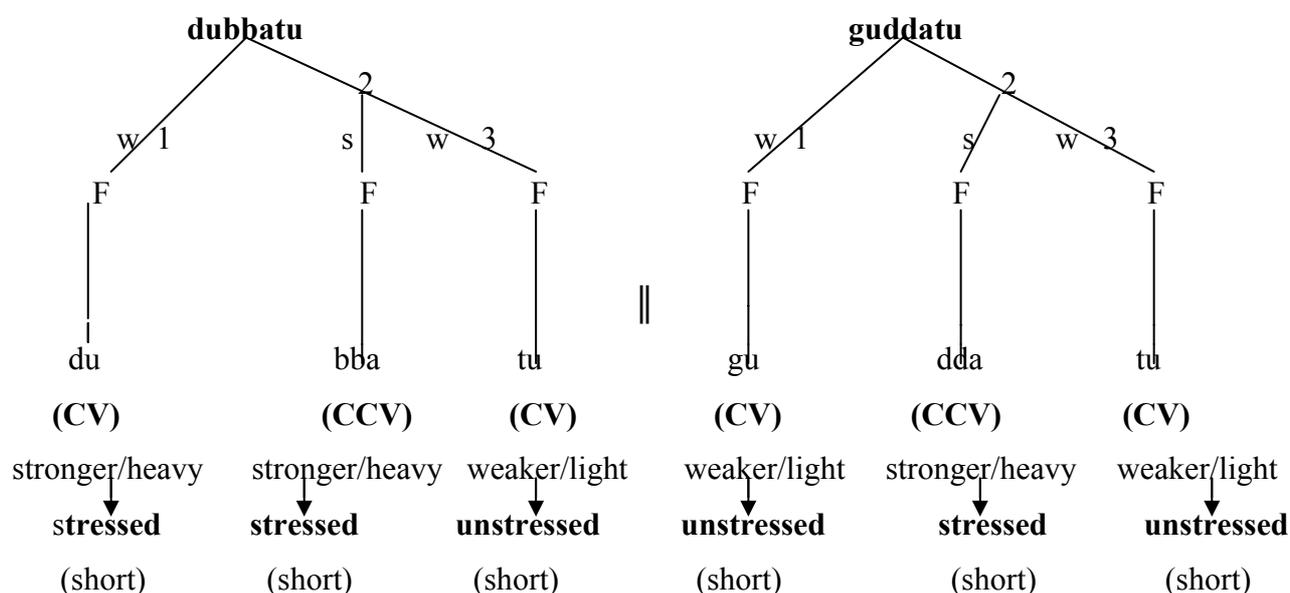
In the Oromo verbal narratives, especially the rhyming proverbial folklore, the effective manipulation of the lexical and phrasal categories and the relations of these constituents in the form of contiguity or causation and similarity or contrast, both in their aspects (positional arrangement and semantics) lead us to the diverse ways of looking at *metonymic* and *metaphoric* combinations and their aesthetic effects. In general, what we see from the rhyming aphoristic expression (figure 4) is that the *selection* of words and phrases (paradigmatic), as well as the *combination* of the constituents (syntagmatic) in parallel construction enables the readers to comprehend the broader concept of narrative syntax. The two positional arrangements-vertical and horizontal relations of the constituents, provide us an objective criterion for the generative transformational rules characterized by semantic similarity or poetic metaphor and *referential* orientation and/or *causative* semantics. The scientific explanation of the combined elements: lexical and phrasal parallels and the systematic investigation of the relations of these elements create an interesting range of configurations which generate artistic force.

In a situation where people live for years in a perpetual state of fear, and if they are unable to decide their own future because of losing a sense of self-worth, then the new generation grows without self-assurance. This proverb satirizes the sinking generation, which is terribly affected by the declining of confidence and sensibility. The two synthetic elements, *hin guddatu* “do not grow” and *hin dubbatu* “do not speak” connote passivity, stagnation and ignorance. If we examine the metonymic link between the two words, we see that the proper growing of children occurs if the

grown-ups guide them to develop confidence in speaking and be able to manage their own affairs in their own way without fear. The oral artist has attempted to comment on a society which lost faith and self-possession. In a broader sense, if the adults or grown-ups fail to hand down confidence and a sense of proper self-concept to their children, the next generation will remain inactive and dependent rather than sensible and dynamic. Here, the oral narrator seems to have been dejected when he observed the stagnant existence of a fragile society which is in total fear and silence. As the result of the atmosphere of uncertainty and the deafening silence experienced by their parents, the children will continue to be dictated by that gloomy situation. He probably tries to urge the fractured society to move forward for change, openness and transparency. In terms of graded semantics (standard meaning), the two rhyming elements: *guddaan* “big” and *diqqaan* “small,” have contrasting characteristics (big versus small); but they at the same time offer similarities in content between “grown-ups” and “children” in their allusive form (figuratively). The verbal phrases with a negative marker (“**hin-**”)-*hin dubbatu* and *hin guddatu* denote activities that are congruent or synonymous both in content and in semantics. As we have already seen in the preceding part, the syllabic structures and rhythmic units (feet) of *guddaan* and *diqqaan*, *dubbatu* and *guddatu* may clearly be explained in Word-Tree Diagram.



NOTE: **weaker/light** (*gu-*)= **short**; **stronger/heavy** (*-ddaan, di- & -qqaan*)= **long & heavy**.



One of the greatest happiness people can have is the successful life of their children. On the other hand, if children are unable to make successful careers due to their indolence or negligence, that creates sadness and mentally upset parents, who are eager to see the bright day of abundance to come through the hard work of the active generation. **Haadha gowwaa deette/deesse hidhiin madaadha** (P33)- ‘a mother who gave birth to fools has a wounded lip.’ Haati ijoollee yartuu qabdu akkuma gadditetti- ‘a mother who has fruitless children is the broken-hearted.’ *Gowwaa dayuu* “giving birth to foolish children” resulted in *hidhiin madaadha* “wound of mother’s lip,” and the latter is the effect of the former. There is phonological parallelism between *haadha* “mother” and *madhaadha* “wound” in a sense that both have the same terminating rhyming segment (**-dha**). The two constituents bring to light how a mother who has the naughty children is deeply sad and lamented her fate. They are born so silly that their mother has not experienced happiness and eventually she is affected by internal torment and a feeling of worthlessness. In a wider social context, the figurative expression *hidhiin mada’a/madaadha* “the wounded lips” portrays deep discontent and melancholic state that severely debilitated the lady. The verbal artist endeavours to point out the way the insensible groups can affect the society; and he showed this through a broken family, which represents social crisis.

There is nothing great and blessing than leading a nation in knowledge. When we say knowledge is virtue, we mean that it makes the unimagined imagined and the non-existent existent. God created man in his own image and man created knowledge to justify the existence of human nature in a true sense. We can imagine what a blessing it would be to have wise leaders who are endowed with ingenuity; and conversely, it would be a great curse to have leaders who are devoid of visions. The backwardness of people is basically emanated from leading nations in ignorance. **Harreen ufiifuu hin galtuu looniin galtii** (P34)- ‘a donkey, which does not manage its own affairs, cannot lead cattle.’ Namni dandeettii hin qabne, nama bulchuu dhiisiitii ofiifuu ofjiraachisuu hin danda’u- ‘a quality of leadership is not expected from the obedient individuals who have no sense of deciding their own destiny.’ The corresponding verbal elements, *galtuu* “not managing” and *galtii* “does it manage” are used to make vivid the inefficiency of bad government which is confronted with its own problems on the one hand, the failure and disappointment the bad government or leadership brings to its nation on the other. It is impossible to imagine that a donkey, which cannot protect itself against the predators be able to lead the cattle. The oral artist relates this situation to mankind who is devoid of courage and knowledge. The Noun Phrase, *harree* “donkey,” in a satirical allusion exhibits the frailties of human nature in which lack of personal qualities and the loss of faith in one’s confidence occur. The recurrent use of *harree* in Oromo *mammaaka* is to explain in more detail the difficult social position of those who have no influence and are unable to take their destinies in their hands. *Loon* the “cattle” in this allegorical expression may also communicate ‘the people’ whose authorities do not have their own meaning and a sense of responsibility. The figurative implication is that relying on a leadership which cannot control events is to head for irreparable disaster. The two corresponding phrases-*ufiifuu hin galtuu* “does not manage its own affairs” and *looniin galtii* “cannot lead the cattle,” have metonymic relations on the level of cultural semantics.

No one is worse than those who care not about their future. The homes of many people have been destroyed by their own making as they open their doors in such a way that they tempt the demon to play the role. Let me begin with a story of a naïve person who joined the companionship of a trickster group whose main purpose was to organize a cheerful occasion. This fellow opened his door to his new superficial friends, and then tried all his best level to live up to their will. He invested almost all that he earned to drink and “Chat”-a powerful plant which is similar to drug; just

to please the feast makers. In the end, he was abandoned when his pocket was drained; and as the result, he went bankrupt, collapsed, and was unable to pay his bills until we collected money and saved him from ‘drowning.’ The fact here is that a person who tries to feed, like an Emperor, is likely to suffer or die like a beggar. In the following proverb, the oral artist tries to uncover the social corruption in which people are made hostages in their own hands. **Horii abbaan gafa cabse, alagaan ija balleessa** (P35)- ‘if the owner breaks the horn(s) of his cattle, the aliens will take out their eyes.’ Bultii/qabeenya abbaan balleesse, diinni hin barbadeessa- ‘if the owner misuses his belongings, his enemy destroys them altogether.’ The transitive verbs *cabse* “breaks” and *balleessa* “take out” portray the same situation wherein the action of breaking horns is repeated by taking out eyes, whereas the Noun Phrases *abbaan* “father” and *alagaan* “alien” have antonymic relations. We also see that these nominal phrases share common terminating rhyming element (**-aan**) on the level of metrical phonology. If an irresponsible owner fails to manage his own activities, his adversaries enjoy his bankruptcy and encourage him to keep on turning against himself. The narrator is mocking human negligence and folly in which self-disparaging becomes the effect. He is also expressing his distaste for a brute owner who mistreats his own belongings (domestic animals). In fact, self-abuse often results in incurable damage.

It is difficult to read the changing faces and hearts of individuals who are ready to move with tide. You cannot call them friends because they are slippery; you cannot call them enemies because you can hardly discover who they are. As we probe into the character revelation of such people, we see that they have both the hearts of human and the hearts of beasts, the behaviour of an angel and the behaviour of a demon. This is the metaphor of the cosmetic world. **Ilmoo bineensaa faanti gara qileeti/hallayyaati** (P36)- ‘the step of an offspring of a beast is towards a ravine.’ Warri ufemalee ilma namaa jaalachuu hin beekne, daandii balaati filtan- ‘those who have hearts of beasts opt for taking evil course of action.’ *Gara qileeti* “towards a ravine,” which also means a “misleading way,” is compared with *faanti* “the step;” and the two ideas elaborate *ilmoo bineensa* “offspring of a beast.” This wise utterance warns us not to trust treacherous people who pursue the evil path of destruction. The adverse effect of untrustworthiness is the key issue of this aphorism. The Oromo often use the derogatory term *bineensa* to describe a villainous human being who is consumed with greed and envy.

In reading the Oromo wisdom literature, we discover a lot of ideas that are related to universal realities. For instance, if we examine Oedipus complex, his tragic downfall emanated from his negligence. In the process of hunting for truth when Thebes was in pollution, he made faulty judgements; and every misstep he took not only infuriated people around him, but also put him in a difficult position. On top of the prophecy of an oracle which led him to trouble, the series of circumstances which brought infliction on him were his own unending errors. Instead of demonstrating soberness, Oedipus kept on moving from one mistake to the next, of which the conflict with Creon and Teiresias worsened his tragedy. Proverb thirty-eight has thematic correlation with Oedipus reckless action, which ultimately led him to blinding himself. **Jilbi lama gubate sadaffaan naafa** (P37)- ‘a knee, which is already burnt twice, will be crippled if it is burnt third time.’ Rakkina deddeebi’ee nama qunnameef (namarra ga’eef) furmaata kennu dadhabuun, balaa dandammii hin qabne fida- ‘a failure to rectify or correct serious errors of several times leads to deep lament.’ If an individual continues to make serious mistakes without learning from the problems or tragic events of the past, or if he has no free will and responsibility for his actions and errors of his ways, the consequence will be catastrophic. The verbal groups with numerical modifiers, *lama gubate* “burnt twice” and *sadaffaan naafa* “will be crippled third time” can be summarized as the devastating effects of too much recklessness. Semantically, the second linking phrase is the expansion of the first and its result. The recurring action of burning is followed by being crippled and the two are linked by causation relationship.

Our planet is a dramatic place which can be seen as a “prison-house” for some and as a “paradise” for others. Those who are submerged under the pressing chains of “earthly hell” stagger to survive despite the unfairness of our world, whereas those who built paradise on earth strive to own more ‘golden gates.’ The two parallel situations have always been unending challenges to the journey of life. **Kan maal qabdu sareen darba qabbaneeffatti** (P38)- ‘a dog, which has nothing to eat, has no patience to wait until the hot leftover tossed to him becomes cool.’ Namni hiyyoomee harka nama jalatti bulu filannoo waan hin qabneef, quuxayee (ufdiqqeessee) bara dabarfachuu qaba- ‘those who are subject to degradation and forced to depend on others for their livelihood, have to accept the unfair offer given to them until the bondage of destitution is broken.’ The phrasal categories, *maal qabdu* “which has nothing” and *qabbaneeffatti* “waits until it becomes cool” are parallel likeness on meaning level. A street dog must try all possible means in order to survive;

likewise, the destitute people have no time to relax until they overcome the sordid poverty which relegated them to lower status of sub-human. The misfortune struck who is dictated by forcing circumstance has no other option other than accepting the unfair offer “*darba*.” This wise statement also unfolds the importance of working hard without which gaining human dignity and value can never happen. The emphasis here is that time once lost is never found and so those who are not fortunate have to use their time effectively (*maal darba qabbanneeffatti*) in order to free themselves from the despicable life of poverty and degradation.

In our every day life, we need to be guided by careful actions because a single serious error we make can create a longstanding problem which frustrates us. **Lagni lufaa jiru si hin fudhatin, jaarsi du’aa jiru si hin abaarin** (P39)- ‘take care not to be consumed by the passing river; and beware of falling under the curse of the aged man.’ Qalbisaa hojjachuu dadhabuun jiruu nama balleessa- ‘miscalculation and lack of seriousness endangers one’s life.’ The syntactically ordered phrases- *lufaa jiru* “passing” and *du’aa jiru* “dying,” are the parallel correspondence. In terms of prosody, the terminating rhyming elements of the first group (-aa) are similar. The compared head nouns, *lagni* “river” and *jaarsi* “aged man” are also parallel components, which delineate social reality. This *mammaaka* involves three main points: first, the importance of scrupulousness, second, the negative effect of negligence, and third, the absence of thoughtfulness. *Si hin abaarin* “beware of falling under the curse” is balanced by its counterpart *si hin fudhatin* “do not be consumed”. The narrator compares the two parallel images-*jaarsa du’aa jiru* “the dying aged man” and *lagni lufaa jiru* “the passing river”. He puts emphasis on the way an individual harms himself if he has no patience to wait until the raging river passes; and if he fails to respect the ailing aged man whose curse is so powerful and damaging. The oral artist also discusses the importance of taking safety precautions when we are dealing with difficult situations. According to the Oromo cultural convention, respecting the aged people is highly valued; but the deviation from this cultural standard actually means to lose social standing. Thus, to be cursed by the elderly people is considered to be a great disaster in one’s life. Moral responsibility and avoiding impetuosity are the main concern of the folk artist.

In the Thebean legend of prophecy of an oracle and a disaster caused following the event of fleeing Corinth, we see that King Oedipus insisted on finding the cause of pollution and plague in the country. In the course of doing this, he began jumping from one error to the next. Out of being

inquisitive, he raised many issues and every point he pressed for led to new problems and developments. As he kept on putting pressure on Creon and Teiresias (the blind seer), he was found to be his own enemy in which the complex problems he created resulted in tragic end when he discovered that he had killed his father (Laius) and married his mother (Jocasta). The following wise saying contains similar message. **Lukkuun haatee haatee albee isii qalu baafti** (40)- ‘digging too far, the chicken dug out the knife that takes her life (slays her).’ Waan hin barbaachifne irratti cichuun lubbuu namaati galaafata- ‘to insist on rigid way of doing things and lack of self-assessment may lead to chaos and catastrophic end.’ The verbal categories, *haatee* “digging too far” and *baafti* “digs out” are parallel in their syntactic structure; the latter being the consequence of the former. The action of *qalu* “slaying” is associated with *haatee* “digging too far” without which the former would not occur. This proverbial genre discusses the disruptive effect of obstinacy (fixity) and the inevitability of risking life. In terms of human relations, refusing to listen to reason, too much hair-splitting, carelessness and a failure to rethink errors may generate a lifetime crisis and/or death.

The fact that promotion depends on merit, though not without a touch of favouritism, meant that there was, for the subjects, a semblance of equality of opportunity for advancement....The kings of Shewa actively encouraged this phenomenon by rewarding those who distinguished themselves with medals, offices, lands, servants, and occasionally the hands of a Princess (Darkwah, 1975: 133).

It is on the basis of this reward that the privileged groups won distinction, favour, honour, and rose to lucrative position. This happened as they demonstrated allegiance to the Emperors. The irony is that those who accepted a system of land confiscation were appreciated and puffed up when they humiliated themselves. “Henceforth, Gobana was to become the leading figure in the military history of Shewa. By the end of 1882, he had conquered for Menelik the whole Macha country and had even penetrated into Kafa to extract tribute to the ruler” (ibid., p. 134). *Kan alagaan nudiqqeesse irra caalaa, kan nuti wal-diqqeesinetu saba keenyaa fi biyya keenya balleesse*-‘the Oromo and their land are more disrupted by the collaborator nationals than those who use them.’ The oral artist has endeavoured to address this kind of problematic issue in the

proverb that follows. **Mana abbaan gube, cidiin birmataniif** (P41)- ‘if a person sets his own house on fire, others add straw to it.’ Yoo abbaan bultii ofii balleesse, alagaan harka dhayaaf/gammachuun simata- ‘if the owner destroys his own belonging, his enemies applaud for his foolishness.’ The first and the second clauses are related to the same context and event. Both the *cidii* “straw” and *gube* “burned” are associated with each other by metonymy; the latter reinforced by the former. The straw is a means of speeding up the burning of the house which is already on fire; and in this specific context, adding straw to fire (*cidiiin birmataniif*) is to refer to encouraging more destruction. Offering the *cidii* to a person whose house is already consumed by fire is nothing more than enjoying the problem created by the neurotic owner. If people damage their own properties, the enemy rewards their foolishness. The powerful satirical image, the *cidii*, is also humorously employed by the oral artist to describe in depth the degree of human senselessness. The unfeeling audience who enjoys sadistic pleasure is also lashed.

It is up to us to decide where we rightly belong in a society we live in and make proper adjustment. In order to secure one’s future in a particular social environment, we have to choose between what we can be and what we want to be. A person may aspire to be a great leader, but it is unlikely to achieve such a lofty dream unless he/she is ready for that. This simply means that if people try to capture what is beyond their reach, it is likely that they seriously harm themselves. **Morka arbaa utaalteeti hilleettiin lukaa fattaate** (P42)- ‘competing with an elephant, the rabbit damaged its leg while jumping.’ Waan hin dandeenne hojjachuuf fakkeessuun ofballeessuu ta’a- ‘if we keep on imitating blindly and pretend to do the impossible, we lose terribly.’ The syntactically structured words, *utaalteeti* “jumping” and *fattaate* “damaged or crippled” are connected by causation in which the action of jumping is followed by the action of damaging oneself. A man who allows himself to be trapped by the unachievable ambition is like a man who falls into the sea without having the skill of swimming. If he tries to climb out into the air as some unscrupulous and inexperienced people often endeavour to do, it is likely that he will drown. The oral artist comments on the irrational people who imitate the impossible way of the others and the high price they pay for their irrational act. If people are unable to understand the boundary of their knowledge and if they are driven by emotion more than reason, there is always a probability of facing trouble. The

two corresponding actions are similar to proverb thirty-eight-that is, the one concerning *lama gubate* “burned twice” and *sadaffaan naafa* “being crippled third time.” The two proverbial parallelisms share common themes and the intensification of quality. In both proverbs, the repercussion of carelessness is underlined.

“And if you are going to function successfully in this world, you must be able to communicate with people whose entire backgrounds, whose very way of viewing the world and doing things may be completely different from yours. This is the challenge of the twenty-first century” (Porter, 2001: 2). In order to effectively meet the challenges of our times and be able to function as a truly global man, we have to move beyond our territories and communicate with people from diverse cultures, norms, traditions and languages. When we travel from place to place, from countries to countries, we do not only experience life in paradise in which we enjoy gardens of roses, but also face tormenting situations which frustrate us. Every time we are exposed to new environment, we must expect the hardships and those trying situations enable us to acquire knowledge and develop skills which empower us to become successful communicators. **Nama deemee fi nama deegetu waa arga** (P43)- ‘he who has experienced destitution, and he who travels gains something.’ Yoo rakkatanii fi yoo beekkomsa argachuuf xaaran/tattaafatan baldhinaan waa hubachuu danda’an-‘experiencing difficulties and a search for knowledge enable us to discover something useful.’ This proverb is more or less similar to the Danish aphoristic saying “*At rejse er at leve,*” literally *to travel is to live* or in a broader context *to travel is to sense the real meaning of life*. The verbal constituents, *deemee* “travelled” and *deegetu* “becomes destitute” do not merely indicate the benefit someone gains, but also enable us to see the necessity of completing the difficult journey of life with success. If we stand in one place, we cannot see the world with open mind. We do not live in a world where success is achieved without painstaking endeavour. The expression *deeme* in a broader global concept is linked with the search for knowledge and gaining valuable experience and *deege* is to taste a painful life of destitution. In terms of metrical phonology, they consist of similar syllables and rhythmic structures-they are made up of **stronger/super-heavy = extra long; and weaker/light = short** (CVV.CV). The phrase *waa arga* “sees something” is to refer to learning more, understand better and be able to see the world with open mind. The value of

tasting trying situation in human life and the importance of gaining profound experiences to solve challenges of our times are the central points which are reflected in the proverb.

People become great losers when they are dictated by rigid notions and insist on trying to reverse the course of history or if they are pre-occupied with nostalgic memories which obstruct their progress. He who, during his time, had been flattered with abstract images that capture his attention to look only backwards instead of forwards, to which history scarcely offers promising future, should be seen as a day-dreamer and unfree man who is out of touch of the changing world. The bottom line here is that people must struggle to be free from a memory which clouds their thoughts and keeps them under siege forever. **Namni bara Minilikii gurraa duude, bara Hayila-Sillaasee hadaraa Minilikii jedha** (P44)- ‘a person, who became deaf during Menelik’s reign calls for the *divinity of his law* during Haile-Selassie’s period.’ Namni yaada gooftaa isaa kadurii jalatti garbummaa fudhatee jiraachuu barate, yeroo hundaa waan durii kan gooftaan isaa ittiin garboomfate faarfata/leellisa. Waan barri irra darbe hordofa/jalatti buluuf xaara- ‘an individual who accepted the dominant status of his previous master still struggles to rehearse the superior power of the king who died long years ago.’ This is a satirical statement which imparts the problem of being out of touch of the real world in which those who are unable to pace up with the dynamics of their time often try to get solace by occupying their minds with the impossible dreams of the past. During the Ethiopian traditional monarchy, it was common to summon in the name of the divine power of the kings. ‘*Banigus Amlaak*,’ literally ‘I warn you in the name of the divinity of the king,’ was often used on the streets and in the public houses to reprimand people who used force or incited violence. This implies that the divinity of the kings casts the shadow of fear over the people and it was believed that the “sacred power” of the “*Fitha-Nagast*” (The Law of the Kings) controls the minds and spirits of the culprits. The oral narrator reminds us of this humorous story in flashback and he attempts to reveal how the divine power of Menelik and Haile-Sellasia, according to the legend, created a powerful image of the kings. The two central ideas- *gurra duude* “became deaf” and *hadaraa jedha* “calls for the divinity,” are related parallels wherein being deaf during Menelik’s reign resulted in calling for the divinity of his law during the era of Haile-Selassie. Hence, on the basis of semantic criteria, the two ideas are metonymically interconnected. This wisdom lore raises two important issues: first, resistance to change; and second, filled with nostalgia for the

old days. The mentioning of calling for the non-existent ‘divine power’ is to satirize the futility of dreaming about the dead past. This proverb depicts how those who enjoyed power and wealth during the distant past are still unable to be free from the nostalgic memory of that period which played tricks on them. The oral narrator has critically noticed the side-effect of lagging behind the time. The figurative term *gurra duude* “became deaf” conveys the failure to adjust oneself to the new situations.

Throughout the world, people seem to have tended to focus on individualism and materialistic prominence rather than on the common good of societies as a whole. Superior cunning, superficial similarities and the disappearance of genuine pursuit have not only jeopardized a sense of human value and collective efforts, but also torn peoples apart. A growing sense of cynicism and popular delusions in almost all institutions, from highest to lowest, and the unwillingness to check tides of destructions and moral epidemics often pave the way for an alarming increase in the eroding of peoples’ confidence and the common interests they aspire to build. **Namni lafatti wal-sodaate, muka waliin hin koru** (P45)- ‘the people who are afraid of one another while on the ground, do not dare climb a tree together.’ Namoonni akkanumaanuu wal-amanuu hin-dandeenne, waliin hinjifannoo argachuun/milkaa’uun isaan rakkisa- ‘those whose minds are full misgivings seldom achieve victory together.’ On the pragmatic level, *sodaate* “afraid” and *hin koru* “do not climb” are connected by causation. Failure to climb together “*waliin hin koru*” is the result of fear of each other “*wal-sodaate*.” This wisdom lore unfolds the problem of mistrust and the disunity of hearts created from unhealthy human relations. If the individuals or groups are unable to build a sense of mutual trust and if they are defeated by apprehension, dubiousness and misconstruction, then they rarely succeed in standing together to accomplish significant tasks which enable them to bring about fundamental changes. Achieving a desirable objective is almost impossible for people who have fallen apart due to the disunity of minds and hearts. This wise statement discusses issues concerning human weaknesses, the absence of fraternity, common purpose and trustworthiness. *Lafatti*, literally “on the ground,” is to refer to the day-to-day human relations, whereas *muka koruu* “climbing a tree” connotes perseverance and the unified struggle for common good and development. It also implies determination and huge achievement resulted from social solidarity in times of complex difficulties. The genre *muka waliin hin koru* “cannot

climb a tree together” denotes lack of genuineness and the problem of unity of purpose to achieve great success.

In Shakespeare’s tragedy (see chapter 4), Othello trusted Iago, a villain character and personification of evil who became the cause of the tragic death of innocent people. Out of jealous rage, he planned to create mistrust and hostility between Othello (a black Moor) and his wife (Desdemona). Following Iago’s falsification, Othello killed Desdemona and Cassio. Then, he finally took his own life. In the Oromo trickster stories (chapter 4), the animal characters (cock, rat and fox) which allegorize human villainy, have fabricated similar situations and subsequent to this, the naïve audience which followed the trickster figures are systematically killed. In both stories, the tragedy happened when the deceived characters irrationally accepted the evil path of their enemies. The following proverb is told in this kind of social environment where the absence of honesty fractures human relations. **Namni xurree/daandii jaldeessaa deeme, qilee/hallayyaa bu’a** (P46)- ‘he who takes a narrow path of a monkey, falls in the ravine.’ *Karaa dharaa filatuun nama kuffisa/balleessa-* ‘he who clings to a fixed idea is likely to be doomed to failure.’ The nominal phrases, *xurree* “narrow path” and *qilee* “ravine,” and the verbal components *deeme* “takes” and *bu’a* “falls” are all parallel comparisons which illustrate a complete failure an individual is likely to face if he/she disregards a broad view, openness and various options. The consequence of taking a narrow path “*xurree deeme*” is falling in the ravine “*qilee bu’a*,” and the latter is reinforced by the former. These verbal categories are also interrelated by metonymy in which falling in the ravine is conceived as the result of taking the wrong narrow way. This means if we are not meticulous in the way we lead our activities and prefer the wrong path, we foolishly perish. *Xurree jaldeessaa* “monkey’s narrow path” also shows the fixed formula of doing things; and in fact this is disastrous. The problem of calling for flexibility and various options and the necessity of thoughtfulness are the general central ideas reflected in the proverb. A monkey is a satirical portrayal of a trickster human being whose way is a force of darkness.

In a situation where misfortune reigns, we lose human quality because we no longer have a power to have control over our lives. In times of adversity, people who are subject to degrading conditions are always at the mercy of the fortunate ones. In other words, when we are surrounded by dark days of disaster, we need great energy and determination to face that

gloomy situation. There is no greatness when human being is silenced by destitution. *‘*Oduu beekuu huuba wajjiin,*’ *jette sareen** (P47)- ‘knowing that it is unclean, I am obliged to eat.’ says a dog. *Bara jiruun namatti hammaatte* (yoo nama jala aanan), *obsa qabaachuun barbaachisaadha*- ‘in times of misfortune, great patience is essential.’ The expression *oduu beekuu huuba wajjiin* “knowing that it is unclean” suggests remarkable endurance and the way people bear misfortune. This proverb is about people’s discontents and the debasing condition of destitution. In a forced situation, people do not have any other choice other than accepting the unfair offer. A dog in this particular situation allegorizes the vagrant wanderers who are dictated by the forcing conditions. The proverb also reflects the importance of showing moral stamina in a situation where people are unable to air their views freely and reduced to speaking tools because of severe oppression. The oral narrator, who has closely observed the depressing experience of the helpless animal, the stray dog, expresses his deep sympathy for it. He tries to create parallel construction of the appalling condition of a homeless dog and the ugly image of extreme poverty in the human world. In times of misfortune, demonstrating more self-control is necessary.

In his satirical novel, “*The Interpreters*,” Wole Soyinka has discussed the complete failure of both the old and young intellectuals of post-independence Nigeria. In order to depict the vividness of the sinking society, he builds up the picture of their stories-weaknesses, passivity and unfitness. Stepping back in time, Soyinka completes the character revelation of the Interpreters who are debilitated by the “Night Club”-the decayed image which is a symbol of shaky, dark, and hopeless world where the so-called prominent figures (VIPs) are relegated to empty shells. The thematic content of P48 (proverb 48) is very much related to the personality crises of the Interpreters. Like Soyinka’s Night Club, the Oromo have satirical explanation for social degeneration, hollowness and complete failure in one’s career. Soyinka’s bleak image of the “Night Gathering” can be compared with the image of social stagnation in Oromo oral tradition as expressed in the story of *Ottee Mukaa*-“Wooden Pot.” **Otteen/okkoteen mukaa ufiillee hin baatu, marqallee hin baafu** (P48)- ‘a wooden pot neither saves the porridge nor itself.’ *Namni yartuun ufi fi saba ufiitis hin jiraachisu*- ‘an incapable person neither benefits himself nor his people.’ The first verbal phrase...*hin baafu* “doesn’t protect” and its linking parallel...*hin baatu* “cannot be saved” are connected with each other in

logical arrangement and as sameness constituents wherein the failure of protecting oneself is repeated by the inability of protecting others. Both the corresponding parts describe the futility of the wooden pot “*ottee mukaa;*” and this is correlated with a weak person which neither saves his own life nor the lives of his companions in times of difficulties. In a deeper cultural semantics, *marqa* “porridge” may also represent national wealth and prosperity. It also implies a nation, which is exposed to calamity because of lack of a strong leadership. Satirically, relying on someone who has no knowledge and strength is to lead a precarious life.

Qaroon qaroo sobe, gadoo dabalata (P49)- ‘a clever man, who tries to deceive another clever person, reinforces vengeance.’ Namni soba aadaa godhate nama hundaa akkuma gaaddidduu isaatitti waan laaluuf, bakka itti salphatu hin eeggatu/hin beeku- ‘a trickster person who sees others as his own image facilitates his own disgrace.’ Trust is part of a great quality of man without which effective human communication and harmonious interaction seldom happen. The proverb implies that a lie can have repercussions that a person using it cannot foresee. It brings to light the importance of distinguishing right from wrong, good from bad, praise from slander or derogatory remarks. It reminds each member of the society to speak well of people. The action of deceiving a clever person-*qaroon qaroo sobe*, is balanced by reinforcing vengeance-*gadoo dabalata*; and the latter is the result of the former (delusive act). This proverb also unveils the universal folly of man in which the trickster who appears to be wise becomes the victim of his own mistakes. Cunning of the best becomes the worst. The incorrigible human characters, both the traditional and the modern, often overestimate themselves without foreseeing the sharp minds of others. If you deal with a fox think of its tricks.

The relationship between the prey and the predators shows that the latter does not let the former to be in peace and stability so long as the changing tone of a trickster is taken for granted by a voluntary subservient person. In a master-servant social structure, there has never been and will never be a time when a *heart of gold*-a kindness of a good servant, softens a master who has a *heart of stone*. **Qotiyyoon qalbii hin qabuu, harka kolaase arraaba** (P50)- ‘the unwise ox licks the hands that castrated him.’ Diina jiruu isaa balleesse tajaajila/gammachiisuuf xaara- ‘he tries to please his enemy who robbed him of his freedom and kept him in chain.’ This is a popular satirical allusion of the Oromo which is told to belittle

individuals or groups, who are relegated to inferior status and degrading life of captivity in the process of negotiating their freedom and dignity. Those who are frivolous cannot anticipate what their future will be if they bow to the will and interest of their foes. There are many people in the world, who, despite being disgraced and mistreated, continue to be honest servants to those trickster figures who do not recognize their rights. In a depraved socio-political structure, the native bourgeoisie and escapist chiefs, both the old and the modern, who often support the losing cause and humiliate themselves just to secure the power offered them by despots, are the epitome of the caricatured animal character, the ox; which keeps on obeying the will of its master who abused him. The oral artist who critically examined the obsequious manners of the collaborators, seems to have been outraged by their abasing behaviour.

If we want to succeed in life in a true sense, we need to have a perfect freedom of mind guided by soberness and truth. There are millions of people who, consciously or unconsciously, harmed themselves because of lack of self-confidence and honesty. As Carroll (1988: 359) has indicated, the tragic element in human situation is the conscious choice of evil. Telling untruth is basically a betrayal of public trust whose retribution must be heavy. Though the degree may vary, those who are addicted to pernicious lies are more or less similar to those who are addicted to harmful drugs because both are destructive. **Sa'a ufhodhuu fi abbaa ufsobu hin danda'an** (P51)- 'a cow that suckles itself and a person who deceives himself cannot be corrected.' Warri ufii ufballeessu, furmaata hin argatu- 'self-deception has no remedy.' Semantically, the two compared elements, *ufsobu* "self-deceiving" and *ufhodhu* "self-suckling" depict a degenerated standard of conduct; and both ideas elucidate negative qualities in different characters. "Extra-ordinary Popular Delusion...is as relevant today as it was...because human folly changes only in detail and not in scale" (Mackay, 1995: vi). Whether in Oromiyaa or elsewhere, the conscious choice of hoax has always been the cause for social and political fall-out of the past and present. The constant use of ruse and self deception as ideology has become one of the most challenging crises, which has no permanent solution. This proverbial narrative exhibits the universal human errors of centuries which terribly affected the succeeding generations who are predisposed to *the crime of lying*. A key issue is the impossibility of improving the insincere mankind, who cannot see the value of truth other than sophistry paradigm.

The success of any oppressive power is based on brutalizing the young generations who make the future of their societies. As a monkey destroys crops before they give fruits, and so does an oppressor who wants to damage the young people before they are mentally and physically matured. In any totalitarian state, corrupting and criminalizing children is the prime concern of the authorities. **Tana tartu hin biilti, jedhe jaldeesi** (P52)- ‘if more time is given, they (refers to grains or crops) will bear flowers/beards’ says a monkey.’ Xiqqeennatti/ijoollummaatti ufwallaalchisan malee, yoo olguddatan fedhii keenya jalatti bulchuun hin danda’amu- ‘unless their mental universe is warped while still they are young, they will not serve our purpose.’ Giving more time “*tana tartu*” and bearing flower “*hin biilti*” are related to the same context. The folk artist focuses on three major points: 1) destroying the crops or grains before they ripe-denotative meaning; 2) the sooner we take action the better, or else it will be out of our control; and 3) the importance of controlling the mind of people while still they are young. The deeper message here is that the totalitarian groups often aim at warping the minds of young men and women at their early stages-before they are out of their control. In the Oromo cultural tradition, *jaldeessa* “monkey” is a symbolic representation of malefactor or evildoer whose main purpose is destruction. This wisdom narrative also communicates the significance of controlling certain events or problems before they become worse.

Yoo suuta deeman, qoreen suuta nama waraanti (P53)- ‘a thorn will prick slowly if people walk slowly.’ Yoo baldhinaan yaadaa hojjatan, bakka tilmaaman gayan. Yoo ofeegaa hojjatan, rakkinni xinnaata- ‘careful action minimizes serious obstructions.’ This aphoristic statement is almost similar to the English proverb “slow and steady wins the race.” We live in a world where our day-to-day activities require wisdom and thoughtfulness. If we are guided by emotional feelings and try to capture the abstract image, which is beyond our power, we are likely to lament the outcome. In contrast, if we apply wisdom in our daily life, there is a high probability of building a promising future. Therefore, the two parallel ideas (adverbial phrases), *suuta deeman* “walk slowly” and *suuta...waraanti* “pricks slowly” reveal the importance of seriousness in one’s action and the necessity of precision in one’s way of thinking and doing in order to succeed. The central issue is that far-sightedness and avoiding spontaneous decision or action enable us to achieve the intended purposes without facing much trouble. Our world

cannot be a safe place of success and pleasure unless every single step we take is carefully evaluated.

Classification of Proverbial-lore in Terms of Common Characteristics

The Generalized Semantic Category ↓	Numbers Assigned to the Classified Proverbs (P) ↓
antithetical behaviour	9, 23
consequence	31, 39
courage/determination	26, 27
inefficiency	2, 6, 34
insensibility/failure	2, 11, 12, 32, 34
misfortune	38, 47
mistrust	3, 23, 30
obstinacy/rigidity	44, 46
oppression	1, 10, 13
pretentiousness/phoniness	20, 22
recklessness/foolishness	24, 35, 37
selfishness	19, 25
submissiveness/passive obedient	28, 42, 50
subservience/inferiority	28, 32, 50
treason	36, 52
subservience/inferiority	28, 32, 50
treason	36, 52
untrustworthiness/trickery	3, 4, 6, 7, 14, 20, 24, 36, 45, 49, 51
warning	8, 31, 39

Note: Of the fifty-three proverbs, thirteen of them (5, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 29, 33, 40, 41, 43, 48, 53) do not share common contextual meanings with others; and for this reason, they are not included in this table of classification.

“Modern folklorists who study proverbs assert that a proverb’s meaning cannot be wholly understood apart from the context of its usage. Among other expressive components, the proverb often includes some value ideal” (Eastman in Dorson, 1972: 194). The primary task of the researchers is thus to probe into the contextual factors by relying on reliable sources and thereby attempt to approach objective interpretation.

Summary: The Universal Character of Oromo Proverbial Lore

The proverbial lore is a metaphorical language, which reveals the living reality about the past and present situations by reference to the experiences of years. In dealing with the Oromo proverbs, the most important thing is to explore the way each wise saying has been employed in a specific situation so as to project the true image of the society. It is also noteworthy that the proverbs are used in various contexts in which pointing out the sanity and vanity of people is the centre. The Oromo use wise sayings in their daily discourses *to emphasize issues of overriding importance* and add some wit to their expressions so that they make their points more powerful, vivid and firm. In some cases, especially when people do not discuss serious issues, the wisdom literature has entertainment value. The proverbial art is an allusive language which is fundamental to people’s survival and the promotion of rational behaviour. It is a source of variety of knowledge.

proverbs summarize the everyday experiences of people- their thoughts, in general, their intellectual status, their attitudes toward social situations and problems, their opinions and feelings, their group morality, their social ideas, their life goals, virtues and values (Mieder, 1982: 167).

Since a proverb deals with the daily life of mankind, it never grows old with the changing time. This popular folk narrative serves as wisdom document and contributes to the continuous function of Oromo democratic conduct and values. It enriches a sense of national and cultural identity. As many African wisdom literatures, the Oromo proverbs are functionally different from riddles in that they mostly deal with serious matters by raising sensitive issues in the society and focuses on the core of the cause of universal human follies and crises. In its texture, the proverb may also be seen as a social satire and is one of the most common in modern criticism.

With the exception of place and time, proverbs are almost the same all over the globe, though the cultural meaning of each aphoristic saying may vary from country to country. The search for justice and truth, rewarding wisdom and a rational way of life, disapproving follies and negligence, valuing the rule of reason (democracy), devaluing misjudgement and incorrigible behaviours, striving for defeating poverty and ignorance, in short, seeking to promote love and the well-being of humanity are common to all peoples of the planet, the white, the black and the coloured; the traditional and the modern. These basic factors that govern or influence every society find their best expressions in the wisdom-lore, the oral document of the wise ancestors, which is the universal language of mankind. In this connection, Sumner (1995: 53) says, “A study of proverbial...folklore provides overwhelming evidence of this similarity. The same proverb conveying the same piece of recurs...in the indigenous aphorisms of all tribes and races.” In fact, there can be many proverbs in the world which share common implied meanings with Oromo proverbs.

How strange it is that although people may be separated by language, race, religion, politics, philosophy, etc., they share the common heritage of proverbs. They have all, often quite independently, had the same experience that has crystallized in the form of proverbs, and these proverbs penetrate far deeper into human nature than generally imagined (Jens Aa. Stabell Bilgrav, 1985: 7).

Though peoples of the globe differ in terms of race and culture, they exhibit similar features, which they share in common. The study of proverbial literature, therefore, enables us to evaluate critically the universal human characteristics that have persisted since time immemorial and which will never be abolished by modernity and civilization. This quotation depicts that proverb is part of the cumulative human experiences of the past and present. These valuable human experiences are directly or indirectly shared by all peoples of this planet; who have encountered many problems, but at the same time benefited much and enjoyed much in the course of the struggle to survive. Whether positive or negative, trauma or happiness, every historical episode has left its mark upon the human race. This collective result is recorded and vividly mirrored in oral literature, especially proverbs.

As we explore the past and present history of mankind, we will discover that people have often benefited much by correcting their errors of the past, and as the same time are terribly affected and become losers as they carry on repeating serious mistakes which they committed many years ago. A proverb is the search for the successful journey of life; and its study facilitates the path for

the new generation to understand the right way to go, re-assess the changing situations and re-examine the worst and the best aspects of human conduct. The *mammaaka* is, therefore, the collection of instructive events of centuries. It reflects the past social and historical situations and exhibits the way the new generation is confronting with many problems of the passing old.

In their functions, proverbs are *meta-linguistic* in that there are relations between words and phrases, together with parallelism between the related constituent categories. They are *meta-communicative* in their metaphoric expressions to call attention not only to their artistic beauty as framed poetic units, but also to the social situations, which suggest their employment. Like verse narratives, proverbs are the meal with which poetic terms are eaten. They express the inherent wisdom of peoples, their codes of behaviour, their deep satirical sense and imagination.

If we examine proverbs and fables, we see that both of them teach more or less, the same lesson. A good deal of Oromo proverbs and fables serve to instruct and remind members of the society of the importance of genuine concern, wise codes of conduct and moral principles. The significance of potency of meanings of proverbs lies in both historical and the immediate situational contexts. As Chimbundu in Furniss (1995: 152-153) has stated, "Proverbs have both a juridical and reference function in that they are used to resolve situations in which plans for behaviour are ambiguous and, therefore, they help facilitate the smooth flow of social interaction." More than that, the proverbs drive home the need for proper social behaviour by holding up to criticism those who fail to conform to socially acceptable norms; and by eulogizing those who live up to correct standard behaviour. The stingy individuals, the insincere, the irrational imitator and those who refuse to listen to rational judgement are all caricatured in proverbs and fables. The wisdom lore also serves as anecdotes that excoriate the slovenly, shiftless, degenerated fools, gullible and stereotyped characters. Conversely, they exalt members of the society who exemplify the virtues admirable in egalitarian culture.

The rational thinker often looks round with an equal eye on all men, generates a store of ideas; assigns universal values to those ideas and places them in a proper social setting. From the generated ideas emerges body of folk-literature. The collected, appreciated and transformed multidimensional narrative or proverbial lore thus forms the new combinations of popular guidelines that impress every generation that needs the stable life of freedom. If a man seeks to be generous or good, he must think comprehensively, put himself in the place of others and share their

pains and pleasures. The aphoristic literature thus functions as a great instrument of moral good and broadens the circumference of imagination; the imagination that sharpens human intellect.

The instructive value of proverbs, their association with eloquence, experience and wisdom make them appropriate for the changing social and political events. Within the framework of the articulation of criticism and rejection or disapproval, the proverbial folklore plays a particular role. It encapsulates many of the central themes of contemporary social and political problems that need serious considerations. Folk wisdom can also be viewed as philosophical concept, which is part of general sentiment. It raises many fundamental issues concerning moral and political correctness and has become the centre of public domain. As it has already been discussed, its deployment in Oromo society actually means the articulation of popular sentiment in public debate in which the aberrant human behaviours are contrasted with those qualities that are desirable in a democratic society.

6. Folk Songs and Poems: Poetic Language and Narrative Style

The Functions of Poetry: Poetic Theory and Practice

A great deal of interest in African poetry has increased over the last forty-years. Numerous traditional poems have been collected by many scholars, some with greater skills and profound knowledge of the subject than the others. In recent years, much oral poetry has been written down, published, and given more space in institutions of higher learning across the continent. In his book *“The Heritage of African Poetry”* (1985), Okpewho has singled out that the modern poets have been so anxious to return to the aesthetic value of the indigenous language; and for this reason, they have made conscious efforts to echo the rhythm of the traditional society. The classification of verse narratives does not solely show the prominence of using some selected genres, styles and modes, but also the values and norms of a particular social group that poetry might address. The humanist scholars examine poetry mainly in relation to aesthetic force, national character, moral duties, social philosophy and the discourse of history. Since poetry is the centre of discourse in the age of reason, its study must always address the dynamics of social and psychic transformation, political and historical changes; and the indispensability of taking account of *theory of interpretation* or *hermeneutic* to examine critically the process of those changes.

Composition...is a harmony of words, man’s natural instrument, penetrating not only the ears but the very soul. It arouses all kinds of conceptions of words and thoughts and objects, beauty and melody-all things native and natural to mankind. The combination and variety of its sounds convey the speaker’s emotions to the minds of those around him and make the hearers share them. It fits his great thoughts into a coherent structure by the way in which it builds patterns of words” (Longinus in Leitch, 2001: 153).

In poetry, the language the narrator employs is different from that of ordinary language and the surface meaning of that spoken word. This makes it a superior means of communication marked

by poetic diction and metaphoric expressions. A poem is an encapsulated artistic language, the expression of a poet's vision or inner life and a mirror of his times. It is the reflection of universal truth, whether good or bad, comedy or tragedy, humorous or satirical, euphoric or melancholic and peace or war. A poetry may be analyzed to be the expression of general human imagination and is the very representation of social and political condition expressed in its eternal truth. It is the universal knowledge through which the deep internal feelings are unfolded and these feelings which usually take secular and religious forms are skilfully articulated and elucidated by the use of poetic vocabularies, which represent events, actions and passions. The elements of a particular poem include a narrator's choice of language (diction), its *syntactic structure* or the systematic order of the constituents in their parallel relations, the way it creates a vivid mental picture (its imagery), its figurative language or trope, the *effects of its sound* (metrical phonology) and the formal principle or pattern of organization. A poetry as imaginative literature also evokes elevated thoughts and is the art of rhythmic composition, spoken or written, either for exciting pleasure or to address the prominent social and political issues that need serious scrutiny. In the most literal use, the term poetic refers to possessing or having the quality of charm of poetry. The poetry of almost all periods has been narrated or written in a distinctive literary language; and this includes expressions not common in the ordinary discourse.

Most of African poems are indigenous to Africa and have continued to become part of academic discourse both in the continent and across the globe. They encompass the broad field of study on the portrayal of African socio-cultural life and political realities. With the exception of the protest poetry (the *geerarsa*), whose greater emphasis is on the imperial encounter, the Oromo poetry deals with the selective issues of egalitarian tradition, the nature of pre-conquest society and its social structure. These issues have been configured along traditional and communal lines; and the chosen themes of discourse are intended to reinforce social cohesion, economic conditions and solid national bond. "It [poetic] may be described as a system of concepts and criteria available to artist and audience as genres, techniques, artistic, devices, etc., that confer aesthetic merit and cultural authority. Thus, a poetics often functions as an instrument of cultural legitimation and authority" (Gikandi, 2003: 438). In socio-cultural and political terms, Oromo poetry contains the most important concerns of the society. The *wolaloo* and the *weedduu sabaa* are the most powerful aspects of cultural communication and wonderfully evocative of social life. The true nature of the

virtue of the *Gadaa* period is colourfully and attractively explained, while vices and the ugly aspects of the rule and conquest are portrayed with equal vividness. Like other verbal repertoires, the general criticism and interpretation of the Oromo poetry require the identification of the characteristics of genres, aesthetic codes, social and cultural conventions through which the golden time of the *Gadaa* egalitarian life, as well as the post-conquest predicaments that have stimulated generations of hostility are effectively communicated.

“What is required is not only a good memory-so that no details are omitted from the long narration-but the ability to compose a rich vocabulary” (Dégh, 1969: 51). So long as the imaginative literature remains in its old style, its language will be continuously refined by the succeeding generation of considerable intellect. The employment of modern methods to express numerous recurrent concepts in a variety of metrical values in verse lines constantly takes place so as to compose new ideas and ensure the continuity of the existing ones. The language of Oromo poetry cannot be discussed meaningfully without taking into consideration the context of social and cultural forces, which enable us to unfold issues demanding serious attention and problems calling for permanent resolution. The language of oral literature as part of cultural tradition is also a product of people’s history. It functions as image-forming agent of a particular society and that of the world. The Oromo views of themselves as a collective social entity depends on the way the images created by the spoken word correspond to the existing natural situation in which they are found.

It is of paramount importance to realize that the treatment of any kind of poetry requires the researcher’s effort of combining the socio-cultural, moral and aesthetic values of the society. These values include ethical norms which we may call *good* and *evil*, *right* and *wrong*. In general, poetry is influenced by religious views, cultural conventions and political commitments. In its aesthetic aspect, poetry also involves what we see as *fascinating* or *beautiful* and what is perceived by us as *unfair* and *ugly*. *Our consideration of the value of a particular poem is actually a measure of its relation to our lives, our way of thinking, and the way we see ourselves in a complex world full of comedy and tragedy*. Therefore, in evaluating poetry, the researchers should demonstrate extraordinary capacity and enthusiasm to examine the *dynamics of history, culture, moral attitudes and political climate*.

The study of folklore literature is so complex that it involves a number of disciplines such as linguistics, sociology, philosophy, psychology, history, anthropology, geology, chemistry and the like; and almost all of them share interests in oral narratives. The talented literary historian often assumes the role of the specialist academics of these disciplines when he endeavours to explore the characteristics of poetic language.

This chapter examines the thematic investigation of the Oromo poetry and to what extent its study is related to metrical phonology and semantics. “As long as the linguist does not clearly realize to what body of facts his theory is applicable, his analysis of poetic language will not transcend the limits of traditional analysis....His facts are invariably selected within a framework of some theoretical assumptions and evaluations” (Sebeok, 1960: 71). Modern literary critics seldom treat language of literature in its prescriptive form; and neither do they apply false assumptions and unrelated facts to oral narratives. The thematic development of Oromo poems is closely connected with the employment of figurative languages (tropes), particularly metaphor and metonymy. Almost all poetic discourses have their own metaphors. Many cliché words and phrases are instances of *dead metaphors*-they are so familiar that people hardly notice their metaphorical sense. For instance, the following expressions can be classified as dead metaphors and the Oromo frequently use them to describe the way people behave or feel: *takadhoo gatte*, “she lost her dress,” meaning she is insolent and uncultured; *wal hin miillu*, “we cannot go together,” and it refers to unmatched and the absence of common purpose; *foon kiyya hin nyaadhu*, “I do not eat my flesh,” connotes I do not exploit my people; *harkinuu luka hin tarin*, “a hand may surpass the foot,” is to indicate a situation in which the rival who proves himself more competent than his opponent makes a contemptuous remark.

“Thus, the exploration of the way in which the literary artist uses words, and the concern to distinguish that way from the more ordinary forms of communication in language have led in a number of directions and added some new territory to the area of the critic’s inquiry” (Daiches, 1969: 168). This implies that literary work, especially oral narrative tradition, often involves a device for expanding and developing meanings (metaphors) to produce ambivalence and illuminate or demonstrate the way literary genres or expressions can help to achieve richness and subtlety of explanation. The fact that the modernists opt for the poetic way of using language for setting up the whole series of interesting suggestions than denotative use of terms typical of ordinary expository

discourse, essentially gives rise to the inquiry into the function of metaphors. The primary substance of the *poetic imagination* is metaphoric truth. The term poetic here signifies having or possessing the qualities of poetry. The charming aspect of a literary work, especially a poem, is often associated with the faculty of producing ideal creations consistent with the existing reality, and the portrayal of that reality requires the ability to have new and exciting ideas or what we call imagination. Therefore, the poetic imagination as part of metaphoric facts involves the innovative power of the human mind and the formation of artistic vocabulary. In his general theory of poetry and mental processes, Coleridge has discussed the differences and synonymous aspects (diversity and unity) of fancy and imagination. He argues that imagination enables us to create rather than reassemble, by dissolving *fixities*-that is, unifying the mental images received from the senses into a *newly generated unity* (organic whole) or combination. According to him, fancy and imagination share similarity in a sense that they denote a faculty of the mind, and he also pointed out that the former is different from the latter and can be understood as a mechanical process which receives elementary images- *fixed images that are devoid of seriousness* in which what has been perceived is not altered and reassembled into a temporal order.

The post-Coleridge critics show that fancy is simply the faculty that produces a lesser, lighter, or humorous kind of poetry, whereas imagination is analyzed as the faculty that produces a higher, powerful, deeper, more serious and passionate poetry; and obviously these qualities reveal themselves through metaphorical vocabulary. The poetry of all periods has been written in a veiled creative language of metaphor, which forms the clear picture of a particular event. A narrator's poetic imagination can be analyzed in various ways, such as the extent to which the conceived ideas become more appealing, produce powerful feelings in which the standard of excellence in the language creates fascination in the course of exploring social and political scenes. According to Haley (1988: 3), "a good metaphor is not merely a clever embellishment of the poet's vision; it is often the only precise embodiment of that vision." A metaphor is not a denotative sense of language to be ignored before the cultural meaning of the poem is uncovered. The ornamental metaphor produces a *decorative meaning* and is *the centre of poetic diction* by which man as rational being imaginatively comprehends the relation of characters to events, time and space. In a literary world, especially when we study poetry, the image on the surface level is nothing more than a suggestive

or overt sense of the oral text. The artistic aspect of it must be discovered by the researchers and this makes poetic imagination effective.

*Nama argitu malee beekuu hin dandeettu **fuulaan***

*Geeraraa bayuu mitii/motii kadhugaan gale **duulaan***



It is hardly possible to judge who a person is by his front part (face)

Wearing afro-style sounds nothing unless the campaigner brings home the truth

The above verse lines not only share the common segment **-uulaan**, but also involve the existence of semantic differences. The two speech sounds /f/ and /d/ differ in a single sound in same position in each morpheme. The poetic expression *kadhugaan gale*, literally ‘the one who brought home the truth’ or ‘the one who returned home alive’ is figuratively uttered and it refers to being triumphant and honouring the pledges made. The poem brings to light the significance of evaluating a person by his concrete action than by the loud noise he makes. When we discuss poetic imagination, it is always necessary to comprehend the metonymic aspects of a language that are more deeper and appealing because of their poetic meanings and artistic effects.

In literary works, metonymy shows the way things are associated with each other in common experience and it identifies a *referent*-that is, an object, a concept or an event to which a term or symbol refers. It accomplishes the *transfer of meaning* on the basis of *associations* that develop out of specific contexts rather than participation in a structure of meaning. This means if one thing is applied to another with which it is *closely related* because of contiguity or referential function in common experience, this is called metonymy. In Greek, metonymy is a term used for a change of name. For instance, *siinqee* “a slender and decorated long stick” in the context of Oromo culture is associated with peace as well as women’s dignity and their inviolable rights. In the *Gadaa* tradition, the term *bokkuu*, literally “*sceptre*” is metonymically related to “*Abbaa Gadaa*” or *President* of the *Gadaa system* and the solidness of his symbolic power. In the Oromo ritual performance of Thanksgiving, the “*irreensa*” (holding fresh grasses) is associated with prosperity and abundance; and if we see someone wearing the “*baallii guchii*” (feather of ostrich) over the head, this will automatically communicate the heroism of the *Gadaa* generation. Thus, metonymy illustrates meanings along the line of contiguity. Apart from its referential functions, cause and effect relations of things or events may also be seen as one of the various functions of metonymy as for example

dabaan muka qottoo ufumaa/ofumaa ufmura “a crooked/twisted handle of an axe cuts itself.” Here, crookedness and cutting are related on causative level. In a wider social situation, a villain person becomes the victim of his own misdeed; and thus harming oneself is the consequence of being wicked. As John I. Saeed (2003: 352) has pointed out, both metaphor and metonymy are used to create new lexical resources in language and they show the same dependence on real-world knowledge or cognitive frames. The two literary devices involve various semantic dimensions in linguistic usage and they may be applied to many aspects of the functioning of Oromo poems and songs. By semantic dimensions I am referring to the *meanings of words as determined by their manifold relations to other corresponding or antithetical expressions and their specific cultural uses in historical contexts*. In general, metonymy functions on the basis of association, whereas metaphor operates on *developing meanings on the assumption that there exist comparisons or similarities and contrast* between things. These literary dimensions, which are the general category of cultural semantics and historical events are the basis for exploring the poetic value of Oromo poetry.

Traditional poems and songs are the most common forms of literary culture in Sub-Saharan Africa in general and in Oromiyaa in particular. The Oromo sing when they feel happy, when they are in a state of melancholy, when they love, when they hate, when they do co-operative work, when they fight, when marriage takes place and when death takes a toll. They have numerous of the *walaloo*-‘folk poems’ and *faaruu*-‘songs;’ and of these the *weedduu/weelluu*-‘love songs,’ *weedduu hujii*-‘work songs,’ the *daboo/jigii*-‘songs of solidarity or co-operative songs,’ *faaruu loonii*-‘cattle songs,’ the *geerarsa*-‘heroic epic’ and the *suunsuma*-‘the satirical and humorous poems’ are the most common genres. Thus, almost all Oromo folk songs and poems provide aesthetic pleasure, grand elemental of facts about the society, historical and philosophical truths, moral instruction and national feelings; the feelings which find expressions in the form of musical setting. They deal with grievances, festive moods (happiness), protests, deep sadness, disappointments, recreational occasions and euphoric times.

The golden age of the Oromo poetry can reasonably be explained within the context of the *Cultural and Literary Renaissance* of the *Gadaa* period (1300-1887). This period is marked by the establishment of a more extended civic polity in which personal strength, competence and courage

have been highly valued and the authorities checked by the organized spiritual bodies and social institutions.

Folk Song Performance as a Genre

A performance as a genre or one of the folklore features (pragmatic category) may be defined as a general way of reconstituting the world of perception and exhibiting or externalizing the poetic impulse in the form of rational response to a given social and cultural climate. We have to always make a clear distinction between the stage performance and folklore performance in which the former necessarily involves imitation or a mimetic action whereas in the latter the narrator presents the facts that he/she has observed without imitation; and both are the reflection of social realities justified by history. On the whole, folk song performance as a generic category functions as aesthetic mode of expression.

Oral performance...is rooted in culturally defined scenes or events- bounded segments of the flow of behaviour and experience that constitute meaningful context for action, interpretation, and evaluation. In the ethnography of oral performance, the performance event has assumed a place [environment] beside the text as a fundamental unit of description and analysis, providing the most concretely empirical framework for the comprehension of oral literature as social action by directing attention to the actual conduct of artistic verbal performance in social life (Bauman, 1986: 3).

In the study of oral literature, the first task of a researcher must be to identify series of events and contexts that serve as the background for the production and relevance of the genres. In its analytical framework, the *structure* of oral performance tradition as the product of the interplay of various important situational factors includes: (1) the social environment, (2) people's identity and values, (3) the social interaction pattern which is the basis for our interpretation and the validity of evaluation, (4) the expressive aspect, (5) the cultural conventions and meanings in context, (6) the political events, and (7) the historical process that constitutes the scenario of the episodes.

“Performance is not only an enabling facilitator in the duality of communication to the body and soul, but also an important dimension of cultures as well as an indicator of how knowledge about culture is produced and utilized” (Gikandi, 2003: 418). Since the oral performer conveys

certain messages within a given space and time, the social context which determines the meaning of a verbal text need to be understood by the consumers (the audience). A successful folk song performance can occur not merely because certain action is unique to the context of a particular text, but if that action serves as a powerful mirror of the existing reality. The Oromo traditional songs and poems as genres thus reflect a turning-point in Oromo history and culture, the great feelings of optimism of the *Gadaa* period and the metaphor of the huge oral production of that period on the one hand, and the vanishing of that optimism after the historical shift of post-colonialism in Africa on the other.

The defining characteristic of some Oromo folk song performance is that the effective interaction between the performer or narrator and the audience takes place in the two-way organization of voice groups-the ‘*call*’ and ‘*response*’ aesthetic relationship. In the work song performance, a specific oral text is recited, a situation in which the style and the recitation usually vary with individual narrator and events or occasions. The singers are divided into two singing groups, namely the “*soloist*” or lead singer and those who join in the “*chorus*,” and each of them recites the same text in a variety of rhythmic tones. The soloist’s leading statement or phrase is usually followed by the response of the audience in which everyone is joined in the chorus after each verse line.

The notion of performance is central to the study of folklore as communication. Indeed, it is through the study of performance that folklore can integrate its scientific and humanistic aims in a forward-looking way. On the other hand, the notion focuses on social interaction and the kinds of communicative competence that enter into interaction (Goldstein, 1975: 11).

This is true because literary tradition as part of contemporary critics also concentrates on the *stylistic content* within the events; and in this case, it enhances its concern with regard to the *artistic qualities* and the *evaluative* dimensions. As far as social behaviour is concerned, the performance of oral tradition also shows the responsibility the performer has assumed for the audience. In a broader analytical perspective, researchers and writers are obliged to show how the cultural semantics of folk song genres or expressions are conditioned by a particular situation.

Besides recreational value, the Oromo folklore performance has also a special purpose. For instance, the *suunsuma*-‘satirical/humorous poems,’ are performed to address social equilibrium, political and moral correctness, whereas the work song records people’s collective endeavour and the importance of lasting solidarity. The ‘call’ and ‘response’ singing in work songs creates an oral aesthetic event in which harmonious and spontaneous friendly interaction takes place within the group. Therefore, the performance of a song establishes communal values and reinforces social order within the Oromo society. As the manifestation of social cohesion, it reminds the new generation of the qualities of conducts that are appreciable and praiseworthy in cultural communication.

Poetic Imagery

“Because the poet invents or arranges his own story, he creates a self-sufficient world of his own...that world is itself a formal construction based on elements in the real world, an illumination of an aspect of the world as it really is” (Daiches, 1969: 37). A poetry is viewed by the generation of poets as a *decorated speaking picture* or *visual image*. For instance, in the work song performance of the Oromo, the genre *iyya fardaa fi lafoo*-‘a call for the readiness of horses and men,’ as the imagery of a state of emergency and the co-ordination of work force depicts social solidarity. The pattern of a poem or the way it is arranged and its colourful expression are the important dimensions of its artistic effects. Another dimension in the analysis of poetry is the relationship between its vocabulary and the imagery or what is termed as ornamental language which is meant to inspire the audience (readers or listeners). The point here is that a poem becomes a work of art if we probe into its artistic arrangement. The meticulous interpretation of the visual image might help us to uncover the power of a poem. The analysis of poetry essentially demands the careful scrutiny of its depth, its language and texture, its organic unity, its implication and the particular scene it depicts.

The valuable experiences that have been gained are perceived by a poet in relation to events, situations or people that are the centre of his attention. In the production of poetry, the primary aim

of a poet is to derive certain literary qualities from the image he has perceived. The transformation of oral poetry to written form actually means to reshape, elaborate or modify an original verbal text. Whether the interpretation of the oral text enhances or depreciates the social meaning to be achieved depends upon the sensibility, aesthetic appreciation and judgement of the researcher.

The oral narrator carefully selects a particular image in order to capture the interests of his audience. In one sense, the image or symbol a poet uses is the outcome of his impulse to perceive the natural world, its unity and diversity. The meanings the poet assigns to the image and the purpose each poem serves differ in depth and complexity. In general, the analysis of a certain image very often leads to a wide range of possibilities of deriving additional aesthetic force from their contextual relations. Each poem is generated to embody a great variety of important issues to which the poet directs the attention of the audience.

Linguistic Characteristics: Prosodic Features

In the oral performance tradition, linguistic characteristics mainly refer to the use of syntactic structure and prosodic features; the latter is similar to *suprasegmental* in phonetics and phonology, which collectively refers to the variations of sounds (intonation/pitch, stress and rhythm) of syllabic segments or morphs in morphemes. In a narrow sense, these divisions of sounds, as I have indicated earlier, may be called *paralinguistics* or variations of tones of voice. The study of verse narratives involves the principle and practice of metre, rhyming elements or a systematic exploration of versification (prosody), which is concerned with the art of speaking marked by time and tempo. The oral artist usually presents the rhyming elements, the events, diverse images, or all these together. The aesthetic quality of oral literature, especially poetry, partly depends on the skilful manipulation of phonological properties of which one of the main elements of marking time is the *rhythm* or a regular repetition of sound patterns.

Sounds as well as thoughts have relation between each other and towards that which they represent, and a perception of the order of those relations has always been found connected with the perception of the order of the relations of thoughts. Hence, the languages of poets have ever affected a certain uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound....An observation of the regular mode of the recurrence of harmony in the language of poetic minds, together

with the relation to music produces meter or a certain system of traditional forms of harmony and language (Adams, 1992: 518).

In oral literature, like other literary works, our fundamental sense of language is as something situated in our experience, and the style of speaking or writing will be built upon different aspects of that experience. Stylistic feature of folklore is different from casual language and the abstract form of utterance it produces in that it establishes coherent units and structures that constitute the system of grammatical language. When we analyse the rhyming elements of the Oromo poetry, we seek to establish the parallel categories and relations of the constituents; namely syntactic structure, phonological realizations and semantic interpretation, which characterize the style of a language in a particular situation. From this general perspective, it is clear that any poetic expression is a theoretical domain for exploring and investigating the systematic relationships of all segments of a sentence that define the nature of linguistic properties. In discourse analysis, especially poetry, we particularly focus on the communicative use of the constituents with reference to functional, textual and contextual primacy of these various poetic elements. The oral art as a social phenomenon, therefore, deals with the use of a language in a particular setting.

In the metrical analysis of poetry, one of the most important things is the pattern of sounds in time and this includes the grouping of syllables-the way the vowels and consonants are arranged in each morphemic unit. By and large, as in the rhyming proverbs, the study of poetry remains incomplete unless the prosodic features are discussed. The exploration of versification as aesthetic category is a way of marking the distinction between a successful poetry and the doggerel verse. In addition to prosody, the effective establishment of literary situation can also occur if the structure of poetry is carefully examined. Moreover, as we shall see later in the love lyrics and satirical poems, the investigation of thematic development, the complexity, character revelation, the conflict, crisis, resolution, etc, are of great importance for ensuring the literary form of Oromo poetry.

The Love Lyrics: The Arsii Weelluu and the Weedduu of Macha Tuulama

In a landmark study of the 20th century, poetry has been conceived by literary scholars as a stylistic language compounded from metaphor, rhythmic, phonetic and syntactic; and these make

poetry different from prose. The Oromo poetry, especially the love lyric, is extrapolated from a developing renaissance of the *Gadaa* and is a kind of poetry in which the style of discourse, from simple rhyming element to a complex phrase-structural patterns, are almost always recognizable and immediate. Throughout Oromo *Renaissance History* (16th-19th centuries), the *weedduu/weelluu* genre becomes, in effect, a widely acknowledged vehicle for representing the fundamental questions related to the objectivity that has become the centre of discourse in the age of humanism. Why do people construct the images of the past out of what they have experienced? How can human consciousness be validated in social and political terms? How would human feelings, emotions, thoughts, beliefs, visions and dreams be expressed in the process of calling for *alternative values and identity empowerment*? These and other intriguing questions that test human ingenuity were raised and discussed throughout the early modern period (early 1914) in a variety of intellectual environments. The transformation from oral poetry to written form in Oromiyaa is, therefore, the result of an enquiry into *new alternatives* and the *redefinition* of Oromo identity and values.

The love lyric of the Oromo might be described as a *reward for human virtues and desirable conduct* because it constructs the image of the celebration of high cultural ideals. Its praise for human sanity establishes a kind of vocabulary of poetic presence that controls the way a poet can articulate himself in the course of describing the events and the natural world. The rhetorical nature of praise language and the decorative use of that language to suit a logical way of thinking, render certain lofty attitudes that are convenient to the narrator. The *weedduu/weelluu* includes an idealized view of the relation between the narrator and that of the unnamed character, a lady, and how the already existing images, essence and ideas are artistically portrayed and properly located in the poem. These are what might be called artefacts of lyric poetry, the very physicality of which is thematically explored, explicitly stated so that through this physicality it would be possible to form the rhetorical logic of the idealizing poetics based on the effective force, the existing reality or truth.

We read and write oral poetry for different purposes; namely for pleasure of sounds (rhythmic patterns), for the representative images and symbols it offers, for its evocative character, for its immense contribution to intellectual criticism as for instance when we enjoy the poet's witty expressions or subtle description of the events and characters. Literary scholars do not read and write oral poetry merely to gain pleasure out of it, but also for the emotion it creates as for instance

when a poem evokes sadness, tensions and despair. The study of Oromo oral poetry thus excites our capacity for creativity and widens our appreciations of what is beautiful, devaluing what is undesirable, unfair and ugly; and its wide range of functions make us to be more receptive to the imaginative experience.

In a tragic poetry, like *Calii Calanqoo* and the *Mutilation of Arms and Breasts at Aanolee* (chapter 7), the deplorable situation of the time creates internal commotion in which the sinking of heart and spirit happens; whereas in the poetry of comedy, as for instance the *weedduu/weelluu*, the spirit of joy reigns and peace of mind will ultimately occur. Whether comedy or tragedy, human emotions are moved by responding to immediate situations and those situations are appropriately addressed in poetic metaphor. Love lyric is the image-forming mirror that constructs an impression the poet has conceived in a sort of external present. It has its origin in romantic movements, strong emotions of the period; and those emotions are constantly nourished as the poet responds to the external world.

The Oromo *weelluu/weedduu* (love lyric) is a short poem in verse produced by individual composer and it serves as cultural and literary reputation for the pastoralist who composes it. It is one of the most striking examples of romantic comedy and emotional love poetry in rural Oromiyaa, especially among the young population. There are at least two related themes of the poems: first, those addressed to the beloved woman, especially a girl, in hope of marriage; and second, to a woman loved and admired from afar whom the poet has seen once and wishes to see once again. In the *weedduu* poetry, the verbal artist narrates the events in such a way that both the theme of hope and frustrated love create an atmosphere of sincere and profound emotion.

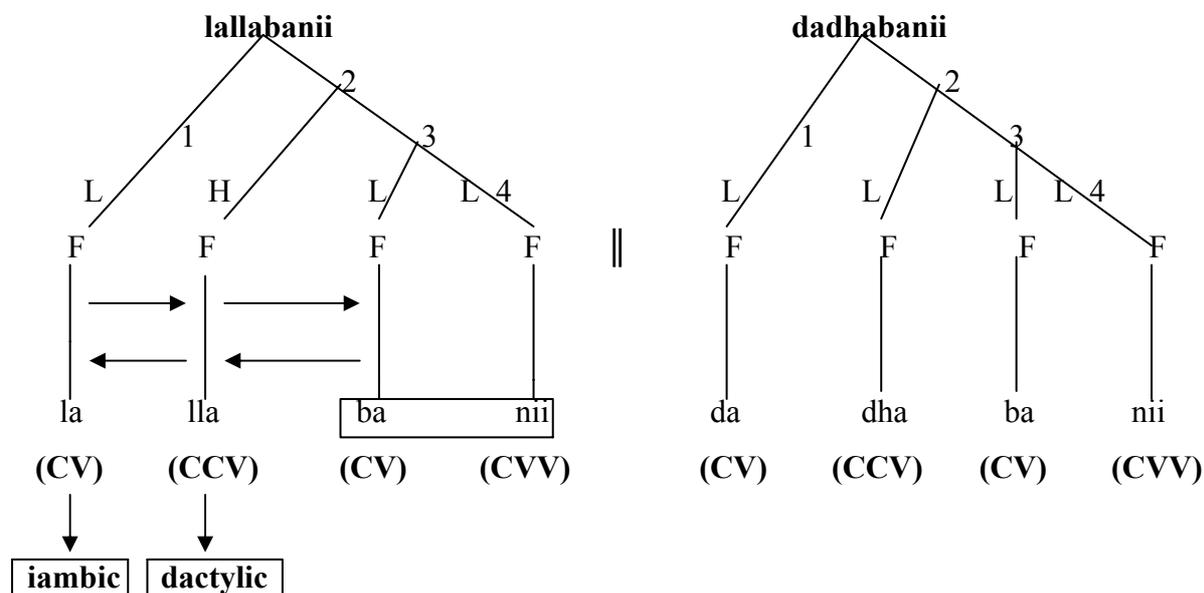
As pointed out in the preceding part, the poet mainly aims at creating friendly atmosphere, and he does this by evoking romantic feelings to capture the heart and mind of the woman loved. The technique of employing a variety of panegyric words shows submission, an intention to compromise and resolve love crisis through a civilized manner. He treats the beauty of a woman and her charming personality in a melodious voice by describing her physical stature in a romantic way. In the song, the poet vividly articulates his profound affections, sometimes voicing his despair stressing the heart-breaking of parting. Both plain and figurative languages are employed; and in most cases, the traditional narrator opts for enjoying the use of local colour. *Weelluu* is usually narrated in the form of monologue.

The analysis of the parallel constituents, especially the rhyming poems, requires the establishment of *phonocentric hierarchy* or forming the new patterns in which the *visual* text is arranged within the pre-existing structure. The *generative* structural approach to poetry encodes a specific sequence of creative process that differs from the casual explanation. In such a method of composition, one should try to recognize the simultaneous existence of the underlying meaning and the abstract pattern within a regular metrical structure. In the vertical and horizontal arrangement of words, segments (*morphs*) and phrases within a *visual* structure, what has become evident is the balancing of the rhyming groups and metre.

<i>asii mitii gadii lallabanii</i>	<i>garaa hima hiinaa sabbataan gossinee</i>
<i>anaa mitii garaa dahabanii</i>	<i>ija attam goona tamidhoo hin obsinee</i>
↓	↓
they are calling from a distance	we can tighten the stomach
it is not I but my stomach [heart], which	with the <i>sabbataa</i> (lady's belt)
refuses me	but we cannot stop a rare glimpse.

The *weelluu* poetry reflects the style of life of the traditional man, order of the day and the emotional needs of the love makers. The folk singer takes pleasure in the songs when he is alone, though he may not fully explain the deep cultural semantics of each spoken word. The two verbal categories in the first stanza, *lallabanii* “calling aloud” and *dahabanii* “refusing” are terminating rhyming which have similar ending segment (*-abanii*). They also share the same number of syllables and minimal rhythmic unit or feet. Likewise, the rhyming elements in the second stanza, *gossinee* “tightening” and *obsinee* “cannot be controlled/stopped,” consist of identical terminating unit (*-sinee*); and in both cases, similar phonological characteristics are observable.

The poetry is composed within a meticulous control of oral structure and poetic vocabulary. The quality of sound, the rhythmic pattern, the syllable structure (stressed and unstressed), in short, the modulations of words affect the entire feelings, meanings and messages the oral poet aspires to convey.



Note: “L” represents “light” syllable, whereas “H” stands for the “heavy” segment or syllable. In these word-level branching, we see that the rhyming elements constitute four syllables and four rhythmic feet each. They consist of multiple metric units. The term ‘multiple’ is used to show the syllables which are more than triple. The syllable (**la-**) of the first word can be categorized as “*iambic*” because this light or weak syllable is followed by a stronger or heavy syllable (**-lla**). The second segment of the same word may also be called *dactylic* in a sense that it is followed by the two light syllables (**ba-**) and (**-nii**).

In the first stanza, the two verse lines constitute corresponding ideas, whereas the parallel ideas of the second stanza are uttered in contradistinction. The poet describes the way he has been debilitated by emotional feelings and internal conflict. The term *gadii lallabanii*, literally they are “calling from a distance,” is to refer to the powerful abstract image of love as experienced by the folk poet and how he is held in deep affection when this image casts its shadow over him. This situation has been reinforced by the second part of line two- *garaa dadhabanii* “it is the heart/stomach that refuses,” the term, which implies lack of inner strength. In the second line, the singer expresses two opposing views-that is, the way his outwardly feeling is inwardly negated. In the two expressions, *anaa mitii* “it is not I” and *garaa dadhabanii*, the narrator tries to elucidate how he is torn apart because of his inability to act as one person when his heart refuses to obey him.

In the poem, the singer stresses the problem of being driven by romantic feelings wherein he lost control of his sensibility.

In a lyric poetry, the narrator expresses a state of mind or a process of perception, thought and feeling. His critical observation, his living memory and feelings are reconstructed in a variety of ways and recited in an ordered form. “Many lyric speakers [singers] represented as amusing solitude....The lyric genre comprehends a great variety of utterances” (Abrams, 1993: 108). With the vividness of Oromo love lyric goes directness and frankness. Imagery is also drawn from language of sexuality.

Baale garbuun gayee biilaan caccabe
waa jechuu dadhabee hanfalaa qaqqabe



the barley has ripen in Bale and its spikes fell out

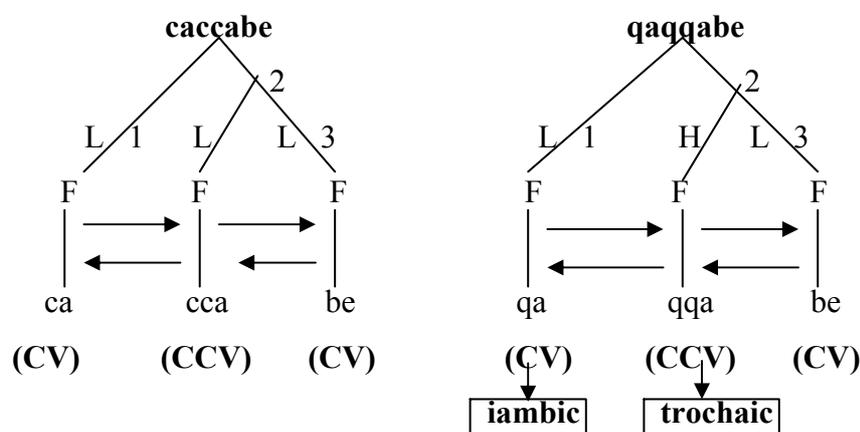
I couldn't utter anything except touching her *hanfalaa/sabbata* (belt or girdle)

The critical study of poetry involves its diction, figures of speech, the collocation of words, the relationship of parts to the whole and to each other within a complete work, together with the parallel arrangement of words (rhythms and metre) peculiar to the given verse lines. The readers or audience become aware of the way in which the linguistic organization of a particular poem can generate aesthetic force and restructure meaning. The multidimensional effects of a poem, that is to say, its rhythmic pattern, its systematic structure and the way the whole parallel categories produce a variety of meanings are altogether the indication of our *rational response* to the poetic form of verse narratives. With the vivid concreteness of the higher level of love lyrics goes directness and frankness. Imagery is drawn not only from exotic woman, but also sexual desires and body parts.

Repetition is no doubt one of the most fundamental characteristics features of oral literature. It has both an aesthetic and a utilization value...it is a device that not only gives a touch of beauty or attractiveness to a piece of oral expression...but also serves certain practical purposes in the overall organization of the oral performance (Okpewho, 1992: 71).

The verbal segments, *caccabe* “fell out” and *qaqqabe* “touched” have the same rhyming end (-able). They are composed of triple syllables and metric feet; and the syllables are organized from four speech sounds. The first light segment (**qa-**) of the second word is followed by a heavy metric

unit or syllable and it is characteristically *iambic*; whereas the heavy one which is followed by another weak syllable (-be) is *trochaic* in its standard feet.



The lyric singer expresses his mental or emotional needs. His action actually exhibits his distinctive trait or what is known as moral character; and this particular quality which the poet's action manifests may or may not depict his ethic quality. A man has fallen in love with a woman during the summer season of his stay in Bale. The poet describes *garbuu* "barley and its *biilaa* "spikes" in the form of imagery. The ripening of barley and love at first sight are compared to portray a promising hope and the pleasant feeling of being successful; but this atmosphere of delight is promptly negated by the falling of spikes (*biilaan caccabe*), which is an indication of the reversal of his first impression. In the last line, the singer illuminates the way he loses soberness subsequent to which he is unable to think properly. This is shown by the use of allusive language "*hanfalaa qaqqabe*" (seduction)-a surge of love for a lady and an overwhelming sense of sexual desire wherein he behaves instinctively.

baddaa kana bayaa gala asuu goraa
nadha baasoo tiyya akka bishaan horaa

↓

I am leaving for the highland; and on my way back, I will visit you
 you are the only one who can quench my need like the lake does (for the cattle)

The rhyming components, *goraa* "visit" and *horaa* "lake" comprise the same terminating segment (-**oraa**). The romantic poet uses an elevated allusive language and the woman is described as *nadha baaso* "heart-warming" character. The Arsii Oromo take their cattle to the lakes once or

twice a year so that the cattle quench their need and refresh themselves by eating (licking) the *boojii* “the dried salty soil” near the lakes. *Akka bishaan horaa* “like the lake” in *simile* shows great beauty and this has created the attractive image of the lake and the woman in comparison. Symbolically, both represent the source of happiness or pleasure.

deebitee karaa kana baataa?
deemsi kee garaa nama nyaataa

↓

would you pass by this street (path) again?
 the way you walk is so moving

In Oromo verse narratives, it is vitally important to understand the aesthetic value of the terminating rhyming elements (words or phrases). Besides the general aesthetic impact, the rhyming groups have more specific stylistic value within the text. In terms of syllabic structures and rhythmic unit, the group of lexical categories, *karaa* “street” and *garaa* “stomach” share basic features common to all rhyming poems.

As far as the type of rhythmic feet is concerned, each word group is *binary with double meter*. In terms of syllabic pattern, each pair consists of **weak/light** (*ka-* & *ga-*)= **short**; and **weak/light (-raa)**= **long**.

The singer romanticizes the woman whom he considers as the ‘*apple of his eye*,’ and he aspires to see her now and again. The phrase (demonstrative adjective) *karaa kana*, literally “this street,” in this particular situation shows the poet’s desire for the continuity of romantic relationship. The imagery of love and the way it deeply appeals to human feelings is expressed as...*garaa nama nyaataa*, the poetic term for ‘a power of capturing attention.’

gadamsi na nyaatee gaafaan na jifatee
qalbii fuute galchi abbaan na hifatee

↓

the kudu attacked me and knocked me by its horn
 the owner has lost patience, and so return the soul that you have taken.

Abrams (1993: 109) argues that the lyric singer “manifests and justifies a particular disposition and set of values...or expresses a sustained process of observation and meditation in which he tries to resolve an emotional problem.” The poet goes on to the love journey from the initial confidence to win the game and then down to a realm of crisis, frustration and despair. The

parallel verbal elements, *jifatee* “knocked” and *hifatee* “fed up/lost” comprise identical terminating metrical unit or recurrence of regular beat (**-ifatee**). The poet, who is frustrated because of being subdued by romantic emotion, seems to have lost mental equilibrium. *Qalbii fuute galchi* “return the soul you have taken” is artistically expressed and it implies being reduced to emptiness and the need for winning the heart of a woman who has not yet returned the love for him. The *gadamsa* “kudu” is an allusion to the woman of great charm; and *gaafa* “the horn” denotes the captivating power of love, which terribly affected the romantic singer.

harka koo sidanda'ee

kan allaattii dorgomu

kan gajjaa muree gossu

garaa koo si dadhabee

miila koo sidanda'ee

fugicha baallee/baallii qabu

kan Roggee muree galu

kan akka baarree/buqqee cabu

5 *ija koo sidanda'ee*

↓

oh, my hands! I have tolerated you

that you cut the *gajjaa* tree and dry it out

oh, my feet! I have tolerated you

that you travel, reach Rogge, and come home

5 oh, my eyes! I have tolerated you

↓

that you compete with the vultures in flight

oh, my stomach! I am fed up of you

the wicked, that has wings

which easily breaks like a gourd

The narrator who has burdened himself now releases more openly his frustrations. This love lyric is probably the typical reflection of the social pressures in modern life and the crises resulted from the inability to read and/or understand the mind of a woman loved. The singer has emotionally confessed his missteps and perhaps the straightforwardness of the language would give him psychological relief. Like Okpewho's poem, “*Love Apart*,” this poem contains one of the most powerful portraits of a dying love affair ever to be captured. The poet has chosen the ‘*ajjaa tree*’ which provides us a symbol of falling apart and/or unsuccessful relations. Now, all his energy and enthusiasm have gone out completely and the effort made ended up in futility.

In the hopelessness of romantic notions, no matter how it may seem important, grand human desires are essentially useless if the prospect is in the bleak. The poet admits that his whole effort is nothing more than strain and he tries to confess the frailty of human nature and the inevitability of crisis. The theme of this physical journey is hollowness, weakness, the essential confusion resulted

and the problem of those who are greatly tempted by the impossible way and unable to empower themselves. This ambiguous romantic poem can be interpreted in various ways. The poet's failure shows the inadequacy of his views of capturing the interests of those whom he interacts with over the course of time of making partnership. The folk narrator who has been wandering under romantic illusion, finally realized that his own illusion is faulty; and he perceived it as the bleak futility and destructive way of life. This poem is about self-criticism in which the frustrated poet who is unable to control his emotion turns against himself. Despite making strenuous effort, he seems to have failed to be the champion of love and then he confesses in flashbacks his error of wasting so long time.

It was reasonably clear that each version reflected the deep-seated feelings and outlook on life of its narrator. While one narrator revealed himself...as a self-assured man in full control of his affairs and the world around him, the other narrator showed himself as an internally disturbed person in whose life woman loomed large as a dominant figure....In such ways, oral literature serves as a vehicle for psychological release(Okpewho, 1992: 109).

The oral artist who was burdened by tensions condemns his hands, feet, eyes and stomach/heart that have brought failure to him. The action of cutting *gajjaa* (a big tree) is to suggest the work of destructive hands. In lines three and four, the narrator describes himself as a wanderer man who often travels a long distance without being certain of succeeding in his aims. Lines five and six depict the way his eyes try to capture the impossible. The eyes and the vultures are compared to reveal the aimless wandering. The poet has mentioned *baallee/baallii* (feather) just to show the way he drifted aimlessly without knowing what to achieve.

The *baarree* (gourd/calabash) is linked with stomach to describe a broken heart and the futile attempt and emptiness resulted from the crisis. The oral poet has used a deep poetic language wherein the verbal imagery created artistic beauty and vividness of the situation. The construction of the poem and the portrayal of the whole picture of the crisis are based on comparative technique.

In southern Oromiyaa (Arsii), *baarree* (milk-container) is used for a special occasion like marriage, but in Macha and Tuulama, it is used for stirring or churning milk (*aanana raasuu*) in order to make butter. The poet has made a comparison between *baarree* and *garaa* just to reveal the lack of determination and strength.

hin sokosa jedheen
sokossuu dadhabee
akka baala agamsaa

↓

I want to move
 but I am unable to do so
 like that of the leaves of ‘*carissa edulis*’

si obsinnaa jedheen
 5 *si obsuu dadhabee*
akka garaa dhalaa

↓

I tried to forget you
 5 but I could not do that
 like that of a mother’s belly

We need to identify the traditional poet as a creative thinker with a deep sense of concrete presence who enjoys the closest intimacy with the physical world. By means of his dynamic sense of form, he endeavours in all sorts of linguistic combinations to give social meanings to those visible images and spiritual presences that give context to his everyday life and thought. The *agamsa* is a thorny bush or plant, which grows in a highland and semi-highland areas of Oromiyaa. The wind cannot move the leaves of the *carissa edulis* “*agamsa*” trees because they are surrounded by thorns. The significance of comparing the leaves and a singer is to show how both are trapped; the latter by a woman and the former by the *agamsa*. The *agamsa* tree and a *woman* whom the love poet eulogizes are also compared in order to unveil their power of captivating. The phrase *akka garaa dhalaa* in simile suggests deep affection, which according to the poet is equivalent to mother’s love for her child.

Waaqni jawwee uumte
baga qoncee/quuncee uumte

↓

God, you have created python
 just as you have created the bark of a tree

kan jaalala uumte
baga obsa uumte

↓

you have created love
 just as you have created patience

The poem stresses the balance of nature on the one hand, the wisdom of maintaining this balance on the other. Love should be balanced by patience (*obsa*), and the serpent python, which produces deadly venom, should be balanced by bark (*quuncee*) of the tree which neutralizes that toxin. The bark of a certain tree is used as medicine against the deadly venom of snakes. Here, the oral poet attempts to unfold the social reality emphasizing the importance of self-control and soberness. If people are driven by emotional instinct and totally defeated by the tempting circumstances, they are likely to harm themselves. The oral poet also compares *jawwee* “python” with *jaalala* “love” to illuminate the way the human being can be harmed by the two if wisdom is

not applied. The qualities of this poem derive from its striking images and allusive styles. The trapping nature of love and the way people are consumed by this abstract feeling have been described by the poet as a python (*jawwee*) which produces deadly poison or venom; and according to him, patience and/or self-control could be a lasting solution to the lost love.

yoo xaafii haamatan

garagalchaa nyaatan

yoo gaarii jaalatan

↓

when you reap/harvest xaafi

you will eat pudding

if you love a pretty and gentle

gara/garaacha cabsa yaadan

5 *harka hafarsaa kaatan*

akka leecaati aadan

↓

you think of self-disparaging

5 you run by waving your hands madly

you roar like a lion

Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed; it marries exultation and horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and change; it subdues to union under its light yoke all irreconcilable things. It transmutes all that it touches, and every form of moving with radiance of its presence (Adams, 1992: 527).

The singer is totally consumed by the personal quality of a lady and eulogizes her for her great character. The expression *akka leencaa* “like a lion” in simile is an indication of filling with pride and announcing victory. The *xaafii* “teef,” which is a popular food in Oromiyaa and *gaarii* “elegant or pretty” are parallel comparisons, and the poet is trying to show a high standard quality of the two. The action of running, waving hands and roaring in combination depict a successful relation and a great delight connected with it. “*A poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened*” (Shelley in Daiches, 1969: 118-119). Like the nightingale, Oromo love poets had a habit of being alone and sing in the desolate pastoral field to entertain their own solitude with melodious sounds. In a situation where publicizing love is suppressed, the voice behind the curtain makes more sense.

maraataan kottee hin qabu
qarrifatu jahaatama
jaalataan onnee hin qabu
marrumaantu raafama



the mad has no feet/legs
 but he has sixty canines
 one who has fallen in love has no guts
 the entrails are churning

5 *farda bichee guddaa*
garaan naraafama
akkuma fiixee gurdaa



5 a horse having a chronic wound on its skin
 my heart is troubled/disturbed
 like the lower point of the girdle/skirt

This poem is about a person who is affected by romantic feeling. The singer has employed poetic terms such as *raafama* “churning,” *fiixee gurdaa* “point of a skirt” and *onnee hin qabu* “has no guts,” just to add artistic taste to the real events. He is delineating how he lost control of his emotions and the way he was left without mental instability. Here, love is described as a driving force of internal turbulence (*garaan naraafama*), and the implication is that it does not merely force you to act emotionally, but also make you thoughtless. The oral narrator has constructed the poem by using variety of rhetorical images and symbols. The term *maraataan*, literally “the mad” implies the irresistible emotional feelings of romantic love, which is portrayed by the folk singer as a snake without limb (*kottee hin qabu*), but has several canines (*qarrifatu jahaatama*) through which it produces a deadly venom. In lines one, four, five and six, the poet raises a sense of self-criticism in which he describes himself as a man without heart (*onnee hin qabu*); and this is further strengthened by his lack of stability (*raafama*). Most importantly, the way he gets collapsed is compared with an ailing restless horse which suffers from the itching skin disease (*farda bichee guda*).

The Work Song (Solidarity Song)-‘Weedduu Hujii’

Oral literature as human product must serve the interest of the people who produced it. Its effective function makes it possible for them to come in terms with the new direction of the world in which they find themselves. One of the major purposes of any form of literary work is that it offers pleasure or what we call mental solace. I say solace because it relieves us of various social pressures, stresses and tensions. As far as the physical condition of work is concerned, the co-

operative song (*daboo or jigii*) helps to create enthusiasm for the work and lift up the spirits so that the members will be relieved from boredom. The solidarity song of the Oromo is obviously intended to make the work of the day more entertaining and delightful. If a society is to exist as a unity, its members must share values, which define the distinctive feature of that society. The Oromo emphasize the importance of collective work because it is believed to enhance a deep sense of friendship, social solidarity and common purpose. Through co-operative work, people develop collective interests and feelings.

This part deals with a special type of verse narrative, which has a specific purpose on certain occasions. The Oromo are known for their solid social and cultural ties and corporate identities, which are fundamental to them. Besides the material and ideal interests characterized by corporate affiliations, most activities in the society are carried out on a highly organized co-operative level. In pastoral nomadic areas, like the Borana, Gujii and Karrayou, the temporary settlements (*godaansa*) are organized by the relatives, lineage, or by the neighbour group (*ollaa*). Likewise, among the agriculturist Oromo, ploughing farmland (*qotiinsa*) and harvesting (*dhawaa/haamaa*) are organized on a communal and co-operative basis. The popular Oromo saying, '*jiruun koo jiruu keeti, jiruun kee jiruu kooti,*' literally, "my existence is your existence and your existence is my existence" depicts the sharing of common concern and values. The perfect social order and acceptable cultural standards are maintained through egalitarian patterning. Thus, in a work song, forging a bond of intimacy, brotherhood and corporate identity underscores the role-relationship.

The work poem is an expression of people's collective character. It is sung during co-operative activities such as *aramaa* "weeding," *haamaa fi dhawaa* "harvesting and threshing," *mana ijaarsa* "building houses," *qotiinsa* "ploughing," etc., in rural areas where agricultural activities provide the special occasion for such work poetry. It is mainly aiming at creating enthusiasm for the work and to motivate members of the co-operative group. This is to say, it avoids monotonous labour and facilitates friendly competitive situation.

The rhythmic beat of work song not only keeps the verses together, but also creates a strong feeling of competition and excitement which help the members of the co-operative work keep their places and move forward together in balance without lagging behind or faltering. In this friendly way of mutual assistance and belonging together, any hard work will be easily done with excessive

speed; and the members of the ‘*daboo*’ or ‘*jigii*’ (co-operative or joint work) themselves enjoy the importance of the song for the mere fact that it adds both efficiency and delight. The *daboo* group will generally be more active and co-operative if the view of each member is taken seriously.

In the Oromo solidarity setting, there are singers who are also leaders of the *daboo* group, the *soloist* “*basweda*,” and the song is sung in the form of *chorus* “*qabjala*,”-the singer starts and then everyone joins in the chorus after each verse. The *daboo* occasion is quite interesting because it helps promote a sense of unity of purpose. It is an activity, which reinforces a sense of deep affection and understanding among the people. On top of creating a happy and friendly atmosphere, the co-operative members are served plenty of food and drink twice a day. Thus, the *daboo* occasion as a symbol of collective action is also euphoric period in rural Oromiyaa.

Basweda: gaafa iyyaa, oo’hoo

Qabjala: iyya fardaa fi lafoo ()*

Basweda: malkaan tiyyaa, oo’hoo

Qabjala: iyya fardaa fi lafoo ()*

Basweda: ani warroomaaf sihilee hin warwaattaa yaboo

↓

Soloist: oh, on the day of a calling for campaigning

Chorus: a call for campaigning on horses’ back and on foot (*)

Soloist: oh, the riverbed is mine

Chorus: a call for campaigning on horses’ back and on foot (*)

Soloist: you are my relative, and so I am less severe with you; you will plead for
mercy, please

Basweda: Kurru Kurruu, oo’hoo

Qabjala: iyya fardaa fi lafoo ()*

Basweda: murruu hin turruu, oo’hoo

Qabjala: iyya fardaa fi lafoo ()*

Basweda: ani warroomaaf sihilee hin warwaattaa yaboo



Soloist: oh, Kurru Kurruu

Chorus: a call for campaigning on horses' back and on foot (*)

Soloist: if we cut fast, we will not waste more time

Chorus: a call for campaigning on horses' back and on foot (*)

Soloist: you are my relative, and so I am less severe with you; you will
plead for mercy, please

The repetition of certain phrases or words in Oromo solidarity song is meant for the intensification of meanings and emphasizing the core genres which reinforce their efforts. The choral singing in response to the protagonist figure (character) is common in the performance of such song and it appears to be a prominent feature of the solidarity poem throughout Oromiyaa. The choral response technique aims at motivating the audience and makes them participate more actively in the work. "Emotions vary according to seasonal and atmospheric changes since all phenomena are mutually resonant. Things call to one another....Poetry is a response to this call and is seen as a literal reaction to the external world of which he is an integral part" (Koelb, 1988: 170). A poetry is a natural utterance having a timeless quality. It does not merely occur in a particular circumstance, but must be understood as being a response to that very circumstance. This means, in a critical literary discourse, like poetry, the social and historical context always encompasses the narrative in a particular occasion and the impulse of the poet here is to secure its permanent existence. He/she does this by locating appropriately the image within the putative original.

The *daboo* poetry is part of Oromo co-operative movement of the *Gadaa* tradition, which is viewed as the centre of perfect social harmony. It is the basis for solving social and economic problems and facilitator of national feelings and democratic outlook. In the above poems (1-2), the recurring humorous expressions, *iyya fardaa fi lafoo, ani warrummaaf sihilee*, and *hin warwaattaa yaboo* are chanted to create competitive condition and show the necessity of co-operation in times of need on the one hand, to warn those members of the *daboo* group (members of the co-operative) who falter on the other. If a member of the *daboo* fails to demonstrate genuine endeavour and active participation in the work of others, obviously, he will not receive their generous help at the time when he organizes his *daboo* or *jigii*. Words such as *iyya* "call for/cry," *fardaa* "horse" and *lafoo* "on foot" in the context of these poems reveal the urgent call for co-operative action.

In times of adversity as for instance during war and natural disaster, the Oromo have a *unifying image* known as *iyya fardaa fi lafoo*, meaning an emergency call for national solidarity. The folk artist reminds us of this historic event, the time when the people respond to the call either by riding on horses' back or by travelling on their foot. During the ritual festivals such as the *Thanksgiving Ceremonies*, large public gathering usually takes place at the *malkaa* (riverbed), which according to the tradition allegorizes blessing, success, prosperity and unity. It is, therefore, on the basis of its cultural prominence that the narrator has mentioned this central image which signifies collective success. The poetic expression *gaafa iyyaa* (poem one, line one) is alluded to the *daboo* day, which is a crucial day for the farmer; and the poet has used *malkaa tiyya*-“the riverbed is mine” (poem one, line three), shows the collective success, common good and the fruitful effort the members of the co-operative share.

Basweda: eegee, eegee leenca magaalaa, reeboo'hoo

Qabjala: reeboo'hoo

Basweda: eegii, eegii, darbadhu bonjaan hin waraanaa



Soloist: the tail, the tail of the brown lion, chase and catch

Chorus: chase and catch

Soloist: be watchful, be watchful in throwing so that the spear will hit the target

Basweda: abbaa duulaa, reeboo'hoo

Qabjala: reeboo'hoo

Basweda: eegee, eegee leenca magaalaa, reeboo'hoo

Qabjala: reeboo'hoo

Basweda: eegii, eegii darbadhu bonjaan hin waraanaa



Soloist: the leader of the campaign, chase and catch

Chorus: chase and catch

Soloist: the tail, the tail of the brown lion, chase and catch

Chorus: chase and catch

Soloist: be watchful, be watchful in throwing so that the spear will hit the target

Basweda: guchii Nuuraa, reeboo'hoo

Qabjala: reeboo'hoo

Basweda: eegii, eegii darbadhu bonjaan hin waraanaa



Soloist: the ostrich of Nuuraa, chase and catch

Chorus: chase and catch

Soloist: be watchful, be watchful in throwing so that the spear will heat the target

In poems 3-5, *leenca magaala* “brown lion” is a clarifying allusion that represents the dried crop or grain which is an interesting challenge of the day; whereas the term *reeboo’hoo* “chase and catch” stands for the movement and action of cutting. The recurring word *reeboo* is derived from the word *reebuu* (to attack or assault). The allusive language *eegee* “the tail” is a representation of a long stalk of the crops or grains. The statement, *eegii darbadhu bonjaan hin waraanaa* is used to emphasize the effort to be made for pacing up with the time and the accuracy of achieving the intended objective. It is an attempt to encourage the members of the cop-operative group to work hard in order to achieve the intended common purpose. The word *bonjaa*, literally “a big spear” as illustrating allusion is to refer to a sickle, which the *daboo* group uses as a weapon for cutting crops or weeds. The use of the indirect reference *guchii Nuuraa* “the ostrich of Nuuraa” is an attempt to describe the protagonist actor of the day.

The work song as a symbol of oneness is functionally different from other oral narratives in terms of relationship to the work they accompany. The joint singing in the *daboo* strengthens the unity of the members and organizes their collective work so as to encourage them feel and work as active members of the group rather than as a solitude individual.

The function of the recurring expressions, *iyya fardaa fi lafoo*, literally “a call for campaigning on horses’ back and on foot” and *reeboo’oo* “chase and catch,” is mainly to encourage collaboration, energize people to work hard and keep them fresh so that they move faster with strong feeling of excitement and interest. This is how the Oromo work song as part of the common good of the society plays an important role in creating pleasure and moral incentives for co-operative activities.

A co-operative activity is essential to effective community work. It facilitates more socialization process, harmonious relations, and promotes the spirit of belonging together to produce collective benefits. The same kind of mood of recreational and light-hearted enjoyment is evident in many Oromo work songs. Through co-operative endeavour people share common values,

acquire unshakeable social life, learn how to accept others and develop a sense of genuine nationhood.

The Satirical and Humorous Poem ‘Suunsuma’

The Social Value of Satire

A satire may be defined as a literary composition in verse or prose in which corrupt institutions, human follies and vices are held up to criticism, scorn, derision or ridicule (see literary terminology). It conveys physical and social reality. The satirist is a man who seeks to be in the world of freedom and is sensitive to the unnatural human communication. He/she is often driven to draw attention to any departure or deviation from what he/she believes to be the truth and right. Therefore, the revolutionary satirist wants to maintain balance, correct errors, and aims at persuading his/her audience to examine human frailty, face the ugly facts and look beneath the surface of things. Human development rarely occurs if evil is taken good-humoured and if the destructive actions of the degenerated fools are encouraged. As Sutherland (1962: 19) has pointed out, the satirist, like the magistrate on the bench [chair] is there to administer justice, uphold the order of a civilized community and bring people to the test of certain ethical, intellectual, social and cultural standards.

In his essay, “African Literature, Culture and Politics” (1972), Ngugi Wa Thiongo has specified the object of satire to be the failure of the society, and showed the way the deviation from African norms resulted in social and cultural aberration. He intends to arouse in readers a sense of moral indignation at the violation of African values. Wole Soyinka’s novel, *The Interpreters* (1972), satirizes Post-Independence corruption in Nigeria, with reference to the intellectual section of the society who totally failed in their aims. In the description of the chaotic scene of the Night Club, he has summarized the dark and hopeless world where people not only lost the direction of life, but also were unable to think sensibly. The Night Club, which represents wilderness and disorder, is an epitome of the new image of Nigerian society wherein intelligence, honesty and noble ideas are frustrated; but incompetence and phoney behaviours are rewarded. The portrayal of the demolition

of one of the slums of the Night Club building and the expression that the skyline has lost tooth from its long-rooted gums are satirical explanation for the falling apart of the decayed system. The so-called prominent figures in the society, like Professor Oguazor, Dr. Fasseyi, Sir Derinola, Winsala, Egboe, Sagoe, and others, who appear to be the driving force and the centre of new hope are now found to be the most depraved section of the society. Soyinka's subtle description of the characters is to make the readers aware of the crises of African independence in which great expectations are denied. Professor Oguazor's affected manners, the professional deficit of Sir Derinola and Winsala, the phoney behaviour of Dr Fasseyi are all contrasted with the keen intellect of a diligent engineer, Sekoni, who was driven to frustration and death because of his professional quality and genuine effort. Chinua Achebe's novel, *A Man of the people* (1966), Francis Imbuga's *Betrayal in the City* (1976), and Ngugi's novel, *Devil on the Cross* (1982) are satirical literatures which expose the corrupt practices, the despotic nature and anti-popular character of political power in Africa after the 1960s independence.

Many satirists, both literate and illiterate, use satire as a vehicle for airing their grievances and resentments. For instance, in his book *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) Jonathan Swift presents the political scene in England in the 1700s, with special reference to the giant government of the King of Brobdingnag. In his reduction technique, Swift has employed a dilute satire to diminish the size of Lilliputian people to one-twelfth of Gulliver's height. This physical belittling or reduced image of the people has been contrasted with their abilities to deceive. In his veiled satire, he takes us to the social depreciation in which he makes us aware of the way the pledges, high expectations, together with the original institutions have turned out to be the most scandalous corruption into which the society has fallen. He has trenchantly satirized the misuse of institutions, the abuse of trust and justice, the way temperance has been ignored, the absence of moral values, the unfairness of class-oriented education in England and the depraved way of getting badges (rewards) and jobs. The unfairness of the institutions has been described by employing the central image such as leaping over the sticks or creeping under them; an expression which may be equivalent to playing the acrobatic game to win corruption licence.

In a work of literature, especially folklore, the satirist narrators have at their disposal a great variety of literary devices, which they use in dramatic incidents, factual or fictional experiences, character sketches and anecdotes. These devices are used in any of the conveniences of the satirists

to make the object of verbal assault more powerful and ridiculous. Both in pre-literate period and contemporary Oromo situation, the power of personal satire is widely appreciated and accepted by the society due to its social prominence. It is feared more than any humanly inflicted retribution because it is one of the major tools for criticism in which public opinion is freely expressed either to provoke genuine laughter or correct malice, vices; to comment on the decline in moral and personal qualities, social aberrations and political incorrectness. “One creative response the satirist makes to social and legal pressures is to try by rhetorical means to approach his target indirectly....It is a nice complication that the devices that render acceptable to society, at the same time sharpens its point” (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1973/74: 272). Any work of literature is the product of a living society and hence the satirist narrator needs to have the audience that shares his enthusiasm and is committed to certain intellectual and moral standards that validate his struggle against social deviation and corrupt practices. In *suunsuma* poetry, the literary artist usually conveys moral instruction by means of ridicule, mockery and humour or laughter. In other words, the *suunsuma* narrative generally deals with the harshest and ugly realities in the society and it increases public awareness of social and political problems that need careful attention. It often accompanies festivals when customary and social restraints are disregarded or abandoned, distinctions of ranks and social status are set aside, and any institution and dignitaries are subject to mockery, raillery, burlesque or ridicule. Since most of the satirists are interested in political and social deviation, a satire must have a measure of freedom. According to Oromo cultural standards, an extra-ordinary freedom of satirical and humorous utterances are allowed on such occasions; and the satirists become free from social inhibition and suppression.

The greatest Oromo satire has been produced during the *Gadaa* period of *cultural and literary renaissance*; the time when ethical and moral norms have had great influence and powerfully appealed to the public sense of justice. The *suunsuma* is thus a popular occasion for commenting on people’s personality and it involves both praising and subtle disparaging remarks.

buura gudda gamaa irra buutee qaanqeen
gaafa dilii Baqqalaa Jaldo gatee gaangee
guddaa guddaa dheessu, si ajabee waankee



the big jungle/forest over-yonder was consumed by fire
 the very battle day with Bekele, Jaldo lost his mule
 seeing the big being chased by another big, I tested you who you are

The *suunsuma* poetry is a historical poem, which primarily meant for entertainment and is subject to the dynamics of facts. It raises many important issues in the society, and discusses human follies and shortcomings. The satirist poet describes the whole episodes or scenes and characters in the form of entertainment or relaxation; and the audience often enjoys the poem without any tension and strain. The genres of *suunsuma* involve various literary and linguistic devices; and these together with the careful choice of words and phrases give the poems great artistic merit.

The constituents, *gaangee* “mule” and *waankee* “about you” have similar metrical ending (-ee). The allusive term *buura guddaa* “big forest” is to mean for the prominent figure in the society; namely *Jaldo* of the Oromo. The *qaanqee* “spark of fire” in this particular situation implies a symbol of battle and the damage it has brought to the prerogative position of the indigenous authority. There is an analogy between the two contrasting segments-the *qaanqee* “sparks” and the *buura* “jungle/forest,” which represent Bekele and Jaldo respectively. The oral poet attempts to depict how one disrupts the other. He also brings to light the way the reputation of the reverent local chief, Mr. Jaldo, has been terribly damaged because of his incapability to fight. The two antagonistic characters, *Jaldo* and *Bekele* are also used in the form of imagery so as to display their defined social position and the leading role they play in their societies. The verbal poet also scoffs at the humiliating act of the loser by using a sense of ironic humour; and this is shown when Bekele chases Jaldo, whom the society sees as a hero figure. Mr. Jaldo, who demonstrated cowardly behaviour, has been belittled and sharply satirized.

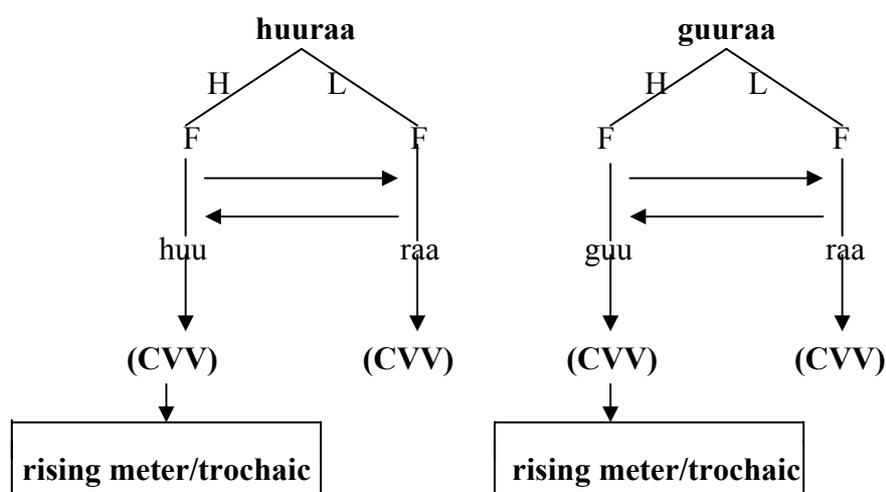
birbissallee cirtanii lafa jiraa tuulaa
jabaa jabaa ufgodhaa abbuu hennaa huuraa
ibidillee hin baasuu amma duddaan/dugdaan guuraa



you have to collect and heap the *podocarpus* tree that you have chopped down
 he pretends to be brave when he is in the forest/bush
 you cannot even manage finishing it by burning; and now carry it on your back

The poet scoffs at the society which moves from proud self-confidence down to the burden of the past and scandalous emptiness. He seems to have been exasperated with lack of a mature understanding of the danger. In human relation where deviation from the accepted standards occurs, satire primarily functions as a social weapon against the violation of the established order, principles and customs. The immense power it has in the society is frightful because it can severely affect the public image of an individual or groups and the delicate lifelines that bind man to the social body without which human being can conceive of no life for itself. The functions of satire differ from place to place and from society to society, depending upon the value a society assigns to this literary device. If the emphasis of a satire is on the correction of the wrong, then, it has revolutionary effect; if not, the result will be the reversal of reality because the satire that causes unnecessary pain never actually brings benefits to people. The *suunsuma* satirical narrative has diverse esoteric functions in the society and is used as a means of enforcing cultural, social and political conformity.

In a literal sense of the word, *birbirs*, “podocarpus tree,” and *cirtanii* “chopped” reveal the destruction of nature, whose outcome is environmental problems. The metaphoric expression *amma duddaan guuraa* “now carry it on your back” shows the way the people allow themselves to be in unmanageable trouble—the burden they have brought to themselves and the deep crisis they have faced due to negligence. In terms human conflict, the metaphorical term *ibidda* (fire) is a symbol of an enemy that devours the society and its assets. In lines two and three, the oral satirist comments on the society who appears to be brave but unable to demonstrate courage in the face of danger. He seems to have been filled with an overwhelming sense of outrage for what has happened. *Huuraa* “forest/bush” and *guuraa* “collect” are not only rhyming, but also composed of rising meter. In both lexical categories, the heavy or stressed syllables (**huu-**) and (**guu-**) occur at the beginning of the words and are followed by the light (unstressed) ones. In terms of metrical analysis or scansion of verse, such syllables may be classified as *rising meter*; and at the same time the two segments are *trochaic* on the level of standard feet.



guddaan kuttee hin dubbatuu nama araarsa malee
galli gadoo hin baasuu simakkaraarsa malee

↓

a wise person does not utter polarizing language, rather, he makes peace

tit for tat/eye for an eye does not bring an end to revenge, rather it troubles you more

The poem emphasizes the importance of forbearance and rebukes the feudal overlords who often call for violence and hatred. The expressions...*kuttee hin dubbatuu* and *galli gadoo hin baasuu*...are warning against the authoritarian rulers whose main purpose was to encourage division, the use of force and strife rather than tolerance, rational argument, reconciliation and compromises.

Throughout human history, good-humoured ridicule or raillery has been the vehicle for commenting on the absurdities of the world. From time immemorial, the human race incessantly engaged in resolving the problems created by man himself; but every problem actually leads to the new ones as men carry on rewarding the terrible mistakes of the distant past. The ever increasing of pervasive hierarchical relations means more tensions and unbridgeable social and political gap between peoples. The human beings are both compassionate and aggressive to their own kind. In an established hierarchy and order, it is evident to see social, economic and political disparities in which frictions, resentments and frustrations constantly occur due to the unfair treatment resulted from the prevalence of inequalities between social groups. In short, the complexity of modernity would seem no much less problematic than the troubled past because the nightmarish history of the

uncivilized world is still far from over in many parts of the globe. The expression of contempt and the mocking laugh are obviously rooted in such threat displays. In most cases, the satirical impulse is linked with these kinds of unhealthy human interactions which need correction not by direct attack, but by the use of effective satirical and intellectual language that help humiliate the irrational thinkers.

Both the traditional and contemporary literary satirists are looking at the absurdity of life in the course of the changing scenes. They are keenly exploring every moment of human history and responding to the unbalanced world with a mixture of entertainment, laughter and indignation. The Oromo satirical and humorous poems must be viewed from this general human condition. It has its origin in a state of mind, which is critical, usually an irritation with human weaknesses, follies and wickedness.

Oromo Folklore Genres Classified: The Feature Matrix of Literary Forms

In the survey of the literary forms, I have tried to pinpoint their peculiar and universal characters with special reference to the socio-cultural and historical factors that have contributed to their artistic value. Now, I shall put the whole corpus together so that the readers can sense the differences and similarities of the folklore genres within the given parameters. This means each branch of oral literature can be described by specifying the features, which they are composed. The distinctive feature composition or matrix can be regarded as folklore property or ingredient that can be used to classify, compare and identify literary qualities. In the table below, I have listed the criteria by which the genres are characterized and valued within a wider system of cultural discourse. A segment can be represented as a column of features or what we call in linguistics ‘feature matrix;’ each with a “value” or “coefficient” and is identified by “plus” (+) or “minus” (-) for a given feature. The two mathematical symbols stand for ‘having’ or ‘not having’ one of the values the society has assigned to each folklore genre.

Literary Forms/ Folklore Genres	Mode of Presentation				Function			
	Monologue	Interpersonal	Imaginative	Factual/ Real	Entertaining	Instructive	Didactic	Satirical/ Humorous
Durduri- Fable/ Trickster Tale	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Mammaaka- Proverb	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	-
Weedduu Jaalalaa- Love Lyric	+	-	+	+	±	±	-	±
Weedduu Hujii- Work Song	-	+	+	+	±	±	-	-
Suunsuma- Satirical/ Humorous Poem	-	+	+	+	-	+	±	+
Geerarsa- Heroic Tale	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	±

Explanation for the Table

Monologue → a part of a dramatic entertainment in a work of art in which a single actor or narrator speaks alone (see love lyrics).

Interpersonal → existing or occurring between people. In oral literature, it refers to narrator-audience relationship or interaction.

Instructive → in literary context, the term instructive shows conveying knowledge, experience or information, which is most useful in the transformation of society (see proverbs and fables).

Didactic → is a literature designed to teach theoretical or practical knowledge. It embodies imaginative or fictional form, together with a moral, religious or philosophical doctrine or theme.

Humorous → having or showing the faculty of humour. Humorous literature gives amusing and entertaining account to evoke a sense of delight (see literary terminology).

Within the broader concept of humanistic properties, human achievements independently vary according to the nature of the representative literary medium in which the desired achievements are embodied or through which they affect the society-that is, the quality of the philosophic, scientific or moral ideas which they imply. We have already seen that the study of oral tradition demands the careful investigation of the nature of artistic structures into which the literary work is built, together with the peculiarities of historical events in which that particular verbal narrative is emerged.

Poetry is the product of the imaginative mind that can explore the dynamics of its time. If we want to appreciate folklore narrative as a poetic work, we need the inquiry into the specific social climates, probe into contextual factors and the necessary constituent elements (syntactic, semantic and prosodic relations) that can help us to achieve the possible kinds of poetic wholes. The main purpose of folklore criticism is thus to identify or discriminate the different conditions of success or failure implied by the nature of each text of poetry.

7. Heroic Literature as Social Protest: A Historical and Cultural Analysis of the Genre of Geerarsa

Generalities about the Heroic Epic

In their attempts to classify mankind in different types, the early Greek philosophers gave a special place to the men and women who lived for action of bravery and they gained a wider distinction from that remarkable performance. They believed that heroism is an important element in the human soul. Similar notions are shared by many nations of our time because the life of heroic action is always superior within the context of the pursuit of human dignity. We do not reward people because of being warriors, but because of the just cause they stand for. This is what we call the gratification of the senses. A particular heroic event leaves everlasting memories and every generation looks back to epic poetry with delight and admiration. Homer made it clear that heroic achievement was superior in his time. The critical philosopher, Heraclitus, sees the heroic age as impressive and a pursuit of great reputation. Aristotle viewed honour not merely as a reward given for the noblest deeds, but as one of the greatest human virtues, as well.

The heroic narrative is regarded by many societies as something which is immortal glory among mortals. A literary epic is inspired by the belief that the immortal heroic action and the honour the heroes and heroines bring to their fellow men are caused by a real superiority in natural endowments. He who died for the dignity of his people is sometimes more admirable than he who is alive. Bowra (1952: 4) argues that “heroes are honoured because they have made a final effort in courage and endurance, and no more can be asked of them.” The heroic poetry is essentially a historical narrative and has always been remarkable for its national character. It usually creates its own world of imagination in which men and women of principles celebrate the greatest historic mission that has been achieved. There is nothing greater in human history than the dignity achieved through risking life; and such a story must be told and retold so that it can appeal to us in its own

right. The heroic epic cannot exist unless we believe that human beings are in themselves sufficient objects of interest and that their main claim is the pursuit of honour through heroism and risk. In a country where the notion of patriotic pride is either suppressed or not to be found as part of cultural prestige, protest narrative can hardly flourish and/or make sense to the succeeding generations.

In the context of the demand for the independent existence of societies, the heroic epic is associated with the rallying cry of the patriotic generations and has marked the growth of national pride. The themes of heroism and human freedom are closely related. “A hero is a man of distinguished courage or ability; admired for his brave deeds and noble qualities” (*Websters’ Encyclopedic Dictionary*, 1996: 665). The protagonist hero figure in war times is a person worthy of veneration, regarded as a model or ideal, and whose life exhibits valour and fortitude. The heroic epic has a long history in human societies and it goes parallel with the survival of mankind. For instance, the period of popular heroic epic in Europe goes back to ‘Trojan War’ of 1250 B.C, the time when a conflict between Greece and Troy made famous by Homer’s *Iliad*. Paris, son of Priam of Troy, carried off Helen the wife of Menelaus of Sparta, and took her to Troy. The Greeks led by Agamemnon, Menelaus, Odysseus, Achilles and other heroes, swore to take revenge and besieged Troy. In apparent defeat, they pretended to sail away, leaving a huge “Wooden Horse” (‘Trojan-Horse’) outside the city, with Greek soldiers concealed inside (in its belly). The Trojans took it into the city, and that night the soldiers opened the city gates to the Greek army. Most of the Trojans were killed, the city burnt, and the kidnapped Helen reclaimed. The centrality of this narrative is that heroism plays a crucial role in the making of human history. In Greek, this heroic achievement has continued to be one of the popular masterpiece narratives in European traditional literature. There are many dramatic heroic performances of this kind throughout the globe. Both the traditional and the modern societies continue to celebrate the remarkable achievements of their heroes because of their instructive appeal and historical significance. Most of the colourful events in human history have been built by the immense contributions of the brave men and women of our world and their valuable works must remain with us throughout generations. *Geerarsi sagalee saba jannaati, jannummaan hundee jireenya biyyaati*. Literally, ‘the *geerarsa* is the voice of a hero society, and heroism is the basis for national existence.’ Like the *Iliad* of Homer, the *geerarsa* is highly valued and remains a compelling subject in the history of the Oromo because of its educative role.

“In its standard sense, the term epic or heroic poem is applied to a work that meets at least the following criteria: it is a long narrative poem on a serious subject, told in a formal and elevated style, and centred on a heroic...figure on whose tribe, a nation or in the instance of John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, the human race” (Abrams, 1993: 53). The epic poetry is thus a long poem, especially a poetic composition about the actions of great men and women in human history. In epic literature, a series of great achievements or events is narrated continuously at length in elevated language. Abrams’s research shows that the traditional epics were written versions of what had originally been oral poems about a tribal or national hero that emerged in the heroic age (warlike age). For instance, in European literary history, among these traditional heroic epics are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* that the Greeks ascribed to *Homer*, the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*, and the 12th century French epic, the *Chanson de Roland*. The oral epic is a war time narrative which reflects the trying circumstance of a particular period and how those who are tested by that circumstance proudly describe the violent chain of events in a dramatic form.

The heroic poets as critical observers of every passing episode make us aware of the major critical issues of war times and the pressures to which poets as critics have to respond. In the analysis of the *geerarsa*, we have to begin with the broad idea of heroic literature by raising some of the intriguing questions to be answered during the crucial moments in human history. Oral literary epic aims at moving its readers or listeners to wonder and emotion. It is a subject dedicated to nobler actions, narrated in the loftiest style, with an intention of moving the mind toward the concreteness of the events. In order to grasp the reality of our time, we need to learn through examples, one that can incite us to good works by showing the reward of excellence. In reading and writing the *geerarsa*, as we do in other heroic narratives, we have to set before ourselves an excellent purpose; and that purpose is to help the next generations by showing them the exemplary human deeds. Every action is performed with some reflection and choice, and the epic literature calls for moral courage and thought, which the Oromo call *abbaan falmatu (iyyatu) malee ollaan namaaf hin birmatu*; meaning a neighbour will not be on your side unless you fight for your dignity.

The Characteristics of Geerarsa

Several forces converged to create the outpouring of Oromo poetry, especially the *geerarsa* genre, which plays a significant role in the cultural tradition of the society. The political and social upheaval brought about by activists and non-violent movements for *Civil Rights*, like *Macha-Tuulama*, ushered in dramatic development in protest literature. The term *geerarsa*, which probably is equivalent to ‘defiant metaphor,’ refers to telling or narrating heroic story. In Oromo history, the *geerarsa* narrative is one of the defiant responses to eviction and a call for resistance against master-tenant relations created by the *gabbaar* (serfdom) system of 1880s-1970s; the time when the absence of alternatives was compounded by offering only tragic possibilities for the subaltern group. In the traditional setting of the Oromo, the *geerarsa* poetry is associated with the image of social prestige; and its producer, who is seen as a custodian of national heritage, enjoys the greatest reputation and high social status.

As in the rest of Africa, anti-feudal domination and anti-colonial influence in East Africa has tended to fall within two categories: the resistance movements based on cultural nationalism on the one hand, violent rebellion against colonial rule and the native autocrats on the other. For instance, the 1880s-1970s Rebellion against the *gabbaar* system in Ethiopian empire, the 1900s Maji Maji uprising in Tanzania and the 1950s Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya are remembered not merely as forces against marginalization, but also followed by the flourishing of protest literatures, both oral and written. The development of the *geerarsa*, as we shall see later in the subsequent parts, is therefore, closely connected with the growth of the renaissance and *Black Consciousness movements* of the 1800s-1980s in the African continent. The revival of indigenous literature or what is known as black arts or aesthetics of the 1960s-1980s in East Africa reinforced dramatic performances, particularly heroic epics. From the beginning of the oral form of literature to the present, the *geerarsa* narrative continued to be powerful as it increasingly addressed the issue of humanity and the restoration of dignity. As a form of artistic expression, it has the potential to play the important role in Oromo resistance history, especially in a political landscape where civil liberties and many other forms of expressions are proscribed or curtailed.

The need to challenge the conditions confronting the Oromo has strongly influenced the *geerarsa* during the catastrophic events of 1886, 1887 and 1960. It may be argued that by its very existence as literary form, Oromo heroic literature, which is a response to repressive demands and the denial of post-conquest civil rights, historically represents a rejection of the violent system of ruling. Several themes have dominated the *geerarsa* poetry from its beginnings. Often drawing on the dominant values and ideals, the epic poets have focused on the issue of survival. They aimed at criticizing the absurdity of the nationalist leaders and have taken ironic stance toward aggressiveness and the absence of forbearance, contrasting political rhetoric of totalitarian regimes with the realities of indirect slavery or serfdom. Having roots in African tradition, satirical allusions had been the key elements in the Oromo protest literature through much of its long history.

The “Eviction Periods” (1872-1974) in the feudal empire, which created the condition for the growing of cultural activists and rebellion movements against land expropriation of the *gabbaar* period, which will be discussed in detail later under Macha-Tuulama and Arsii protest narratives, the *geerarsa* remained popular instruments of resistance until the late 1960s. It achieved new levels of importance because of its quality of energizing people’s solidarity. The late 1890s in Oromo history also saw the development of substantial body of heroic epic in which the poets contrasted the devastating effects of transferring richest farmlands to the warlords and feudal gentry with the freedom and prosperous life of the pre-conquest. In terms of human predicament, the emergence of Oromo epic poetry may be compared with the new vision embodied in *Harlem Renaissance* of Langston Hughes (1921) and many others, when great self-awareness, high cultural ambitions and literary movements brought about the new role of protest literature in the African American community. The Oromo epic narrators set in motion a poetic tradition characterized by furious pursuit of freedom from the repressive feudal system in all its dimensions, as well as the cultivation of heroic visions authenticated by its own distinctive literary forms and perpetual communal values. In short, the idea of human dignity marks Oromo oral literary consciousness from the early period of serfdom (1872) to *the Mutilation of Hands and Breasts* (1886), *Massacre at Calanqoo* (1887) and popular uprising of the 1960s and 1970s. During these periods of turbulence, the epic poets were popular critics of social values as they envisioned a world of justice. Furthermore, as we shall see later in the documented poems, the *geerarsa* of these particular historic moments reflected a

widespread disenchantment with the values of the class in power and continued to embrace the egalitarian notions of discouraging wars and violence. In the context of the socio-political and economic imbalance of the 19th century, the epic poets rallied the society in the cause of freedom; and dating back to the early 1870s to the present, their oral materials reflect Oromo concerns in a larger cultural and national identity. As I have mentioned earlier, the verbal artists tend to employ the heroic epic as verbal weapon against the status-quo and created a body of protest narrative that grew out of Civil Rights movements and folk roots. The cultural and political movements of the 1960s and 1970s not only changed the way Oromo thought about their socio-political legitimization but also planted the seeds for new trends in the exploration of literary possibilities and aesthetic tradition.

One of the major common characteristics of the *geerarsa* has been its response to specific historical events, as for instance, the years between the 1870s and 1890s: series of wars to impose feudal system, great famine (*rukkisa*), conquest, *Harkaa fi Harma Muraa Aanolee* (the Mutilation of Hands and Breasts at Aanolee), *Calii Calanqoo* (Massacre at Calanqoo) and land confiscation; the 1900s and 1970s: the partition of rich Oromo land among wealthy landlords (warlords), the imposition of serfdom (*gabbaar*), famine, and the eviction of rural population under the empire; the 1970s and 1990s: communism, the destructive settlement programme (*safaraa/yemandar misrataa*), wars, famine, unrest and the scenes of carnage. Most significant was the Arsii freedom movement of the 1880s-1890s led by Leenjiso Diigaa (see Abbas 1990), Rayya-Azabo revolt of 1928-1930 in Wollo, which involved Ras Gugsa Walee, the Wallagga independent movement of 1936, the 1960s-1970s Arsii-Bale and Macha-Tuulama patriotic movements, led by General Waaqoo Guutuu and General Taddese Birru respectively, the rebellion resistance in the east- Hararge (1970s-1990s) led by Jaarraa Abbaa Gadaa, reinforced protest literature in Oromiyaa. Altogether, waves of protests and uprisings of several decades for land reform and change in Oromiyaa contributed immensely to an atmosphere of creating new emerging forces of writers and scholars who insisted on the fundamental notions related to democracy: cultural identity, literary revival, equality of religion and socio-economic empowerment. The protest narratives of these periods in Oromiyaa were mainly about the complex issues related to the burdened generations of the serfdom era- the evil aspects of wars, ruthless exploitation, man-made economic difficulties, the devastating effects of feudal empire and the necessity of changing the inequitable socio-economic structure.

The main features of the *geerarsa* genres are patriotism and successful military careers which include celebration of the whole scenes or episodes, both the bright day of victory and the tragic laments drawn from different trying circumstances and horrendous war experiences. When battles are lost and won, the world is for the next patriots, and the young generation must take responsibilities to transmit the worthwhile achievements of the past heroes. The *geerarsa* can be read or understood as a territorial history of post-conquest Oromiyaa in which it is set and as forward-looking reassurance. The issue of human right, the making of history, the tragedy of totalitarian powers and conquest, the carnage, and the questions of conflict resolution are at the heart of this epic poetry. In thematic terms, the Oromo protest narrative reminds us of the sordid past, takes us to the present, calling for a proper human relations and the hope of the future.

The construction of a distant past, whether global or national, depends upon a method that relies on historical references to capture a vivid account of human achievements over centuries, which are handed down from generations to generations in the form of oral literature. In reading past events, we read the minds of people who lived centuries ago, and this kind of reading becomes productive if the oral material is perceived as part of a historical process. In a historical perspective, the *geerarsa* can be seen within the context of the background for the emergence of postcolonial literature in Africa, how it was perceived in the imperial political setting, the way it depicts the events and attitudes of its period, and the relevance of those events to the new order of our times. The traditional Oromo artists need appreciation for their ability of pressing a sense of the real and concrete presences. By means of his dynamic sense of creativity, they endeavour in all forms of combinations to make events or scenes more meaningful and lively. In their rhetorical techniques, the oral narrators often use an elevated and lofty style so as to exert a strong influence; and listening to the *geerarsa* heroic performance leads the audience to a moving emotion and deep feelings. These feelings uplift the spirit of the listeners, filling them with unexpected astonishment and pride, arousing profound and noble thoughts and suggesting the prominence of self-empowerment.

In traditional societies where the vehicle for communication is mainly verbal, the central events of human life are invested with elaborated ceremonies by which the social organism empowers itself so as to make a meaningful journey that leads to success. In African tradition, the heroes are usually portrayed in superhuman terms. The heroic poets teach us that the days of brave

men and women will never get old; and therefore, celebrating heroic events with extraordinary personalities is one way of giving their tales a unique appeal as well as ensuring that the great deeds of the past remain alive in the memories of the succeeding generations. The illustrious heroes Martin Luther King Jr, Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Waaqoo Guutu, Taddese Birru, to mention only a few, have become national symbols, consecrated with monuments and hagiographic literature. In the history of mankind, the heroes function in the national culture as standard-bearers of the values and goals of their nations. The Oromo heroic literature depicts actions that the oral poet recognizes as necessary and true. In this respect, the language of the patriotic narrator is almost similar to the language of the founding philosophers in that it infers universal facts from the observation of events and the relations of characters in a particular critical moment in the history of the nation. The *geerarsa* narrative as the reflection of cultural tradition of the heroic age of the *Gadaa* aims at reinforcing self-assurance and social stability. It goes parallel with national history in celebrating a stunning victory of culture heroes of the country. This part discusses how oral tradition serves as a record of history and a timeless evidence of historic events to which the technique of New Criticism is to be applied.

“The man must in this case be praised through his ancestors. Their greatness must be established, and he must be shown to be their worthy descendant” (Adams, 1992: 510). Almost every man has a natural desire to empower himself, engross as much prestige and reputation as possible so as to build a popular image that would enable him/her to win the social and political fame. The successful and influential individual moves the nation and gains widespread popular supports, the triumphant fighter is not only decorated for his/her valour, but is likely to win political power as well. That is why the oral poet often tries to find the appropriate audience that can disseminate the fame of his achievements and the extent of his possessions. Most heroic tales look back to what is known as the *heroic age* when the patriotic heroes emerged to withstand the hostile environments and the domination of nations by the rising despots. Throughout the globe, the heroic age varies in different indigenous literatures. For instance, Homer’s epics of the 8th century, was about the war with Troy. The heroic poetry of German, Scandinavian and English peoples mainly deals with the great German migrations of the 4th-6th century A.D. The Oromo heroic epic deals with hunting and imperial conquest; and this ranges from the ancient pastoral and hunting period to

the late 20th century; the latter marked by marginalization and resistance. In the heroic-age society, the main function of the epic poem in Africa appears to be to stir the spirit of hero nationals to actions, lauding their exploits and those of their illustrious ancestors by assuring a long and glorious recollection of their fame.

Like most technologically underdeveloped countries, African cultures are based on values that are fundamentally societal; the main functions of folk-literature are...to perpetuate the memory of its past...and so to bolster its sense of collective identity and dignity, to record the wisdom pragmatically accumulated by generations of ancestors in proverbs and gnomic tales and to celebrate the prowess of...warriors whose deeds have ensured...the glory of the group (Gérard, 1990: 124).

In its peculiar form, the *geerarsa* poetry is a subject worthy of serious study. It is one of the popular literary genres which depicts manifold problems of the war times and the virtues of courage and strength to overcome those difficulties. The elevated metaphorical languages are used to give the hero great respect and verbal reward and this is usually accompanied by dozens of related references.

The heroic performances are often presented at a large gathering of people, and such recitation has tremendous effect on the morale of the combatants. The *geerarsa* narrator recites some of phrases in a very high pitch. This convention of the Oromo epic poem shows that recitation, the swift change of the variation of voice and the speedy tempo create an atmosphere of emotional excitement in the audience. The phonic stylistic features of the narrators accompany their recitation to reveal dramatic movements, sometimes leaping about with gesticulations as the emotional feelings and excitement increase. The movements and the actions often suit the spoken words. Like the heroic song of the Zulu of South Africa, the *geerarsa* mimetic features involve dramatization of the scenes and events described by using formalized gestures, holding or carrying a ceremonial spear, gun or sword, and singing in a melodious voice so that the song inspires his audience. Employing derogatory remarks, heaping insults on the cowardice and adversaries, and diminishing their status are common in the *geerarsa*. The use of direct references and lauding names characterizes this genre; and the praises are directed publicly to relatives, parents, companions, prominent community figures and the community as a whole. Eulogizing domestic animals such as horses and dogs, and inanimate objects like spear, gun or sword is also common in

the *geerarsa* poetry. “First, something must be said about the praise names which often form the basis of formal praise poetry. These most often are given to people, but may also describe clans, animals, or inanimate objects, and they are usually explicitly laudatory” (Finnegan, 1970: 111).

In the Oromo heroic tradition, the epic narrators are decorated with multitudes of heroic symbols and wear feathers of ostrich, mane-like coiffure, skins of leopards (*qeerransa Afrikaa*) and lions; that hang from their arms and shoulders. In their several ways, these decorations tend to reinforce the hero’s tremendous self-esteem and a sense of uniqueness. The *geerarsa* poetry involves boasting marked by stirring emotions and romantic glorification of the patriots. The valour the victor demonstrates, the challenges he has faced, and the victory achieved in the course of battling with his adversaries are often expressed in such a way that his heroic action on the stage creates the image of a battlefield in which the audience is filled with great enthusiasm and courage. Generally, the story is narrated with blunt and descriptive language, sometimes trenchant and sometimes gentle. The singer criticizes harshly those who have no guts and elevates those who have demonstrated moral stamina in the face of dangers. The technique of combining both demerit and verbal rewarding creates a sort of balancing or equilibrium judgement in his poetic language. Like the heroic tales of other African societies, the Oromo epic literature does not merely deal with traditional national-pride, but also helps promote the new spirit of national feeling, which free societies of modern Africa need.

In form, style and content, the *geerarsa* poetry has many distinguishing features. The language in which it is formulated is rich, subtly, and metaphorically used by the narrators. The structure of the constituents is terse, precise and incisive. The style is lofty and poetic in the narrative and all possible artistic effects can be drawn into the text.

The Geerarsa Narrative in Response to Violently Marginalized Identity: Modernism, Empire and the Historical Development of Protest Literature

The late 19th century could be defined as the age of dynamic movements wherein the force of nationalisms played the central role to move the world to a new order, characterized by polarization and animosity. It was also the period during which the great secular institutions and ideologies emerged. The turbulence and instability of the time which undermined the natural world order actually led many peoples of the globe to understand what was happening, to investigate the very foundation of the ideologies of the emerging forces and challenge the principles of new social and political forms. The economic, social and political gaps that had been created by the totalitarian powers of the period terribly affected the multiethnic societies of the developing world, especially Sub-Saharan Africa.

The recent development of oral literary creativity and protest narrative in Africa can be attributed to the effects of post-colonialism, the continuing problems of decolonization and the building of democratic societies in the continent. Within the context of the postcolonial situation, the creative art in Africa is closely connected with the growth of a sense of national identity and such developments were anticipated during the late nineteenth century. The dominant themes of literary works of Africa, African American and the Caribbean are, therefore, studied as different responses to the problems of the new world order of post-colonialism. The past and present protest literatures in Africa are mainly the result of the rise of virulent nationalisms and the contradictory socio-economic structures they have created. The new African nations are the consequence of the expansion of empires and international events. The Oromo protest narrative, which is the outcome of militarism, annexation and the expansion programme of the nineteenth century aims at addressing the manifold problems surrounding the subjugated nation that has been trampled over by the empire-builders. "The rapid growth of empires was followed by settlements and the incorporation of many of African continents, either as crown colonies or through annexation" (King, 1980: 3). The consequences of empowering empires and docile kingdoms were dominance, destabilization, political and racial tensions. The emergence of Oromo heroic literature as an

instrument of resistance is to explain in social and political terms, the imperial histories, its negative legacy of war and destruction.

The growing consolidation of the new type of feudal empire in the Horn of Africa and its expansion to the South after the 1870s was paralleled by the development of nationalist cultural movements marked by xenophobia, ethnic friction and division. The Oromo epic poems dramatize the way those movements brought about ceaseless confrontations of several decades in the Horn of Africa. In the historical development of both African and English literatures, what we see is that expansion and settlements of postcolonial period contributed to the rise of extreme nationalisms that had grown strident throughout the globe. These coupled with the change of cultures in the Western world after the First World War, the global recession of 1926, the ‘Great Depression’ which began in 1929, and the growth of Socialist ideologies strongly influenced the protest literatures of the 1920s and 1930s, both oral and written. The force of heroic literary works of the period made the empires increasingly irrelevant. The Oromo traditional literature, especially the *geerarsa*, remained a relevant subject of discourse because it shares thematic content with protest literatures of the world.

“The same modernization which created new nations also produced its emerging literary tradition” (King, 1980: 25). In his research of the historical development of English literature, Bruce King has made it clear that an early sign of rapid industrialization and nationalism, which generated the Second World War, was at the same time to produce a new type of literature that can be found in Africa; and presumably he was referring to the coming into being of protest literatures which the Africans were using as modern weapons. He cited Peter Abraham’s *Mine Boy* (1946) and Alan Paton’s *Cry the Beloved Country* (1948) as cases in point. These protest literary works were used in South Africa as transitional between an earlier kind of protest fiction and the new socio-economic and political conditions resulting from the themes of post-war times. The increased national and international importance of the mines of South Africa as a dominion of settlement may be compared with the gold mines and coffee production in Oromiyaa, which continued to be the centre of attraction for settlement. The protest idioms of the late Depression years (late 1920s) was transformed into the vocabulary of a search for national identity and we find striking similarities with the poetic language of the *geerarsa* of *post-Rukkisa* (great recession and famine) of 1889-1892 in Oromiyaa.

As it often occurs in the early novels of protest in Africa, as for instance Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* (1950), concerning the disturbing situation in former Rhodesia (present Zimbabwe) of the war period, the *geerarsa* explores the problems of unequal socio-economic and political structures, and subsequently the study of identity set within the context of contextual and political crises in post-conquest Oromo. As it frequently happens in such early national literatures, folk-literature provides a means to record Oromo social consciousness and the issue of moral problems.

Like the modern fictions, in the oral literature of war-times, there is always a mood of cultural and identity assertion. The characteristics of oral literary tradition, particularly heroic epic, include the investigation of national history and the criticism of the ruling power structures; and in this respect, the complex relationship of the war period literary genres to a wave of patriotism means the struggle for cultural roots, national liberation and the search for a new code of values which would bridge the past and present. According to the Oromo folklorist scholars, the past heroic tradition always serves as the solid basis for a mass culture. They believe that heroic literary tradition as the centre of the image of the noble past is studied to overcome a modern sense of fragmentation and loss of identity. A tendency to associate or connect oral literary history with extremist nationalist position is, therefore, inaccurate.

“The political and cultural reforms proposed by anti-colonial movements in such countries as India, Egypt, Algeria, Ghana, Kenya, and in the Caribbean, therefore, formed the fountain-head of what we now call post-colonialism” (Waugh, 2006: 343). With the increasing momentum after the end of World War II (after 1945), anti-colonialist movements took a more confrontational and no compromise approach to decolonization. Where deep settler colonization prevails, as for instance in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Nigeria, and many other colonized countries, the colonial powers clung on disparaging methods and exercised particular brutality. The political and literary movements in the violent world resulted in the retrieval and animation of the indigenous literatures as important vehicles of national self-expression and therefore, of resistance to the colonial exclusion of the natives as uncivilized irrational. In the process of the struggle for cultural and political freedom, or in one sense, decolonization, the revolutionary leaders and patriotic intellectuals such as Ghandi in India, Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya (see *Mau Mau Uprising*), Frantz Fanon in Algeria (*The Wretched Earth*), Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Ngugi Wa Thiongo in

Kenya (*Decolonizing the Mind*), Chinua Achebe in Nigeria (*Things Fall Apart*), Steve Biko in South Africa (*Black Consciousness*), and many others helped define the essence, the broad concepts and paradigms of what has become the study of colonial empire. These, together with *Orientalism* (1978) of Edward W. Said and *Negritude Movements* led by immigrant writers, like Aime Césaire, Albert Memmi and Senghor in the 1920s and 1930s, provoked a widespread colonial discourse, which reinforced protest literature of postcolonial periods. By and large, these literary movements and influences in Africa have made a significant contribution to the growth of Oromo protest literature, the *geerarsa*. One of the major characteristics of this heroic epic is that it is a reaction against the disruptive influence of the feudal system in Ethiopia. Many heroic poets still believe that it is part of their historical mission to write and reach back to the poetic tradition of their hero ancestors so that they can give a new life to the treasured oral art of the past.

To be marginalized is to be removed from history. Post-conquest literature or more appropriately protest literature is often a painful and highly complex means of fighting one's way into empire-made *reductionism theory*. The optimism and traditional egalitarian processes of post-conquest Oromiyaa (see Legesse's book 2000) were increasingly threatened by worsening developments in unhealthy ethnic relations marked by friction, misunderstanding, wars and bitterness; and these were eventually attended by the literary epic of the oppressed group. The new wave of migrant settlements, the mounting of militarism in the Horn of Africa after the 1890s and empowering the rising feudal overlords continued to corrode Oromo social cohesion, cultural and literary heritage. Thematically, post-empire protest narratives and writings in Oromiyaa are, therefore, deeply marked by the experiences of cultural and economic exclusions.

In this chapter, I have tried to examine the way a challenge to feudal empire and literature of imperial and post-imperial reveals itself. Notoriously, following the conquest of the 1880s, the great plight of the Oromo began. The conquest and the whole image of the powerless population can be summarized as scenes of carnage, devastation, falling apart, eviction and displacement.

If anything else, by offering us insight into the imperial imagination, the texts of empire give some purchase on the occlusions of human loss that operated in colonial representation. The effects of empire on the colonized peoples, and colonized responses to invasion, usually appear as mere traces in the writing of the time. Reading of imperial texts suggest, therefore, how it was possible for a world system which presided over the lives of millions to legitimate

itself by way of myth and metaphor while at the same time masking suffering. Colonial writing is important for revealing the ways in which that world system could represent the degradation of other human beings as natural (Boehmer, 2005: 21).

For those of us who by force of circumstances have continued to live under the stifling feudal empire of *reductive polarization* as it entails gabbaar-landlord relations, I am fully convinced that there is always a sense of moral and historical responsibility which is attached to the literature and culture we write as scholars and humanists. I also believe that it is incumbent on us to alter or dismantle abstract formulas which dichotomize humanity; dismissive and potent kinds of thought that take human mind away from truths about human history, literature and culture into realms of fictitious ideology, irrational and commanding discourse, confrontation and sophisticated treason.

“The nationalism the empire generated, the race antipathies, played a critical part in British society...as empire grew, identity was defined against the inferior state of being which the colonized were said to represent” (ibid., p. 31). Within the context of colonial and postcolonial times and influences, African empires of the past can be understood as the extension of other virulent empires of the world wherein broader imperial identity superimposed the identity of the oppressed and amalgamating or as Boehmer says, bracketing together different ethnic groups that serve the interest and will of the dominant. This kind of social stratification in the developing world eventually generated what is known as post-empire identity of contradictory form marked by cultural strife and social disharmony. The Oromo heroic literature is part of African protest discourse and it offers us a detailed account of the complex antagonisms which led to human predicament.

Heroic literature is mainly the consequence of marginalization and economic disempowerment. It is a criticism of empire and its aftermath. The protest literary theory and practice reveal that post-empire discourse covers the distinctive problematic issues inherent in contradictory socio-political structures. These issues encompass the emerging fields, like minority studies, Gender studies, African studies, African American studies, Caribbean studies, Latin American studies, Third World studies, Chicano studies and others. This aspect of literature thus includes all peoples, literatures and cultures that have been affected by imperial movements and hegemonic control from the moment of colonization to the present. This means, the *geerarsa* in its

content is the narrating back to the crisis of the empire with an emphasis on the correction of the socio-economic, political and cultural problems it has created.

Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort. And sadder still, there always is a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires, as if one shouldn't trust the evidence of one's eyes watching the destruction and misery and death (Said, 2003: xvi).

With the passing of time, the Ethiopian empire, like other empires of the past, developed its own forms of self-validation and created a momentum to justify a widely pervasive sense of correctness. "Bowling to the prerogative of uniqueness, both lay and scholarly writings on Ethiopian politics generally eschew the conceptual tools and the theoretical apparatus that govern an inquiry into social process in the developing countries and discard the conventional standard and criteria normally applied to other African societies" (Markakis, 1974: 2). The Ethiopian empire enjoyed the stereotyped construction of uniqueness and similarly the sanctity of the imperial office was an antique theme derived from the ideas of divine kinship-*Seyuma Egziabher* (see Levine 1965: 151). Throughout its periods, the imperial writers borrowed sophistications and many tempting ideas from others that would serve imperial ideology, exaggerated more than ever, the angelic stories, supremacy and the mystic power of the makers (autocratic rulers); as well as the importance of living up to their abstract myths and *utopian visions*. In essence, the *geerarsa* narrative captures these dominant moods and the ideology of greatness of post-empire times.

Literary History: The Geerarsa as a Genre of the Heroic Age

The Heroic Tales of Eastern Oromo (Hararge)

"If literature has become important to the study of Africa's history and culture in a variety of disciplines ranging from anthropology to natural sciences, it is because it constitutes an indelible record of the continent's long past, its complicated present and its future possibilities" (Gikandi, 2003: xii). The protest narratives are subject to historical conditions and become prominent in

specific circumstances at particular times. The major historic episodes of Oromo literary history have been linked with a turning point in the protest movements of the late 19th century in East Africa. The *geerarsa* poetry as a powerful and compelling subject is often viewed by the Oromo as an instrument of creating the willing acceptance of people to make their own free world; and to me that is what human greatness means. In much the same way as other African countries, Oromiyaa remained a politically vibrant region in the Horn. This chapter depicts the way politics draws on the art of rhetoric and how the heroic narrative within this paradigm has been exercised as a powerful weapon of resistance.

For the last one-century, many heroic narratives of the Oromo focus on protest in which the eminent hero nationals, who demonstrated great courage and patriotic feelings, have been highly eulogized and honoured. It presents the valour in flashbacks when the resistance was based on a truly heroic character and almost every generation is moved by the vibrant tone of defiance and brave spirit. Each hero poet fights gaily and gallantly and many of the poems of the *Gadaa* age reflect their confidence and national pride. The description of the natural setting helps the hero poet as a background when he wants to expand its special function in historical terms. The portrayal of the natural scenery suggests some grave situations that need prompt response. Therefore, the background of the mountain, the soil and the landscape in general, is to call up the difficult scenes the nation has been facing and the long journey to be made to reverse those violent scenes. The noun phrase *gaara* (mountain) is connected with the hero narrator to underline points concerning the issue of offering protection to the society that has fallen into dungeons of despair.

gaara gaaraan yaamanii

dafa dafaan yaamanii

biyyee biyyaan yamanii

biyya maqaan yaamanii

5 *guyyaa dubbii ulkaa [olkaa], guyyaa dubbii ijaa, dhiira lolaaf yaamanii*



a mountain is called by its name

urgent action requires urgent call

the soil is called by its country

a country is called by its name

5 in times of prompt action, in times of life and death, it is the heroes who answer the call.

This may be properly called a literature of combat in the sense that it calls on the whole people to fight for their existence. It is a literature of combat because it moulds the national consciousness, giving it form and contours and flinging open before it new and boundless horizons; it is a literature of combat because it assumes responsibility and because it is the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space (Fanon in Leitch, 2001: 1589).

The personal urgency and the narrator's self-assurance were attended by keen anxiety that a heroic poem boldly assumes a prophetic stance at a moment of national emergency. The poet paints a view of the countryside. He uses the attractive landscape as the background to describe the natural world of freedom and the beauty linked with that world when one's land is protected at the cost of the life of the rising generation. The portrayal of the mountain, the urgent action, the soil and the homeland is to inform the audience that everything has its own beauty in its balanced form. This is connected with the vivid account of the hero combatants, without which the dramatic landscape of Oromiyaa cannot maintain a perfect fascination and the society seldom enjoys independent existence.

When we probe into the historical elements of protest literature, we find that the patriotic poets never allow themselves to be dictated or suppressed; and thus they air their views freely without concealing every single event. Moreover, the epic poetry, which reflects the existing social and political situation of a particular country, is presented to the audience in a form of dramatic narrative. Since the audience may not have full access to the whole events of the battlefield, like historians and journalists, they are more interested in the dramatic performance of the hero actor or singer and the way he projects objective reality. In listening to their work, we must always use reasonable judgement and critical analysis so that we will be able to shape the material on the basis of artistic criteria.

The essential benefit of the poets is not to have the ready-made world with which to deal; rather, to be able to see in depth its complexities and contradictions: the beauty and ugliness, the boredom and the liveliness, the atrocities, the horror and the glory, which ultimately define its true

image. These complexities characterize the subject matter of poetry in general and the protest narrative in particular.

The outstanding episodic events of a particular battlefield are often carefully united so that the heroic story will be more powerful and plausible. The oral artist has made a vivid description of the great battle of *Calanqoo* between the Oromo and settler soldiers or *Nach-labaash* in which enormous damages occurred and hundreds of thousands of civilians and great men were killed. He has portrayed the horrific image of this battle in which the tragic experience of the martyrs has been recorded. The dead bodies of his fellow men and women that had been stretched upon the ground moved the poet to deep emotion. He has strongly emphasized the spirit of the late 1880s in the history of the Oromo when the *Nach-labaash* army decimated civilian population to ensure autocratic hegemony in the South. In the following verse passage of the *geerarsa*, the whole scene of tragic grief rises before our eyes and remains with us through the long account of the fight. It is appropriate that such resistance should take place in this wild surrounding, the mountain, which is displayed by the narrator as the graveyard for hundreds of thousands of the massacred civilians.

The First World War created a horrifying image across the globe. In four-years (1914-1918), over nine million lives were lost. Similarly, the wars in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Congo, Uganda, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia and other places are also the worst nightmare scenarios in the modern history. The Mutilation of Arms and Breasts at Aanole in 1886 and the Massacre at Calanqoo in 1887, and many more untold bitter stories of the Oromo people are the outcome of unjust war waged by the ambitious warlords and virulent despots. In general, the *conflict model pluralism* in Africa and the wars it has created not merely resulted in human tragedies of years, but also caused the psychological wounds in the minds of the survivors. The socio-cultural dislocation of war times very often gives rise to political narratives or more appropriately to literature of resistance. Like the unjust wars elsewhere, the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s wars in Oromo homeland, Oromiyaa, were marked by the death of more than *five million* Oromo civilians; it also saw the death of the *Gadaa* democratic conduct, literary expressions and the traditional values. On the other hand, it gave birth to the struggle for Oromo nationhood, the determination of the next generations to face the facts of the modern world and narrate the stories about them in vibrant voices.

*Lola Calii 'Calanqoo' himadhu moo ni dhiisa
manguddoo keenya gatee arriwaan gaara ciisa*

dardara keenya fixee filaawaan gaara ciisa
hayyoota keenya gatee bokkuwaan gaara ciisa
5 *kabiirran keenya gatee tasbiwaan gaara ciisa*
shamarran keenya gatee calleewaan gaara ciisa
eessaanan galee rafa dhiigatu garaa naciisa.



the battle and the massacre at Calanqo, may I tell the story or not
 exterminating our elderly men, their grey hairs lay in the mountain
 exterminating our young men, their combs (usually wooden combs) lay in the
 mountain
 exterminating our wise men, their sceptres lay in the mountain
5 exterminating our religious scholars, their religious ornaments lay in the mountain
 exterminating our young ladies, their ornamental beads lay in the mountain
 I have an immense amount of blood in my stomach, and so how can I go home and
 sleep.

As Levine (1965: 3-4) argued, one needs not to be blind to the drawbacks of feudal dominance and to recognize these and other important benefits for the Ethiopian empire of the past in which many peoples were maltreated, free peoples reduced to slavery and unique cultures decimated. The unfavourable reputation of the totalitarian rulers in the South has been due largely to the example of the unscrupulous governors and soldiers whose worst impulses were at times allowed free play.

The hero narrator laments the destruction of his homeland and the loss of lives during the invasion and conquest of 1886-1887. Misery, trauma, grief, frustrations, in short, the tragedy of contradictory pluralism are the most affecting touches in the *geerarsa* poetry. As the revolt against the subversive land reform had fallen through, the hero poet recorded the lament of the time without, of course, forgetting to mention the tragic dignity of those brave men and women who in the end failed. The poet keeps his eyes on his characters and their actions without wasting energy on irrelevant detail. He concentrates on the concise theme, which is pertinent to the situation and provides the authentic image of the whole episode. In general, the protest poem of “*Calii Calanqoo*” brings the event closer to the people’s life and makes it substantial.

It may not be enough for the poems to be interesting unless they depict where the intent of the heart and mind goes, and unless they lead the heart of the reader as they want. Explaining the appropriateness of the language of poetry, Adams (1992: 69) says, “As people’s faces smile, in a similar way they sympathize with those who weep. If you wish me to weep, you must first feel grief yourself....Sad words are appropriate to a sorrowful face; furious words are fitting to the angry ...serious words to the solemn. For nature first forms us within to meet all the changes of fortune.” The skilful poets are endowed with the qualities of creating the concrete image within the power of their art; they encapsulate many of the central themes of every passing scene and make people rejoice or impel them to outrage, burden them down to the ground with a heavy grief or lift up their spirits to celebrate euphoric occasions.

War and tyranny are the ugly aspects of human experiences which great civilizations of our time and modernity have failed to abolish. Its destructive effect has left the unhealing wound in the minds of the new generations. The poet expresses his outrage at the harsh realities and agonizing situation he witnesses. He shares with us his observations so that we may be able to grasp as clearly as possible the feelings of deep sorrow and despair evoked by the subject. These feelings could better be thought of as meaning evoked by careful contemplation of the poem in its manifold and somewhat subtle ways of treating the text so as to lead the audience on to a view of war and the melancholic state intrinsic to an art. The poem, which powerfully mirrors the awful nature of war and conquest of 1887 at *Calanqoo*, is at the same time a forceful subject which reconstructs the horrible image in the conquered land, Oromiyaa, and the way the indigenous population has been trampled over by the tyrant rulers.

This heroic narrative reminds us of the worst case scenario of the late 19th century when the Oromo not merely faced enormous challenges, but also were decimated when they resisted a utopian approach to pluralism. It describes the horrendous episode the poet has experienced during the battle of *Calanqoo*. The term *Calii* refers to massacre. The poet’s anger finds expression in words such as *arriwaan*, *filaawaan*, *bokkuwaan*, *tasbiiwaan* and *calleewaan*; and they mark the actual meaning of the lost battle and the painful experience. The situation is described with realism, which not only influences the audience, but also moves them to tears and action. The oral artist employs these allusive terms in order to illustrate the horrifying vividness of the situation. He narrates the whole situation by unfolding the clear image of the massacre at *Calanqoo*, together

with the heavy damage inflicted on the society. The expression *dhiigatu garaa naciisaa* (line seven) reveals total rage and a sense of revenge without which the combatant hero cannot get mental peace. The extent and the horrors of the catastrophic situation are depicted as great darkness in the history of Oromiyaa.

The *geerarsa* poetry usually deals with romantic glorification underlying the boosting of confidence and high morale; and this frequently refers to the performer (the oral artist), his fellow groups, clans or tribes. In some cases, both the hunting and the war songs describe the general values, which characterize the community as a whole rather than calling for immediate action. The poem is presented in the form of serious struggle and challenges so that it provokes strong feelings and sometimes stirs the audience to action. Singing heroic songs is usually accompanied by brandishing of the weapons. The performer swiftly moves around with furious gesture and roaring voice in order to demonstrate the real picture of a fighter, his courage, unflinching determination and confidence which stir up people's emotions. In the heroic poetry, the leading parts are assigned to those who are endowed with extraordinary gifts and recognized as being prominent figures of the society. Though most of their interests lie in what happens to them or the hardships through which they have passed, an equal interest also lies in the portrayal and description of the qualities of their characters.

amma kormaan weenniidhaa birbisa fiixa bulee
egaa dhorgaan [quriin] jaldeessaa hallayyaa keessa bulee
...janni aayyiyyoon deette, lolaaf aadataa [dhaadataa] bulee



now, the male colobus monkey spent overnight on the apex of podocarpus tree
 and so did stay a baboon monkey overnight in the ravine
 but our hero whom the mummy borne was singing heroic song overnight to fight

The poem reflects the complex situation of war times in which the poet describes the testing circumstances in the course of the liberation process. The poet uses allusive style in which the *weennii* “colobus monkey” and *dhorgaan jaldeessaa* “baboon monkey” are rhetorically articulated and are contrasted with the patriotic hero (*janna*) so that the narrator may capture the mood of the audience. The satirically set wild beasts are chosen on the basis of their symbolic representation and

this is to comment on the degenerated personality of the cunning sophists who are not willing to show the proper sense of responsibility. We also see that the singer offers verbal reward to himself and his mother whom he is always proud of. In the heroic tradition of the Oromo, the hero's mother is adored; and in most cases she enjoys high social status and reputation in the society.

The two expressions (prepositional phrases): *birbirsa fiixa*, literally “on the top (apex) of podocarpus tree,” and *hallayyaa keessa* “in the ravine,” illustrate the monkeys, which in this poem epitomize the timid human beings who failed to act in times of need. The podocarpus tree and the ravine are delineated by the poet as a symbol of *safe haven* for those who have no sense of history, dignity and freedom. The seriousness of the situation and a subtle use of a sense of humour are combined so as to elaborate the moral crises of the war leaders who are described as *kormaa weennii* (male colobus) and *qurii/dhoorgaa jaldeessaa* (baboon monkey). The poem reveals the way the cowardice descends into the journey of fear and confusion; and this should be seen as antithetical parallel to the ascending journey of a patriotic man. This heroic poem is told during the crucial time of war in which those who appear to be important figures in the society are totally defeated by fear, give up hope and surrendered. The timid and bizarre behaviours of the beasts are contrasted with the unflinching determination of the brave citizens.

Despite the imperfection of the language, traditional epic poem conveys deeper social realities, which characterize the survival of the nation. Within the context of the liberation process, the *geerarsa* poetry as integral part of the celebration of military success is also one of the most important aspects of Oromo literary history because it addresses the issue of building a patriotic society.

Reputation and prestige are central to a heroic being, and if an individual combatant fails to prove his worth, or if he is found to be unfit to his standard (career), he is subject to contempt and slander and this damages his public life. “In the last resort, the hero's honour means more to him than anything else” (Bogar, 1952: 62). A literary epic can create the heroic history of men and women which never fails with time and that living history reflects its own world of imagination in which men bravely act to promote the principle of defeating fear in times of hardship. It celebrates great accomplishments of the capable men by making them speak for themselves and appeal to the younger and the older generations in their own right.

Addeeysa/addeessa duulee, adda dhiira barbaadee
dukkanaan duulee, xurree faanaan barbadee
dabeessa wajjiin duulee, qaciicaa lammii tiyyaa lubbuu addaan barbaadee.



I left for the battle when there was a full moon and looked for the brave man

I left for the battle in the dark, and looked for a narrow street on foot

I left for the battle with cowardice and looked for life in particular.

The poem summarizes the success and failure of the poet by illuminating the obstructions he faced on the one hand, his searching for a particular enemy (*lubbuu addaan barbaadee*) and the problem of going to the battlefield with soldiers who have no courage on the other. *Addeeysa* “full moon” is a symbol of success, hope and victory; whereas *dukkana* “dark”, *dabeessa* “coward” and *xurree* “a narrow-street/path” in combination represent the gloomy situation characterized by total failure, hopelessness, defeat or death. The poet has used the expression *lubbuu addaan barbaadee* to comment on a fearful soldier who is not willing to commit himself at the time when the heroic men and women were in fierce battle.

As already discussed, the main theme of epic poetry is to address the issue concerning ideal heroic behaviour, together with describing the challenging events the victor warriors have faced in the process of battling with their foes. The oral narrator depicts the whole image of the events by using literary techniques of which imagery and flashbacks play greater role. The descriptions of the events are colourfully presented by the frequent employment of panegyric names and this is followed by the romantic picture of the occasion. Though the main purpose of the *geerarsa* is to celebrate the remarkable military performance, in its entirety, this genre reflects the collective heroic spirit of the nation.

In the heroic age societies, the great man is not he who tries to make his voice heard through what we call pervasive hierarchical relations based on supremacy, rather through his natural quality of enlisting or demonstrating heroic actions which characterize all prominent leaders and cultured nations of the past and present. In this epic poem, the oral artist emphasizes the way he has proved his allegiance to the nation, the hope he brought home and his great expectation for the commitment he has made.

The Protest Narrative of the Southern Oromo (Arsii)

The *geerarsa* narrative is usually linked with specific socio-political and historical contexts, as well as a particular turning-point within which it is to be narrated. There are direct references concerning the Oromo history, the social and power relationships, the system of values and ideas. In terms of form, style and thematic content, the Oromo heroic epic has various distinguishing characteristics. The language, the rich vocabularies in which the poem is formulated, the variations and the dramatic scenes created by those variations are marked by imagery and flashbacks. The mode of presentation of the literary epic has special features. Invariably, the narration of the *geerarsa* is accompanied by a participating crowd in which the narrator who is surrounded by families, fellow friends and lineage groups is applauded and received with dignity. The problem of complex hegemony in Oromiyaa during the feudal empire of several decades (1889-1974), the painful life of the *gabbaar* society, the revolt to get back the expropriated land, lamenting the destruction of the rich countryside and the hopelessness of the periods are all brought to the open on the stage of performance.

In historical and political terms, the *geerarsa* narrative reveals the struggle against indignity, a style of domination and having authority over the disfranchised. A wave of revisionist writings and repression in Oromiyaa was also compounded by the total distortion of the image of the society; and this fuelled the confrontation of the rulers and the ruled in a changing political market. The evolving of *Civil Rights* and the ever increasing of protest movements has now re-directed heroic literature and cultural awareness in an extraordinary manner.

Modernity, then has come to acquire a positive and negative narrative: the first insists on the ideals of self-conscious subjectivity and the desire for freedom; the other is driven by an acute sense of disenchantment.... In Africa, these two narratives have been complicated by the experience of colonization, since it was colonialism that introduced what were considered to be the institutions of modern life in many African communities, while at the same time depriving people of the rights that were associated with the project of modernity. In these circumstances, the ideals of modernity were bound to run into conceptual problems, because if colonialism was to be the major agent for transforming

pre-colonial societies into modern polities, it was difficult to reconcile the notion of free self-conscious individuals with colonial domination (Gikandi, 2003: 337).

The extract encapsulates the problems of imperial narrative and the controversy of modernity in postcolonial Africa. The narrative construction of the greatness of Ethiopian empire and the excessive force used against the oppressed people to justify the uniqueness of that empire are not only contradictory to modern thinking, but also have created many untold tragic events in the Horn of Africa in general, and Oromiyaa in particular. As I have repeatedly stressed, subsequent to the rejection of multiculturalism and the plural principle of mutual respect and tolerance, the Oromo entered a new phase in the troubled history marked by economic disempowerment, cultural sinking, the gradual disintegration of social structures and the established egalitarian institutions; the time when a sense of loss of national identity fractured the nation. The *geerarsa* thus appeared in '*an age of national struggles*' as a response to the unsuccessful imperial modernism when the whole issue of national culture and national entity was under discussion throughout the Sub-Saharan Africa. In the analysis of protest oral literature, *we have to go back and put in place the dislocated African sense of history and nationhood*. This can happen only if the heroic poetry is understood *as identity marker and a tool of enforcing the existence of an alternative* which can help the society to grasp the true meaning of freedom.

The heroic narrative has a considerable value for history because it is part of the struggle for survival and reflects some of the strongest aspirations of the human spirit. It still remains of permanent value in the history of many nations. The heroic success that demands honour and distinction can be gained in many fields of action. Heroism in a wider contemporary concept may not only be limited to the combatant nationals in uniform. Rather, it also encompasses all dedicated professionals: *sportsmen and women, musicians, singers, artists, academics and many others who bring home greatest triumphs and are lauded, loved, honoured and rewarded by their nations as heroes and heroines*. Since honour is often achieved by demonstrating superior devotion and performance than other men, there is essentially an element of fierce struggle and confrontation. This is why a lot of poems reveal themselves in the form of boasts and panegyrics, which have to be translated into actions. For the successful function of his poetry, the narrator must pick the core events with skill and identify issues that will capture the imagination of the living audience.

The antagonistic human relations and the *conflict-based pluralistic formula* that have been imposed by militaristic governments reinforced self-assertion of the Oromo society and this assertion is represented by the wise poets who serve as keen observers of events. The amalgamation of different cultures without considering their equal status and the emergence of oral narrative as a powerful arm of maintaining the cultural identity characterize a process of resistance narrative in Sub-Saharan Africa, of which Oromiyaa is the part. After the 1870s imperial period and the Arab expansion programme, numerous antithetical co-existing cultures and traditions emerged in the African continent; and African folklore has grown out of those cultures as the identity marker of diversified groups. Therefore, the indigenous genre as social protest represents the African voice against the new order of polarization which is the breeding ground for indignity and corrupt economic structures. Within the context of the growing of antithetical traditions and the mechanical homogenization of pluralism, the *geerarsa* narrative is an expression of socio-political problems, the contemporary challenges and contradictions which need sensible solutions.

“Heroes are champions of man’s ambition to pass beyond the oppressive limits of human frailty to a fuller and more vivid life, to win as far as possible a self-sufficient manhood, which refuses to admit that anything is too difficult” (Bowra, 1952: 4). The admiration for great deeds, especially heroic performance, lies deep in the human heart. The epic poetry is always remarkable for its unfailing objective character. It is not only objective, but also devoted to unfolding the historical truth validated by its audience.

ammallee koofii lolaa
ammallee koofii lolaa
qaataa abbaa Abdellaa
hojjaamessa makkallaa
5 *qabbanoofnee dhumannee yaa goojee abbaa farraa*
nurratti murteessinaan, murtii du’aa namarraa
yaa garaa jabeenna isaa abbaa murtii farrisaa
nama dhibbaa fi soddomaa seera malee fannisaa?

↓

once again, the hero of war time
 once again, the hero of war time

the trigger of the gun of Abdella's father
 the unshakable pillar with great energy
5 we were totally frozen oh, the king with demonic spirit
 we are under the sentence of death; and how horrible it is!
 oh! a treasonable judge, how cruel he is to pass the death penalty!
 you hanged hundred-thirty men unlawfully

The demand for the abolition of the master-servant type of human relations often leads to the creation of what is known as a new literature of the marginalized people. From the 1870s onward, the entire continent of Africa was in political upheaval and rocked by a series of wars. As the natural boundaries of nations ceased to exist and the new empire builders emerged from the ruins of *old* empires, the continent faced the dark era in history. The economic momentum generated by modern capitalism in its powerful prime also fuelled raw aggression and the naked imperial expansion. The poem unfolds this historic moment in East Africa, Oromiyaa, during which the Oromo people experienced cultural shocks and the devastating effects of the new global order of post-empire.

The functions of literary nationalism in the regulation of social order, needs to be qualified by taking into account cultural and historical circumstances. If we examine in political terms, folk traditions in different historic periods, that is, the 'Old World' of pre-capitalism and the 'New World' marked by capitalist domination and power imbalance, it is clearly evident that friction occurs between the co-existing cultures and traditions in the countries that are modelled on the colonial system. In the polarized societies of unequal power, heroic literature reveals the adverse effects of cultural dichotomy. The North and South Americans were colonized by the Europeans who transported millions of African slaves to their overseas empires. As the result of this, the country experienced co-existing and interacting traditions, which eventually generated the folklore society and *patriotic nationalism*. The indigenous Indian, the colonizing Spanish, Portuguese, French and English; the African-Americans, together with the 19th and 20th centuries immigrants from Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, in short, the national and regional socio-cultural and political situations have been shaped by the new historical and environmental factors. Being the member of the New World, the continent of Australia also experienced cultural barriers; and its folklore literature has been divided between the Aborigines and the others. After the 1880s

postcolonial events and settlements, the African continent experienced similar historical situation. The protest literatures in modern Africa are, therefore, the result of global historical and cultural changes.

A hero poet must not compromise their moral or political position by concealing or negating the truth. It is, therefore, necessary to unveil vices with a view of dissuading so that the work of art he produces is not merely allowed to grow, but also popularized. The oral artist tries to paint both the chaotic world of war and the euphoric times of victory and peace. He celebrates the triumph achieved and at the same time laments the tragic effects of unjust war and the human tragedy resulted from that disorderly world led by perverse governments. With regard to this, Noakes (1988: 168-169) says, “Emotions are emitted in sounds and when sounds form a pattern, they are called tones. The tones of any orderly world are peaceful and lead to joy, its government harmonious; the tones of a chaotic world are resentful and lead to anger, its government perverse; the tones of a doomed state are mournful to induce longing, its people in difficulty. Thus, in regulating success and failure...nothing comes to poetry.”

The expression *qabbanoofnee dhumannee* “we were totally frozen” illuminates the entire picture of being under the sentence of death and a pervading mood of fear and tension the Oromo nation experienced during the arrival of the empire builders. In lines three and four, the poet discusses his own physical stature and charisma by using figurative language. He emphasizes the significance of building self-esteem and defines himself by using allusive phrases, *qaataa* “trigger of a gun” and *makkallaa* “the unshakable pillar with great energy;” and these descriptive words are alluded to him to clarify his great personal quality, charm and fitness. The last four lines (5-8) are heavy criticism of the irrational judge who passed death sentence against 130 Oromo nationals.

gofti guddaan baddaa jira Gomoorii
mootiin fardaa ‘goljaa’ hanqisa boorii
dubbii hin beekuu nama rakkisa moognii [wallaalaani]
dubbii beekaa hin hulluqa hayyuunii
5 *du’a namarraa hin oolleef uf hin rakkisu goonnii*



the largest tribe which dwell in the highland is the *Gomoorii*
 the yellow, the king of horse, overtakes the ‘warthog’

the unwise does not know how to speak, and so he troubles you
 a wise man knows how to speak, and so he knows to survive
 5 death is unavoidable, and so the hero does not worry himself

The narrator praises his brilliant horse which he sees as himself. The comparison between the *mootii fardaa*-“the king of horse” and *goljaa*-“warthog,” is an attempt not only to show how the former is faster than the latter, but also their antithetical characteristics. The brave horse of war time is glorified, whereas the fearful warthog is undervalued; and both are the representation of positive and negative characteristics of mankind. The two contrasting characters in the poem, *hayyuunii* and *moognii*, reveal the human qualities which contribute either to solidarity or the falling apart of a society in times of difficulties.

“The desire for simplification may be manifested by bringing the heroes together at a single time in a single society, though they historically can be separated by considerable gaps of years” (Bowra, 1952: 522). The *geerarsa* brings together men that are known for their noble achievements of the past to help continue the heroic tradition of the society. It is a simplified history in a dramatic form, an account of the real events that appeal to the living people and reminds them of matters concerning both the past and present heroic culture. In most places and at all levels of human history, the heroic tale is regarded as a repository of facts and seriously treated by literary historians and folklorists. Another peculiarity in the treatment of the series of events by heroic poets is that they select themes which influence people and enrich their sense of confidence. Since heroic narrative is the reflection of the people’s history, the characters in the story are often judged by the patriotic poet within the context of the making of that history.

ammallee koofii lolaa

madaala cidhaa hin taanee

ammallee koofii lolaa

5 *akkaa awwaldiigessaa boolla qotadhee hin baanee*

goonni gafana lolaa

jaala ‘Sheik Hussein’ Baalee



once again, the hero of war time
 once again, the hero of war time
 the hero is summoned to fight on such a crucial day
 I am not a decorated jug of the wedding day
 5 and neither am I emerged from the den like that of ‘armadillo’

rather, I succeeded in winning the battle with the greatest help of ‘Sheik Hussein’ Bale “The storytellers who used to relate inert episodes now bring them alive and introduce into them modifications which are increasingly fundamental. There is a tendency to bring conflicts up to date and to modernize the kinds of struggle which the stories evoke, together with the names of the heroes” (Fanon in Leitch, 2001: 1589).

The *geerarsa* has been most useful to enhance national feeling and its study usually involves the problem of power relations in a particular turning-point in history and the way the ideological and political interests operate through the poetry of imperial period. In this historical poem, the oral artist has given a vivid account of his life as a career soldier when he demonstrated brilliance to challenge a system of alienation which endangers national existence. Nur Hussein is mentioned in the flashback simply because he has a significant place in Oromo history and literature. He was one of the prominent hero figures of his time, as well as a zealous spiritual leader in the region. Under his leadership, the southern Oromo (Arsii) rejected the expansion of feudal empire and the forced assimilation policy. Therefore, *Sheik Hussein* is remembered by the Oromo as one of the leading patriotic figures of his generation; and it is for this reason that the narrator eulogizes him. At present, the holy place of ‘Sheik Hussein’ is one of the known religious and historical centres in southern Oromiyaa.

“The only legitimate basis of creative work lies in the scrupulous recognition of all the irreconcilable antagonisms that make our life so enigmatic, so burdensome, so fascinating, so dangerous, so full of hope” (Quinones, 1985: 88). The importance of referring to the *madaala cidhaa* “the jug of the wedding day” and *boolla qotadhee hin baanee* “I am not emerged from the den” is that the fighter wants to describe himself as a fearless character who succeeded in recording his fame as the result of overcoming many trying situations. His military decoration is not like that of the decoration of *madaala* (a big jug) of a wedding day and neither is he emerged from the den “*boolla*” like that of the *awwaaldiigessa*—“the armadillo”. The armadillo and the decorated jug of the wedding day are ironically portrayed to comment on the soldiers who failed to make successful careers—that is, those who have humiliated themselves, their society and families. The recurring phrase *koofii lolaa*, “the hero of war time,” is self-reference; and it further connotes a life of selfless service the protagonist fighter has given to his people.

waraana walitti baasee, waraanaa jedhee kaasee *isa kanaaf mee ragaa*
dhiira harka mursiisee, beera harma mursiisee *“Aanoleen” dhaya maqaa.*

↓

↓

he organized the armies and gave them command to fight as concrete evidence
 he ordered them to mutilate the hands of men and breasts of women let me mention Aanole.

The development of protest literature in Africa may be viewed more or less as a critique of the negative inheritance of the empire, the time when the indigenous populations were exploited, brutally repressed and enslaved. It can also be seen as the description of the conflict between the oppressed and the oppressor whose cultures and values are antagonistic; and the agony resulted from the relations of the two groups. This *geerarsa* of ‘Umer Suleyman’ reminds us of the atrocious acts that had been committed in 1886.

The Arsi Oromo were another people who resisted the Shoan conquest and paid a heavy price for it. Their defensive war against the Shoan army was one of the bloodiest in the entire colonial era. The population was decimated, and Ras Darge, the general who conquered them, *cut off the limbs [harka muraa]* of 700 men and women in a single day (Legesse, 2000:21). ‘*Aanole*’ is a place in the southern Oromiyaa (Arsii province) where 12,500 men and women suffered the barbaric act of conquest; and the epic poet seems to be deeply affected by this worst nightmarish scenario and flashback. *The right hands of men and the right breasts of women were mutilated and hung on their necks.* The horrifying image of Mutilation at *Aanolee* and the massacre at *Calanqoo* are to be written and re-written and brought to the living rooms through the mass media and books.

The Heroic Literature of Central and Western Oromo (Macha and Tuulama): The Geerarsa within the Context of the Gabbaar System

Though heroic poetry has not flourished and persisted in the same old way, it still plays a great role as instructive subject in many parts of the world. There has never been and will never be a perfect nationhood without the transmission of heroic values. Thus, the protest narrative presupposes a view of existence in which the hero figures play a central role and exert their powers to ensure that existence. “But after all national pride is a legitimate pleasure and heroic poetry

cannot fail at times to promote it” (Bowar, 1952: 30). The protest narratives express defiance, outrages, discontents, grievances, success, failure or misfortune, sadness and a state of euphoria. The verbal artist often uses a trenchant language of a defiant. In postcolonial terms, the *geerarsa* captures the problems of imperial modernism, the violently marginalized identity, and the changing scene in the conquered land in course of the struggle for self-realization. Alessandro Triulzi has noted:

These songs are...important because they give us the social background to one of the recorded peasant revolt in Wällägga history, that of 1909-1912, which for a short spell freed Qéllam...and eventually led to several thousand gäbbar families leaving Qéllam for more hospitable highlands of Beggi up north (Triulzi in Tubiana, 1980: 178).

In 1908, the ruler of Qeellam, the collaborator Dajjach *Jootee Tulluu*, was summoned to Shaggar (Addis Ababa), accused of failing to implement the directives of the king of Shawa (Menz) and then jailed. This was the time when the peasants of Qeellam revolted against the Emperor’s policy of land expropriation and eviction. The son of Jootee, Mardaasaa, was also summoned to Shaggar and later sent back to Qeellam (Wallagga) to help administer the region. Following the uprising of Qeellam peasants, Fitawrari Sahle Giyorgis, brother of Ras Tasamma, was appointed to control the situation. The Qeellam peasant rejected the system of imperial overlord and continued reacting against the policy of displacing rural population.

In 1909, the Qeellam peasant movements and resistance staged protest in ‘Gidami,’ immediately after the region came under the control of the settler soldiers-*Nach-labaash*. In 1917, the arrival of Dajjach Birru and 8000 soldiers resulted in the imposition of the new law of the gabbaar-landlord relationship. Subsequent to this, many peasants of Qeellam not only continued denouncing land confiscation and eviction, but fled their homes in defiance of the system of serfdom as well. The oral singer Seifu Shano, whose father was a *gabbaar*, chanted the following heroic song of protest:

<i>yaa joollee, galaanni gannaa gannaa</i>	<i>qonnee gombisa [gootaraa] guunnee</i>
<i>gaafa guutu hin beekanii</i>	<i>dilbiin [qabeenyi] kan kooti hin jennee</i>
<i>lubbuun gootaa biliqaa</i>	<i>ajjeefnnee mirga hin qabnnuu</i>
<i>gaafa duutu hin beekanii</i>	10 <i>ila mirga koo hin jennuu</i>
5 <i>ijoollee biyya keenyaa</i>	<i>sareen gumbii [gootaraa] urte kaa</i>

maal goonee biyya teenyaa



oh the offspring! The raging river of winter
nobody knows when it overflows
the gut (heart) of the brave is so great
knows when it passes away
5 the offspring of our soil (land)
what have we contributed to our country?

gadheen dubbii dhufte kaa



we laboured hard and filled the grain store
but we toiled in vain for the wealth is not ours
we are unable to kill and win victory and nobody
10 and there is nothing that justifies the victory
we have achieved
and so we have faced the worst situation

This is a powerful poem which shares almost similar theme with Okpewho's poem called the "Peasants." The poet denounces the way in which the peasants were treated with disrespect by the autocratic leadership; and how the wealth of the nation was drained before their eyes without getting sharing of it-*qonnee gombisa guunnee, dilbiin kankooti hin jennee* (lines seven and eight). The poem reveals an admirable depth of sympathy on part of the poet. The anger in the poet's voice was also subdued-*maal goone biyya teenyaa* (line six) and the long list of grievances is read more in a tone of deep sadness. After the 1880s new global order marked by the expansion of empires and the Expropriation of natives' land, the Oromo found themselves in a traumatic situation in their homeland. The evicted rural population was transformed into a new pool of cheap labour for farms of the dominant feudal overlords. The consequence of the loss of the land actually means economic disempowerment and this gave rise to the galvanization of protests among the evicted Oromo peasants. This eventually generated a lot of resistance forces in the country. The most important oral text triggered by the 'Native Land Act' (or Land Expropriation) was the *geerarsa* poetry that provides an account of the social, political and economic consequences of indigenous displacement, destabilization, and their sordid condition in the new political and social order characterized by inequality, alienation and antipathy.

Within the context of social protest, certain literary genres become significant mainly because of the conditions in which the literature of a particular society is produced. In order to comprehend the social and political impact of Oromo historical narrative, the *geerarsa*, one must always remember the divisive and violent political tradition of Ethiopian feudal empire (1889-1974) and the central issue of the Native Land Act that has been enforced and the way the subjugated population was entitled to only 20 percent of their land.

The protest poem stresses the hard time the Qeellam peasant had faced during the new Native Land Act of the 1900s. Land expropriation and a system of *gabbaar* (indirect slavery) resulted in deep outrage, desperation and uprising.

In verse lines 1-6, the singer points out the readiness of the *gabbaars*-“serfs” to resist the subversive system of landlord. The term *yaa joollee* “oh, the offspring” is an attempt to stir up people’s emotion to say no. The illustrating allusion *galaanni gannaa* is compared with *lubbuun gootaa* in order to elucidate the inevitability of staging protests and uprisings. The artistic description of the raging river of winter-*galaanni gannaa*, is also used as imagery in which this violent image and a brave man are combined to portray chaotic situation, insecurity, as well as the complexity and magnitude of resistance movement of the *gabbaar* time. The expression *maal goonee biyya teenyaa* (line six) shows how the audience or the *gabbaar* population is fractured, dispirited and unable to progress. The poet is also telling us the impossibility of staying in their homeland. In the verse lines 7-12, his emphasis is on self-criticism. In these verse lines, the oral artist focuses on the despicable act of the society in which the silenced people lived in constant fear. The satirical explanation *sareen gumbii urte kaa* is to lash the exploiters who act as destructive forces.

...if the commander moved on to conquer or govern another area, they remained in the province permanently. Their members were augmented by military men who arrived periodically in another governor’s retinue, all of whom were assigned *gabbaars*. These helots [*gabbaars*] had to provide each soldier [*Nach-labaash*] with a stated amount of produce and services (Marcus, 1975: 192).

After the long wars and conquests of the 1880s and the coming into being of the feudal empire, hundreds of thousands of Oromo farmers were taken captives and relegated to semi-slavery or serfdom. Vast areas of fertile land fell into the hands of a handful wealthy landowners. As for any conquerors, it was more profitable for the landlords to look either for forced labour or to employ the labour of serfs to work in farmlands. In the process of the Native Land Act programme or land confiscation, the Oromo were relegated to the life of bondage mainly by the use of force. As the result of militarism and economic disempowerment in the south, the Oromo farmers became the major means of getting rich for the powerful landowners until the early 1970s. As any form of

serfdom of the 19th century, debt bondage system in the Ethiopian empire had been the main tenet of the feudal regime. An *insolvent debtor* continued to be a creditor's slave if he/she was unable to pay the debt. Such a condition usually occurs when a *debtor*- the landless farmer or *gabbaar* is forced to give a pledge of his personal services- negotiates his freedom, or those of his dependents (children, wife or close relatives), a security for a loan. The main purpose of such an agreement is to keep the oppressed people under bondage forever. In this way, the servile agreement (forced labour contract) was likely to become hereditary.

In a multiethnic country of conflict model where ruthless exploitation exists, it often happens that the lender of money or credit is at the same time a wealthy and oppressive landlord, while the debtors are the impoverished Oromo farmers who were bound to overlords, attached to a plot of land liable only for certain dues and services, and by right protected from being persecuted, maimed and treated as personal property. However, serfs in Ethiopian empire could be indirectly bought and sold without land and they were very often robbed of their rights and subject to almost unlimited work and frustrating discipline from the cruel overlords. The product of their holding was expropriated by their overlords; and subsequent to this, they were exposed to destitution and sordid misery. The feudal lords were using the *gabbaars'* labour by forcing them to cultivate their land and perform extra tasks imposed on them. If the serfs or *gabbaars* fail to fulfil the task imposed on them by their masters, they were likely to face harsh retribution, including being deprived of the right to hold their plot of land. Thus, land expropriation and serfdom in the feudal empire were part of bondage slavery in Africa in which the marginalized people became landless. Wars and tyranny of the *gabbaar* era in Oromiyaa and the precarious situation experienced by the agrarian society led to civil disobedience, uprisings, protests and rebellion movements of several decades and the *geerarsa* emerged as a national saga in course of the struggle for socio-cultural and economic freedom. As the Oromo studies shows, before the new land reform of 1975- prior to the communist regime, the Orthodox Church shared about one-third (33.3%) of the richest areas in Oromiyaa (see Wolde-Yohannes and Gammachu, 1986 E.C), and this does not include the land occupied by the feudal landlords. As the land tax register of 1968 shows, in Adama sub-district and Wonjii area alone, 14 *riste gultegnaas* (hereditary landowners) hold a total area of 592.58 *gaashaa* (acres) of land. Of these, 202.25 *gaashaa* of land was owned by the Emperor alone.

The research works of some scholars, both the Oromo and the Westerners, reveal that after the imposition of serfdom, the fertile areas in Oromiyaa had been shared among the feudal autocrats on the basis of their traditional feudal ranks and level of allegiance to the self-styled emperors. For instance, a Governor General of a county or province, usually a person with a rank of *Dajjaazmaach* or commander of the gate (second feudal rank), owned 1,000 acres (*gaashaa*) of land; a *Fitaawraarii*- a person with third feudal rank, 300 acres of land; *Qanyaazmaach*-a person with fourth feudal title, 150 acres; and a *Nachi labaash* (settler soldier), from 2 to 20 acres depending on his level of faithfulness to the kings (see Gadaa Malbaa 1988).

...approximately *two-thirds* of the land was taken by the state; *one-third* was left to the local population [the farmers]. Of the first two-thirds, extensive stretches of land were given to the church, to ex-soldiers and...dignitaries. Others passed into the hands of Greek immigrants. Large portion of good went to the imperial family....The rest of the land was entrusted to local land owners [Oromo landlords] whose rights became hereditary (Bartels, 1983: 25).

Throughout the harsh evicting period of *gabbaar* in Ethiopia (1930-1974), there were tens of thousands of idle priests whose livelihood was based on indirect exploitation; and all of them had been allotted *rist land* (hereditary land). Each priest who lived in each province of Oromo homeland was given a minimum of *half to one* acre or *gaashaa* of land. The Emperor, his family members, noblemen and all high-ranking officials had been allocated hereditary land ranging from 200 to 700 *gaashaa* of land by the Emperor. According to the 1960s research in Ethiopia, land holding of the Orthodox Church falls between 25-40 percent of the total area of the country. "It is observable that individual churches, monasteries, and even clergy and lay officials own or control considerable tracts of land" (Lipsky, 1962: 108). Until the Revolution of 1974, individual churches, monasteries and clergy men received gifts of land, often with *gabbaars* from the Emperors and wealthy feudal landlords in provinces. In general, after the conquest of the 1880s, the conquered land was often granted to the privileged dignitaries by the government or the regional and local officials in the form of "*malkanyaannat*" (having the right to own the land which is confiscated from the evicted owners). Thus, *malkanyaannat* literally refers to the transferring of the land of the conquered people to the powerful feudal lords.

On the whole, the long years of a system of serfdom in Oromiyaa (1889-1974) may be seen as a period of *Abolitionist Movement* fraught with many untold problems wherein the *radicalization of pluralism* by the autocratic rulers, governing through fear and a reckless disregard for equitable strategy raised the issue of redefining the metaphors of the greatness of the empire and explaining in poetic terms the human plight it had created as revealed in the *gabbaar* period. The *geerarsa* as historical narrative thus captures the socio-economic and political life of the Oromo after moving the centre and power change of the 19th century in East Africa and the catastrophic effects of *utopian vision* of creating forced homogeneity in plural societies.

<i>maal gaaratti yaafnaree</i>	<i>maal cal jennee teenyaree</i>
<i>yaa joollee biyya keenyaa</i>	<i>akka waan jibba qabnnuu</i>
<i>mee akka waan dhibba qabnnuu</i>	<i>haa geeraru abbaan “bunaa”</i>
<i>maaf geeraraa bulleree</i>	<i>mee inni buna gunfure</i>
5 <i>akka waan mirga qannuu</i>	10 <i>mee inni ‘deega gurgure’</i>

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why do we drive the cattle into the mountain for grazing?

why have we sat in total silence ?

oh, the offspring of our land (country)

as if we were hostile to one another

as though we possessed hundreds of heads of cattle

let the “coffee” owner chant heroic song

why have we been chanting heroic songs all night

he who has grown coffee

5 as if we were victorious and free

10 he who has defeated destitution

Until the early 20th century, Oromiyaa was known for cattle breeding and abundance in East Africa and each Oromo family had several heads of cattle. Within the context of the pre-conquest period of the *Gadaa*, if a family owns less than one hundred heads of cattle, that family cannot be considered rich. Thus, the oral artist tells the story in flashbacks and compares the abundance of the past with political tensions, ruthless exploitation and the destitution of the post-empire. Line three of the poem reveals how the wealth of the past has been drained and replaced by a sordid poverty of the *gabbaar* time. In lines four and five, we see the failure in aims and the sinking-down of heroic spirit. The narrator highlights the problem of pretending to be brave without showing the qualities that characterize the rising generation of heroic age. In verse lines six and seven, the problem of divided heart and lack of determination is vividly shown.

“Coffee” is mentioned precisely because western Oromiyaa, especially Wallagga is one the major coffee producing regions in the country. The last three lines (eight to ten) praise those industrious peasants who have succeeded in their aims; and who continued to be masters of their own. ‘Let the coffee owner chant heroic song’...‘he who defeated (sold out) destitution’ shows the necessity of toiling hard in order to challenge the oppressors. In most cases, if a society is economically empowered, there is always an opportunity to win political power. In contrast, if the economic standing of a society is unfavourable, people usually continue to be powerless and dependent. In discussing the effective use of coffee, the poet is trying to put emphasis on this universal truth concerning people and wealth and the role the latter plays in the making of a truly living society. The verbal artist thus describes the coffee as a visible symbol of economic power, which needs to be used wisely by the true owners of the land. He also denounces the deafening silence of the cowards, and at the same time offers verbal rewards to the peasants who defy the imposed system of serfdom.

<p><i>geerar, gearar, naan jedhu</i> <i>eessa abbaa koon gearara</i> <i>namni yaada yeelalu</i> <i>attamiin haa geararu</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>they urge me to chant heroic song but there is no way of singing a man who is depressed and sick with worries how can I sing heroic song</p>	<p><i>5 yaa joollee baddaa baddaa</i> <i>kan mormi alangaa fardaa</i> <i>yaa joollee baddaa Beeggii</i> <i>bara baraan joore kaa</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>5 oh, offspring (boys) of the highland who have slender (charming) necks of horse the offspring of Beggi highland I became a wanderer every year</p>
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The poem explores the responsibility of the poet to his people, and in the process it takes a very critical look at the socio-economic and political conditions in the early 20th century Oromiyaa. The poet describes the dilemma and the uncertainty that consumed him during the problematic period of the *gabbaar* system. The bleak prospect made impossible for him to express his feelings, to find his way to be free from the tension caused by eviction and economic difficulties. In its centrality, the poem discusses the outrages, hopelessness and disappointments of the annexation period.

In fact, the assignment of *gabbars* to both classes of soldiers was much the same. The common soldiers and ordinary *naftaññas* were allotted between *two* and *ten gabbars* each depending on the family needs, the number of available cultivators and the concentration of troops in any given area...and that officers with the rank of *balambaras*, *qaññazmatch* or *grazmatch* were often allotted between *fifteen* and *twenty* peasants [semi-slave serfs]. (Marcus, 1975: 192).

Boehmer (2005: 5-6) has singled out the fact that nationalist movements have relied on literature, on novelists, singers, and playwrights, to hone rallying symbols of the past and the self through which dignity might be reasserted. The well-known image of the oppressed speaking out of silence has meant a willed intervention by colonized people in the fictions and myths that presumed to describe them. The poem raises issues concerning the problem of being evicted as the result of land expropriation, and the way the Qeellam peasants suffered the degrading condition when the disruptive land holding system robbed them of the right to use their land. The folk poet thus describes with indignation the appalling tensions the marginalized society has experienced by pointing out the seriousness of that bitter experience and the pain it has caused. Phrases such as *akkamiin haageeraru*-“how can I speak/sing”...*namni yaada yeelalu*-“a man who is depressed and sick”...illustrate the burdened feelings of the poet. In the conflict system of unequal power, the *geerarsa* is usually chanted during victories and when people celebrate the work of great heroes with strong feelings of happiness and excitement. Therefore, the narrator reminds us of the absence of this euphoric mood on the one hand, the way the peasant populations in Wallagga (Qeellam), have been terribly affected by the growing silence of fear on the other.

The first four lines (1-4) deal with the problem of total hopelessness and despair; and how the *gabbaar-landlord* relations relegated the previously rich society to subordinate status. The last three lines (5-7) describe the way the fascinating appearance of the Beggi Oromo disappeared (faded away) because of forced destitution and how they became landless and *wanderers*.

<i>mootiin mukaa waa sadii</i>	<i>mootiin ilmaa waa sadii</i>
<i>gaafa firri bulfatu</i>	<i>tokko jaanna dhalata</i>
<i>odaa Jilli dhaabatu</i>	<i>tokko gamna [hayyuu] dhalata</i>
<i>tokko muka yaa'iiti</i>	10 <i>tokko arjaa dhalata</i>
5 <i>isiin biraa caraancarittii mukaa</i>	<i>inni biraa caraancaree lugna</i>

gottoon maaf hin murre



the king of trees is endowed with three qualities:

on account of the gathering of relatives for special occasion

the sycamore tree planted by the **Jila**

the other one is the tree for general meeting (conference)

5 except these, the rest of them are the useless ones

why don't we cut them down with the axe?

the king son is endowed with three qualities:

golfaan maaf hin fudhanne



one is born hero

one is born wise

one is born generous

10 except these, the others

are useless

why are they not taken

away by the evil spirit

In dealing with the *geerarsa* genre, each event must be placed in its historical context. The narrator tries to compare the qualities of trees with those of human beings. The first, second and third verse lines enumerate some important functions of the useful trees-the way they serve the needs of the society. In the context of religious ritual, the *Jila* are groups of people who make pilgrimages to the *Abbaa Muudaa* or father of the anointment to receive his blessing. The sycamore (*odaa*) is a popular tree in Oromiyaa simply because of its symbolic importance. The meeting of the *Gadaa Parliament (Chaffee)* of the Oromo took place in the shade of the trees, specially the sycamore tree, which according to the society is a powerful image of freedom and solidarity. Culturally, it is viewed as a representation of knowledge/wisdom, peace, stability, the nation's dignity, democracy, common good, love and prosperity. In ancient times, the *Jila* groups or the pilgrims used to plant sycamore trees on returning home from pilgrimage; and they believe that it is a 'Sacred Tree.' For this reason, it is often seen as the king of trees.

Oral narratives as the centre of social philosophy involve the study of nature and the deeper meaning of human life. The verbal artist describes the beauty and imperfection of nature and the qualities of universal man through analogy. In the same way as human beings, trees have different qualities depending on their degree of use. Some are extremely important, some have minor importance, and others have the least importance or are not even useful.

The three verse lines: seven, eight and nine delineate the qualities, which characterize man. The poet admires those who are endowed with wisdom, intelligence, generosity and heroism. Though he is incapable of having insight into the wider definition of human values, he has pinpointed the

reality that a man who is devoid of these noble qualities is obviously a burden to his society. Despite its imperfection, the poem conveys the most instructive experience of all time.

<i>farda magaala hin bitu</i>	<i>dullacha kufe kaasa</i>
<i>kan booqaa qabu hin dhiisu</i>	<i>mucaa du'e awwaala</i>
<i>durba magaala hin fuudhu</i>	<i>booyeen boorataan maali</i>
<i>kan kaarruu qabdu hin dhiisu</i>	10 <i>kan takka hin caraanin</i>
5 <i>lola maaliif jibbuu</i>	<i>ilmi abbaan dhalche maali</i>
<i>jabbii badde barbaada</i>	<i>kan takka hin waraanin</i>

↓

I will not buy a brown horse
 I will not miss the one with a blaze on its forehead
 I will not marry a light-dark girl
 I will not miss the one who is gap-toothed
5 why do they hate war?
 it is looking for the lost calves

↓

it lifts up the fallen old
 it buries the dead boy
 why does the warthog dig?
10 without grunt with joy once
 why is it that a true son is born?
 if he has never fought

The self-contradictory nature of man and the problem of personality clashes in social groups are points of greater concern in this poem. In the first four verse lines, the poet tells the story about a horse and a woman with special reference to their colours. He continues explaining about his choice of the type of a horse (refers to a fighter horse) and then compares this with a light-dark girl having fine teeth. The attractive and bright-stripes of colour (*booqaa*) of the horse correspond to the fine teeth (*kaarruu*) of an elegant girl. The two fascinating colours are the choice of the poet; and in the context of war, these fine colours symbolize hope and victory. On the contrary, it is not his preference to buy the horse with *dark-brown* colour-*farda magaala* and a girl having *light-dark* skin-*durba magaala*. The *dim* colour which is viewed negatively by the poet is probably associated with the bleak prospect. He has intentionally chosen these striking satirical images to impart misfortunes and defeat, which according to him are the ugly aspects of human life.

In verse lines six, seven and eight, the hero singer has tried to justify his reasons for supporting wars. He believes that just wars are essential because they uplift the spirits of those who are silenced by unjust wars. The metaphorical phrase *jabbii badde barbaada*-“it looks for the lost calves”, is to refer to getting back one’s liberty. The allusive term *jabbii*-“calves” is probably

equivalent to *paradise lost*, which in this case suggests the denied human dignity. The two satirical phrases, *booyeen boorataan*-“a warthog that digs” and *ilmi...hin waraanin*-“a son who does not fight/kill” emphasize the problem of moral strength, the inability to meet social standards and the unfitness results from lack of resoluteness. The Oromo employ the satirical and humorous expression, *booyee boorataa*, to make the negative remark about the contradictory behaviour of the timid people who are fond of making loud noises but who can hardly implement what they say.

harka jiruu teessumni cufaa hin banu

wodeellotu/qeerrotu baasa baase

mataa jiruu teessumaan boolla hin galu

karkarootu baasa baase

5 *janni hin luuxu*

qeerransatu baasa baase

↓

he who has a *hand*, does not open the door

with his *bottom* (buttock)

it is unimaginable that the *bachelor* has done it

he who has a *head*, does not enter a hole with his bottom

it is unimaginable that the *warthog* has done it

5 the *hero* does not sneak

it is unimaginable that the *tiger* (leopard) has done it

the *coward* does not climb a tree

lugni/lunni muka hin koru

jaldeessatu baasa baase

tumtuun kolfaa hin deemtu

10 *qamaleetu baasa baase*

daldalaan muka hin yaabbatu

weennitu baasa baase

↓

it is unimaginable that the

monkey has done it

the *smith* does not keep on laughing

10 it is unimaginable that the *ape* has

done it

the *trader* does not mount/climb a tree

it is unimaginable that the *colobus*

monkey has done it

This poem examines the antithetical qualities in the same person. It enumerates the self-contradictory nature of both human and animal characters on the one hand, and the way the behavioural difficulties have affected their image on the other. The contemptible acts of the cowards and their personality deficit are also displayed in the poem. The narrator has used poetic diction and satirical language to clarify factors that contribute to the social debasement and a decline in moral standards. In lines 1-4, the reversal of the behaviour of the incompetent individuals is shown without comparing human beings with wild animals. The bachelor man has been criticized for his strange manner; and the action of the warthog is compared with the depreciated human character.

The satirical phrase *janni hin luuxu*-“a hero/brave doesn’t sneak” (line five), belittles a vaunting person whose actions contradict what he appears to be. In the last four lines, the two timid beasts: *jaldeessa*-“monkey” and *weennii*-“colobus monkey,” and their actions are linked with human beings having antithetical characteristics. *Muka hin yaabbatuu*-“climbing a tree” (line eleven) denotes power and great achievements, which are connected with the victor. The poet uses this metaphoric language to satirize a situation in which those who do not deserve the highest position in the society have been wrongly valued. The delineation of the two beasts shows a crisis of representation and inefficiency. Hence, the representative animal characters symbolize the gutless members of the society, who, despite being devoid of courage, have succeeded in holding a better position. The trader and the colobus monkey are discussed in contradistinction to each other in a sense that the monkey, which is timid and less intelligent than the human being, won the game. The reference here is that the better position is attained through deceit or showing a false front than ability or bravery. The analogy between an ape and a smith indicates lower status. In traditional Oromo, smiths were classified as lower classes. The poet attempts to bring to our attention this wrong view of the traditional society which relegated the black-smith to a melancholic state and a solitary life of silence. He has compared the despised and/or neglected human being with an ape (*qamalee*), and according to him, the latter is more free and happier than the former.

The Poetic Diction and Literary Qualities

The Character	The Antagonistic Images	The Substance (Social Satire)
1. Qeerroo (bachelor)	Harka (hand) Vs Teessumni (bottom) dexterous	The reversal of behaviour. It is not indolence (literally, ‘bottom’) that can open the golden gate, but the dexterous hands.
2. Karkarroo (warthog)	Mataa (head) Vs Teessuma (bottom)	The reversal of behaviour and lack of confidence. Giving more prominence to passivity and instinctive action than to great diligence and human intellect.
3. Qeerransa (leopard/ tiger)	Janna (hero) Vs Luuxuu (sneak)	The crisis of appearance. A failure to prove what one appears to be.

4. Jaldeessa (monkey)	Lugni/lunni (cowardice) Vs Muka koruu (climbing a tree)	Succeeding in seizing power without exhibiting heroic spirit.
5. Tumtuu (black smith) / Qamalee (ape)	Kolfaaa deemuu (gales of laughter or shrieking with laughter) Vs Caldhisuu (seriousness/soberness)	Showing false front is acknowledged and rewarded rather than seriousness and toiling hard.
6. Daldalaa (trader)/ Weennii (colobus monkey)	Muka yaabbatuu (sit on a tree) Vs Muka yaabbatuu dadhabuu (failure to sit on a tree)	Winning power game through trickery rather than genuine effort (capability).

Recapitulation

The contemporary African literary studies shows that the oral literary genres serve as the medium for the expression of historical knowledge and have universal truth to impart. They are the inseparable part of history in the making and the agent in constructing a culture's sense of reality. Therefore, as a body of knowledge created by the shifting of historical process, the *geerarsa* narrative also involves power relations, complex contradictions and has powerful effects on the past and present Oromo history.

All human beings like to look back into the days that are passed without which a deep sense of history can hardly be ingrained in the present generation. In the context of the *geerarsa* poetry, identity is regarded as the centre of proper social function. For instance, for the generation of *gabbaar* time, there was a clear and inextricable relationship between the newly imposed socio-political and economic situation in which the society found itself and its own definition of the past glorious times and a desire to fight for the lost economic power and political freedom. Invariably, the Oromo heroic tales communicate the idea that the and *post-gabbaar*, with its dehumanizing character and callousness, obliterated human identity, but that there existed a dream that could alter the subversive relations of humanity by restoring individual dignity and personal self-worth. "Because of its strong cultural linkage, the heroic epic obviously recalls explicitly or implicitly certain historical events in the life of the people" (Lindfors, 1977: 259). It is because of its immense cultural and historic significance that the traditional epic poetry is reconstructed and brought into new order and form. The interest of studying poetry becomes more universal and its understanding

has widely increased. The human sanity and vanity, the beauty of nature and its magnificence, the complexity and the magnitude of the daily civic life, together with the challenging universal problems are all meaningfully presented in poetry. Thus heroic epic in African social and political setting is a great art which demands profound skills in writing and analyzing, a good command of exploring its poetic language, wide knowledge and comprehensiveness of the human mind. It involves the whole field of the intellect, cultivated and enriched by the greatest intellects of our century.

In terms of literary tools, the *geerarsa* genre is bound with sophisticated metaphorical and satirical expressions, characterized by lofty styles in the narrative, and with a painted poetic tone. Its stylistic effect reveals that the hero is an embodiment of the successful generation of war times. As part of the cultural and historical events, the Oromo heroic literature offers information concerning the conquest and the nature of relationships in multiethnic Ethiopia. It provides diverse features of periods of resistance in which the meaning of genealogical references (kinship as a background of pride), the valour connected with hunting and wars, the social and political fall-out during war crises, the building of cults, fame, the values and sentiments are underlined. The technology of hunting and the many wars that were fought between the prey and predators, the oppressed and the oppressors of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were occasions for many patriotic poets and warriors seeking to regain national identity and freedom. The heroic actions so far discussed in the Oromo epic are thrust on almost all men by the circumstances under which they lived- the constant wars and hunting expeditions. The broad categories of eulogies employed constitute descriptive or deverbative and associative (references) in which the narrator describes the personal qualities- physical and moral stamina of the hero figure. We have also seen that praising the hero's associates: the people that surrounded him, the animals and weapons play a prominent role in the *geerarsa* narrative. "In these ways, oral literature even when it deals with events of history, presents constantly to members of contemporary society the standards of excellence that they should practice in their own interests and for the survival of the society" (Lindfors, 1977: 117).

The war time narrators in Africa are literary historians and chroniclers of their time, as well as the depositories of all the knowledge and/or experiences. A patriotic poet is, therefore committed to secure the sharing of those witnessed truths through the poetic language which inspires intellectual discourse, not only through the physical power. "Their success exalts emulation to the

attainment of intellectual eminence, sharpen their own wits and awaken those of others” (Adams, 1992: 509).

The dramatic delineation of the fighting scene is the favourite theme of heroic poetry. Since the hero actor or narrator is usually tested in the battlefield and reveals his worth, interest often centres on the dramatic performance of his natural talent. In the heroic age society, the physical and moral stamina seems to have gained less admiration unless they are backed with mimetic skill. In a conventional sense, honour can be attained so long as a powerful arm of the battleground is combined with the sharp eyes of the audience that help validate this protest narrative. Thus, the poem gains intensity if it portrays the image of the contending powers. It is only then that the audience can enjoy the dramatic physical movement and authentic story. In some cases, the audience also identify themselves as fighters in which applauding is accompanied by deep emotions; and in such circumstances, protest poetry can also be compared with the turbulent and emotional situation of the sport match and singing contest in which the audience are consumed with an atmosphere of joy.

The *geerarsa* genre recounts the outstanding deeds of great men and women in history. In terms of tone, it differs from the literary genres we have seen so far largely because it focuses on the problems of social and political life of the Oromo during a wave of wars, turmoil and dark era of conquests. Though the way it functions in the society may vary from heroic poetry elsewhere, this literary genre has been used by many traditional societies all over the world during different historical episodes to transmit their patriotic traditions from one generation to the next. Therefore, the Oromo society often identifies the existence of the *geerarsa* poetry with national character and the making of the patriotic society. The heroic age has been experienced and shared by many traditional peoples of the world; usually at a stage of development in which they have had to struggle for national existence and identity. In the modern African literary context, protest narrative is perceived by African literary scholars as a universal language of the people who want to be free.

The main function of poetry in heroic age-society appears to be to stir the spirit of the warriors to heroic actions by praising their exploits and those of their illustrious ancestors, by assuring a long and glorious recollection of their fame, and by supplying them with models of ideal behaviour (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Volume 6, 1973-1974: 906).

The *geerarsa* poetry is believed to ensure the permanence of heroic spirit of the ancestors and provide the society with a sense of cultural pride. The oral artist thus reflects the dominant values of the people which is rewarded by success. The champion of heroism is an invincible warrior. All the heroes symbolize ideal types for their social groups; but deviation from this moral standard is often labelled as non-conformist coward. Therefore, heroic tale corresponds in function to national history in celebrating the greatest achievements and culture heroes of the chosen nationals who are responsible for the survival of their nations. The popularity of this genre reached the highest point during the time of the painful encounter with migrant settlements and conquest in East Africa after the 1870s. Thus, the increasing demands for the growth of civil liberty and democracy have created a space for this genre. The protest literature in Africa has always been the medium through which the marginalized people asserted that their destiny did not lie in embracing the oppressors' identity, rather in the legitimacy of their people.

The heroic tale also involves the recognition of moral and political qualities that have been appropriately represented by the poet and the nature of the image of power relations painted by the tales. The narrative focuses on negative representations tend to follow a pattern in which marginalization leads to protest. Such national literature provides us with a number of scenarios taken from experience in which those who are disfavoured strive to voice their resentments to reverse the role relationships. The *geerarsa*, therefore, constitutes a voice that affects the interaction between the free and the unfree in such a way that the singing of heroic songs is an indication of exercising challenge and defiance. As Furniss (1995: 12) has pointed out, "Whether within the context of specific patronage relationships or within the broader ideological context of didactic genres, the language of orature is politically engaged in the sense that it is purposively directed to persuade people of a particular point of view or of the truth value of a particular representation."

The decline of heroic poetry can be explained in terms of social and political causes that take place in the process of human development. This development obviously includes technological advancement, religious movements, conquests, cultural influences of foreigners and others. In the course of such changes or processes, the heroic narrative can possibly disappear or its material may be elaborated and transformed to meet new needs. Thematically, the *geerarsa poetry* attempts to unfold the painful processes of using force than rethinking errors in which the oppressed society has lost cultural autonomy and self-assurance.

The heroic tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It entails, in the first place, a historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be the living witness of the process of history in which proper perception, not only of the distant past, but also of its presence is mirrored. It is in this way that the historical sense compels a heroic poet to record or write not merely the events of his generation, but also to be conscious of the timeless quality of the great works of the dead poets. As T. S. Eliot (see Adams 1992) has noted, a great poem always asserts its relation to the works of the dead poets and the writer or researcher must develop a sense of the presence of the events of the distant past. The contemporaneity and the aesthetic value of heroic poetry persist as long as the re-creation or re-construction process constantly takes place in time.

The spread of the impressionistic approach to the study of African oral literature had a disastrous effect on folk singers, as they were doomed to frustration and execution. This brought about corruption and the gradual disappearance of Oromo heroic tradition. At this degenerate stage of the society, heroic literature encountered what has been called "*literary elimination.*" The enrichment of the *geerarsa* poetry by the succeeding generations of genuine oral poets of the creative age almost ceased to exist after the 1890s, subsequent to which it has lost its popularity and influence.

CONCLUSION

In this study of oral literature, I have tried to cover different areas of discourse giving more attention to multidimensionality in which the phenomenon can properly be understood in its own right and in terms of its relevance to egalitarian ideals and modern thinking. In so doing, I have examined contextual and functional aspects underlying the narrators' world-view; and then moved on to the way in which the oral production as field of scholarship may best satisfy aesthetic appreciation. As I have emphasized time and again, oral literature must be read back into the circumstances in which it has originated. The concern for contextual interpretation and functional factors in the conduct of the creative adaptation and critical standards is meant to address the past events in the context of the present and the future.

I have started where the genius ancestors stopped and re-interpreted the verbal document we have inherited in a new fashion so that the Oromo can live their dreams. I hope the broad ideas and the intriguing issues I have raised will invite literary scholars to look at the Oromo oral narrative tradition with openness and explore areas that have hitherto been thought of as of no significant cultural, historical and aesthetic account. As I have tried to underline several times, the macro-approach to oral literary studies will certainly facilitate further investigation of the subject. Many intellectuals, both Westerners and the Oromo themselves, have made painstaking efforts to collect this body of literature, but of these only few have made serious attempts to analyze the wealth of material and to formulate a fairly broad judgement which can lead to a fruitful academic discourse. I think we can do better only if literary culture is put to the test in a contemporary setting and viewed as a sublime combination of aesthetic force that operates within a dynamic context.

Oral literary criticism often involves the meticulous exploration of the direction of human movement and the way that movement influences the growth of a body of literature or its declining. A talented folk narrator or storyteller may develop a variety of techniques that result in the cultivation of an oral repertoire over the period of time from different points-of-view and these enable him to enrich his narratives in a new form. On the other hand, many valuable oral materials

have been distorted, diluted and failed to meet academic discourse, or even die out because of cultural shifts, lack of skills of the practitioners or writers and due to the overwhelming political influences marked by structural inequalities. The investigation of such situations is immensely important in order to give a deep insight into the fundamental creative spirit that can bring about oral literary transformation.

The writing of oral literature has been so closely bound to the rapidly growing needs of putting in place the disappearing reality of the society and explaining in diachronic poetic terms the essence of the *Gadaa* equilibrium model. As the Oromo nation moves forward to emerge from long years of marginalization, silence and predicament to the new world of poetic imagination, the struggle for vigorous self-assertion and a seeking for alternatives have now preoccupied the minds of humanists and folklorist scholars. The search for the centrality of the *Gadaa civilization* has increased with extraordinary rapidity and force. The dislocated culture and indigenous literature (oral tradition) are to be shaped and elaborated more by a hope for the future than clinging to the stereotyped discourses of the past. In this work, one of my central arguments is that drawing a new and truer picture of the oral narrative tradition can help surmount the social and cultural deficit.

The struggle of the Oromo to maintain the national tradition of the *Gadaa* time throughout their history has been another transforming factor in their cultural life, and therefore, in their literary history. The oral tradition, which is a record of the nation's experience, has continued to be the most instructive subject in that it helped the succeeding generation to have greater responsibility in the making of a new society. The Oromo people have had a sufficiency of great oral historians and representative narrators who transmitted whatever in their history that could in their time be put into the form of artistic communication. In this work, my focus is particularly on assessing the varied and extensive experience of the traditional past and the objective of this assessment is to record in written form and explain or acknowledge the great work of wise ancestors, which despite the repression of several decades, has immensely contributed to the survival of Oromo identity and values. My effort is then to make the suppressed national culture and corpus of literature speak to the imagination. The exploration of a series of socio-cultural and political 'waves' is an attempt to show the complex developments, confrontations and the forcing circumstances that relegated the native culture and literature to nominal existence. Folk literary tradition, as I have tried to illuminate

in this project, is a traditional narrative in which emotional feelings, aesthetic and intellectual values are articulated in excellent expressions. It is the record of dogged human efforts to address people's needs, define the physical world and overcome serious challenges. It has been magnificently used by the Oromo in the service of history, of cultural tradition, of religious ritual, or political purposes; and for this reason, it has no sharp boundaries.

So far, I have raised various intriguing issues and discussed in *humanistic* terms, how literary culture continued to have a powerful function and influence, its peculiar and universal characteristics. By humanistic I mean a rational approach to the discipline for the purpose of reflective understanding, transparency and genuine portrayal of the whole issues. We have seen how oral literature serves as an instrument of national culture and history as they existed, developed and changed. I have endeavoured to capture the *rise* and *fall* of Oromo history, national culture and literature, the metaphor of domination, the shifting of power, the subversive effects of unnatural relations between the empire-builders and the Oromo, and the privatization of the social, cultural, economic and political life of the latter by the former. Altogether, these strong impulses towards change, refinement, resistance and the needs to create more space for freedom and the democratization of discourse characterize Oromo folklore literature. We can, therefore, associate the oral narrative tradition with the successive socio-political and historical swings of Oromiyaa, which helped us to exert more energy to find solutions to our own peculiar problems which kept us in isolation for years.

The long road to self-discovery forms the basis of the folk literary tradition which depicts a series of events from which the narrator's psychic state has evolved. In their efforts to promote the culture of civil society, the oral narrators have formulated numerous imaginative ideas about social development and presented them in the most stylistic and effective combinations. In this project, I have argued that the New Criticism approach to these combinations evokes ceaseless possibilities of creativity and legitimizes self-empowerment. To me, the study of Oromo oral literary genres deepens the meaning of freedom and strengthens our vision of the world where wisdom and peace reign.

The centrality of self-definition in the genres is meant to expand moral, political, artistic and intellectual horizons for the people trampled over and I believe this eventually gives new opportunities for being. In the process, the society is likely to develop a sense of coping with

egalitarian life. Perhaps the most liberating concept of the folk literary narrative is its openness to broad perspectives, alternative explanations and the recognition of possibilities of rediscovering values through the process of poetic imagination. The movement to ensure this imagination increased at a rapid rate in indigenous literature during and after the 1970s Revolution. The rise of revolutionary consciousness and the change of power of the period urged a shift to attitudinal change in order to redefine self-hood. This shift was attended by the dawn of a new and dynamic oral literary ideal, an ideal achievable only through the repudiation of all depreciating notions that militated against a positive self-image.

Whenever we study the literary tradition in a modern context, it is always necessary not to view modernity in its paradoxical sense in which the inaccuracy of history, breaking with the treasured materials and the liberation from the established customs and patterns, have become the result. In other words, a modern way of thinking does not mean moving to another extreme position which may lead to a sense of loss, alienation, frustration, the disinheritance of norms, the deprivation of moral quality and the disaster of human imagination. The modernists, who see literary culture and history as separate phenomena are often subject to failure and unable to find their starting-point, which defines their true national character and values.

Today, I am still fascinated by the act of writing, the processes, the trouble, the pain, and the joy that we go through in order to put in words what we feel, what we recall vaguely but which insists on being recalled, what we envision whether it is full-length images or enigmatic flashes running through our brain like a storm of truth (Bernstein, 1990: 73).

Oral tradition as an integral part of history is a living educational document which depicts many challenging circumstances and depressing social and political scenes as well as the revolutionary visions, glorious chapters and great successes in Oromo history. As survivors, people narrate historical and cultural events of their times and the non-diminishing truths of those events must continue to exist through reconstruction and interpretive criticism.

One might argue that the Oromo literary culture contains almost all the ingredients that constitute egalitarian values and identity empowerment. For this reason, it has been my longstanding aspiration to rediscover the essential truth, the seriousness, the relevance and the civilizing function of the corpus of literature of the *Gadaa* time. In writing this work, I have

emphasized some different ways as to how modern critics could respond to the questions concerning the nature and aesthetic quality of Oromo oral literature and how it is to be judged or evaluated on the basis of the truly literary ground (in its own right) that can help the mounting of intellectual interest.

Oral literature, which is the product of culture, needs to be examined from the perspective of cultural studies. Here, the emphasis is invariably put on literature as the cultural event with reference to social, historical and political roots and ramifications. The notion of oral literary performance is central to the study of cultural communication. It is through the study of performance tradition that literary culture integrates its scientific and humanistic aims effectively. In terms of analytical approach, oral tradition focuses on harmonious social interaction and the type of communicative competence that occur in the process of human relations. Therefore, oral performance involves a broad field of studies such as social and behavioural sciences. On the whole, oral literature makes a significant contribution to comparative analysis and the effective study of communicative events, with reference to focusing on the stylized mode of expression. This means, the scientific explanation of the oral narrative tradition enhances the aesthetic and evaluative dimension of the spoken word. Within this concern, the oral text plays the leading role in the interpretation and appreciation of cultural and historical events.

The study of traditional literature becomes effective and makes sense for later generations of readers and writers as long as the time and the cause for its creation are scrupulously examined. In writing folklore literature, an enquiry into the historical factors is of capital significance. In the African setting, the great creative epochs, like the *Gadaa*, are often subject to stagnation merely because in its very creation it did not find itself in the midst of intellectual culture. For the creation of a master work of literature, especially the oral art, *the power of man* (abstract knowledge) alone cannot help succeed in transforming the society unless *the power of the moment* (the atmosphere in which it finds itself) is in concurrence with modern thinking. Folk literary critics stress the validity of considering the historicism approach for two main reasons: first, historical critics provide a context of background information of the past event which is necessary for comprehending the situation that accounts for literary production and how it was perceived in its period. Second, the historicism approach to literature reveals how the oral narrative tradition reflects identity, attitude, ideology and values of the time in which it was produced; and it evaluates the image of the distant

past within the context of a contemporary setting. These two general methods of looking at literary culture might be termed as *Historicism* and *New Historicism* respectively. In the contemporary oral literary studies, the historicism critics seem to have been given prominence simply because they adequately explain how the oral text must be read and understood with a sense of the time, the place, and the objective realities that have contributed to its persistence and relevance. Every time we discuss the Oromo folk-literature, we need to capture the social and historical background of the *Gadaa* period because every indigenous genre is the product of its time and its world.

In the investigation of oral literature, we share the imaginative vision of the narrator and adopt his way of perceiving the changing social and political scenes. In so doing, we unfold the layers of meaning in a text and discuss their significance in social, historical and political terms. Through reading a wide variety of literary genres, we develop interest in entering the new imaginative world and stating our views about the ideas and values expressed in the text. In the process of broadening and sharpening our perception of the folk literary universe, we are likely to capture more about the *poetic meaning* and deepen our appreciation of their artistic achievements.

The literary culture can be understood as an effective means of communication through which social processes and historical situations are properly perceived by every generation. It provides a linguistic model, provokes intellectual discourse, moral and cultural norms without which it becomes problematic to characterize man as a rational being. The coming into existence of oral narrative as part of social development must be seen as an exercise which enables an individual to respond with the appropriate historical sense to the vocabulary of the products of the distant culture. Through folklore literature, the oral narrators make the voice of their people heard, reconstruct social and political scenes and bring them to the living audience. The whole range of analytical methods which the literary scholars have developed from various ways of analyzing the genres show that literary tradition reinforces social and moral responsibilities. The complete translation and contextual analysis of verbal narratives, the constant production of new ideas and the interpretation or re-definition of all kinds of treasured materials that insure the continuation of egalitarian traditions and the national identity constitute what is known as the transformation of verbal art into literary dynamism. Oral literature presents many prominent issues for investigation. There are many instructive points that can be raised and examined within the context of social transformation, global cultural communication and contemporary challenges. The exploration of the

storehouse of wisdom literature means that there is always a possibility of discovering more about our identity and values and to bring them out in the open.

The Oromo have numerous traditional narratives: witticisms (proverbs), the variety of folk songs, poems and folktales which helped them to maintain the broad outlines of their original world in the continent. In the contemporary African situation, literary tradition has been considered as an image forming agent precisely because it is fundamental to the assertion of traditional values and identities. Many Oromo writers and intellectuals believe that it is central to their literary projects. Oral literature can be viewed as the expression of the daily life of the people, whether it is related to peace, war, euphoric situation, melancholic state, crisis, solidarity, love, prosperity or misfortune. It may be laudatory, ironic, humorous or satirical; and it is composed with reference to the social situations to celebrate either the victory of nations or to lament tragic events. In spite of the imperfection of the language, the oral narrative as identity marker enables us to have profound insight into egalitarian life and national history.

Within the context of modern tradition, the Oromo society is well known to history and social sciences for the democratic and republican character of its institution, the *Gadaa* ritualistic system. Indeed, the living evidence of a literary culture suggests that the institutions of the *Abbaa Gadaa* (literally, the founding father of the *Gadaa*) have been in favour of a democratic ethos and for this reason, they remained as a part of the most highly cherished values in Oromo thought for centuries. This work is the outcome of the discovery that oral narrative appears to be among the most powerful of the numerous forms of artistic expressions in the *Gadaa* tradition, which serves to perpetuate democratic principles. It encompasses different historic and social situations of the past, as well as the current realities in which the dynamics of cultural identity, political process and the daily representation of social life are underlined. This means that folk literary genres, as popular representations of the social dynamism in Oromo history are also the integral part of academic discourse in which the folklorists explore in great detail the direction of socio-cultural and political change and the way people are affected or gained benefit from that change.

The verbal narrative has been constructed in a context, which seeks to blend traditions with contemporary realities. It raises many instructive questions, which lead us to more creativity and new possibilities. As part of the cultural revival of the post-renaissance, the oral art has a deep-rooted history in the society's famous creative thinkers, folk singers, narrators, storytellers and in

the performances. Its existence gave further impetus to the search for knowledge and the beginning of the ancient civilization of the Oromo. Though this national literature plays the greatest role in the making of an egalitarian society, it has become an institutionalized field of study very recently. In much the same way as global literary culture, the Oromo oral literature continued to be the most powerful master narrative both in times of freedom and during the catastrophic events and the traumatic process of the conquest in the history of the nation. In the New World of globalization or what has been called the post-nation constellation, it is associated with the *Great Age of African Patriotism* and nations' moving toward modern thinking, freedom and liberation of the mind. The indigenous genres, as the product of the rising generation of the 'Age of Wisdom,' are also viewed as the celebration of the coming into being of the Oromo nation and as the assertion of egalitarian values and norms.

The oral narrative, especially proverbs and trickster tales (fables) bring into play the recurring common themes such as moral issues, wealth and power, kindness, generosity, misjudgement, genuineness, treason, honesty, mischief, sensibility, follies and the problem of being affected by self-seeking attitudes. The distinctive organizing motifs in prose narratives and poems- the trickster stories, proverbial lore, satirical poems, folk songs and the *geerarsa* (heroic tale) include the journey of life and the way the society struggles to complete the process of that journey. This process involves, obstructions, defeat, triumph, moral and social corruption, patriotism, successful and unsuccessful love affairs, crises, failure, victory, in short, melancholy and euphoric occasions. The artistic value and the social meanings of folklore genres cannot be unfolded unless the researchers carefully examine an indigenous African sense of beauty.

In the socio-cultural and political life of the Oromo, every situation has been accompanied by poetic language narratives. The prosperous nomads praise their domestic animals, which are the source of their prestige; the patriotic heroes eulogize their brave nationals, the young herdsman sings panegyric songs to win romantic love affairs, the wise men (*hayyuus*) use humorous, satirical and instructive expressions in public speeches when they comment on social aberration and misjudgement, a diligent worker sings co-operative songs to create an enthusiastic atmosphere for the work to be accomplished. On the whole, the society values oral literature because it ensures a drive for *cultural empowerment* and *social cohesion*. The Oromo is a folklore society and has had a great philosophy of depth and value, which needs to be investigated and defined. It has a long

history of dealing with its social and political issues through the medium of poetic language. Indeed, the cultural traditions and oral art are built into the social structure of the society so deeply that their significance seems natural. For this reason, they are often viewed as the expressions of natural philosophy and the national character wherein the society sees its perfection and imperfection, its weaknesses and strengths, its true picture of the past and present, and its place in the changing world. It raises various fundamental issues, which test the ingenuity of even the most imaginative mind of our time.

In its centrality, the Oromo oral tradition addresses the issue of egalitarian conduct and sensibility; and its study is seen as a major landmark in the building of the self-empowered national community. It is, therefore, imperative to organize scholarly research in rural and urban Oromiyaa to strengthen new strategies for studying indigenous literature and to bolster the active participation of the verbal narrators: literary historians, storytellers and folk-singers. More significantly, the work of documentation (filming and recording) should not be left only to specialist academics. Rather the young intellectuals should be trained for field research, especially at the local levels so that popular participation of the rural population helps accentuate the transformation of modern culture and literature. Since oral tradition is the core of national identity and the restoration of democratic values, its inclusion in the curriculum- from lower elementary to higher learning institutions, is of vital importance. The desire to create a mass-based intellectual culture and a sense of self-confidence increase when the young generation is oriented towards the scientific study of oral tradition and if this body of literature is taught as a field of scholarship in schools and universities.

We live at the crossroads of a constantly changing world where the fascinating old cultures and oral traditions are overshadowed by modernity. The point is then how to combine the two so that modernity will not be affected by abandoning the treasured values of the past. In the study of Oromo verbal narratives, our main focus should be to bring together the peculiar qualities of the remote past and the present, without, of course, returning to the old but to transform it. This is how the study of the survival becomes meaningful. We learn more and understand ourselves better through the comparative approach; and this paves the way for the exploration of the past and present condition of the Oromo, not just in a mechanical search for identity but also from the concrete historical and socio-cultural perspectives.

Until recently, the image that the world community had of the Oromo and their literary achievement was formulated by the writers who adhere to the traditional discourse of one-sidedness; and obviously the narrative construction of that image was concocted to legitimize impressionistic approaches to oral narrative. It is, therefore, of great importance that the Oromo unfold appropriately their cultural and literary universe to the world. The exploration of oral literature opens up a new world of the imagination that broadens our horizon of viewing the traditional way of life. From the new perspective, we see that we cannot allow ourselves to be trapped by the image we hold of ourselves in the old world. The transformation from the diminishing subservience to a greater self-worth and the making of a rational society can take place if oral literature is viewed as the *collective memory bank* of Oromo experience in history; and if they are carefully treated and interpreted so that they can capture the imagination of the young generation.

Folklore is one of the cornerstones of East African literature. It expresses the traditional values that form a basis for contemporary East African culture. Since literature is an artistic expression of the social reality, it follows that folklore provides a firm foundation for written East African literature. In the 1970s and 1980s, scholars and researchers in the region made great efforts in encouraging the preservation of folklore and in furthering its pursuit as an academic subject. Apart from researchers and scholars, East African creative writers *have breathed new life* into folklore by maintaining it to contribute to the creativity of their works (Benson, 2005: 522).

The post-independence period of the 1960s in African history was marked by the great literary revival in the continent and one of the major concerns of folklorist scholars and creative writers had been to devise a broad research programme of collecting, analyzing and publishing the texts of oral literature. The continuous research of years in this field of study actually is the background for using the oral art as the basis for producing original and indigenous work of literature that reflects a more or less modern perspective. The whole research efforts of re-defining the corpus of narrative is to demonstrate that African traditional culture is still relevant for articulating contemporary issues, needs and goals. Okot P'Bitek of Uganda has made the most valuable contribution to the study of folklore in East Africa. In his work, "*African Cultural Revolution*" (1973) he underlined the didactic and social value of literary culture and calls for its serious consideration. P'Bitek has influenced

East African literary scholars to give folk-literature the attention it deserves. The rapid movement for the study of indigenous art in East Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, and the rise of folklorists such as Mwangi, Ogutu, Roscoe, Kipury, Mutahi and Kabira in Kenya, P'Bitek in Uganda, and Mlama in Tanzania, has reinforced the issue of the rediscovery of African identity. A new way of looking at Oromo oral literature after the 1970s is closely linked with the increasing movement in East Africa for redefining an African sense of national identity.

The purpose of studying oral literature in a contemporary perspective is to show as accurately as possible whether it meets the needs of a changing world. Within this analytical parameter, our main concern should be to use the yardstick that would best enable us to evaluate the artistic function of this kind of traditional literature. It is probably most rewarding to try to trace the literary sensibility and aesthetic quality of African oral art from history, the established values and identities. The integrated approach (macro-interpretive technique) to the Oromo oral narrative is thus to address the particular, amusing, historical and cultural events which help literary scholars construct new meanings, ideas, values and identity. The most interesting aspect of this study is that the contextual and thematic exploration of the genres in the specific historical moment of the *Gadaa* provides us with a modern thinking, a greater sense of promoting democratic values and a proper understanding of the way the society struggled to overcome socio-political and moral deficits. Most importantly, I have argued that the transformation of oral literature from abstract narrative to expressive form (intellectual discourse) empowers us to discover the layers of new meanings and poetic sense which characterize the artistic form of a work of literature.

In this oral literary study, I have tried to demonstrate the new trend in Oromo verbal art emphasizing the functions of various genres in a particular cultural and historical moment. In so doing, I have focused on three major folklore features: the pragmatic, cognitive, and expressive; which constitute cultural conceptions and striking metaphors. Though painful it may be, a broad interdisciplinary approach to this intriguing body of literature not only leads the scholars to some important issues and realistic investigations, but also helps them to perceive and judge this oral material in its own right.

In the study of contemporary poetics, the concept of an oral literary genre has in fact assumed new importance, not, of course, in the same way as the prescriptive set of rules or *minimal units* (*fixities* of ideas) of the traditional past, but the continuous shift in the method of critical theory to

critical practice (expressive orientation) has brought about a drastic change both in the conception and the labelling of literary genres. In a modern setting, a folklore genre is understood as a set of cultural norms and people's expectations, so the structure of our reading and writing of oral texts should essentially be based on these broad concepts. The investigation of a particular genre in a cultural and historical environment always allows us to perceive variations in the use of convention and to come up with fruitful analyses.

The Oromo verbal art has been dictated by fixed images, stereotyped discourse and assumptions. The instruments of analysis of such an approach continued to be restricted merely to certain facets of the real nature of the subject. The diverse examples I have used in discussing each event are to justify and/or prove that the analysis which forces the oral genre to have a single and fixed meaning will obviously hamper the intellectual creative act and cloud our profound understanding of social and political circumstances. The folk literary narrative as a social metaphor essentially demands the discovery of broad social and cultural meanings and this implies that more layers of poetic meanings can be created in the act of reading wisdom literature diachronically and synchronically.

All the way through, I have proved that the oral literary tradition as an art form contains a timeless quality. In order to explicate the aesthetic value in a new fashion, I have clarified the main analytical tools of the texts, contexts, cultural tradition, history, genres and scholarly practices. These are thoroughly discussed as academic discourse and theoretical constructs. In this perspective, the scholarly investigation of the interdisciplinary functions of the folklore genres generates what we call openness to new possibilities and the creative dimensions that involve a re-definition without restraint, or in a sense, the interpretive mode of explaining literary culture.

Another dimension of my argument is that the Oromo literary tradition as an integral part of cultural and historical evidence never becomes obsolete with the changing time and attitudes; and neither can it be viewed as a static monument which says the same thing forever. In this connection, I have discussed the central issues concerning consciousness representation. If the oral narrator represents the society's actions, thoughts, collective feelings, interests, visions, dreams, in short, consciousness, then one has to ask to what extent these representations will be relevant or important in the course of people's attitudinal changes. In the contextual criticism of an oral literary narrative, we must always distinguish and/or be able to identify a kind of consciousness representation: the

collective feelings, thoughts, interests, etc., that determine the nature of relationships between the producer (narrator) and the audience (society), and correspondingly between historical situations and the cultural tradition. My overriding concern of looking at the oral art in a contemporary perspective is, therefore, to prove the way the interplay between the representing agents (characters) and the consciousness representation in a given space and time determines the continuity and social relevance of oral literary discourse.

The traditionalists' fuzzy interpretations have failed to address the aesthetic principles on which the Oromo oral literature is executed. Moreover, the *blanket theory* (the superficial analysis of literature) that was used to discuss the African indigenous art merely focused on an exotic appeal with little or no substance. In such a situation, an aesthetic disaster will inevitably happen. In the analysis of the oral narrative, I have categorically rejected the formalists' impulses and their notions of a static conception of literary tradition. Probably the most fundamental argument that may evoke scholarly interest is that the analytical strategies which reduce the oral production to only few formulae and self-referentiality, without foregrounding the idea of the narrator (performer), can hardly explain the enquiry into the value and aesthetic merit of this kind of literature. It is, therefore, most likely that such an approach creates a cliché literature, or an amputated work of art, which is totally removed from its context.

One of the most important steps the study of literary tradition can take is the comparative analysis of this field as cultural, moral and behavioural systems. As I have emphasized time and again, the traditional approach to oral literary studies seems to lose sense and it would be useful to transcend a certain low level of pedagogical utility. With this regard, I have forcefully argued that the new research that embraces contemporary concerns provides a more adequate intellectual criticism and a sense of poetic tradition upon which the authentic cultural and literary heritage must be based.

I conclude that drawing a new and truer picture of the indigenous African genres and the interpretive response to this field of scholarship will facilitate the path for the scholars to examine appropriately the multifaceted nature of the subject. The current research shows that, Oromiyaa despite its wealth of literary material continues to be a literary desert. The study of the Oromo oral tradition as form of literature in its own right is, therefore, to regain that literary wealth.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX I

Oromiffa Tropes as Essential Ingredients of Oral Literary Criticism

If the purpose of literary criticism is to discover as accurately as possible the essential quality of a particular work of art, then our aim should be to apply the appropriate language which will be the most useful for our study. One should agree that the poetic sense of the oral literary genre can systematically be investigated if each spoken word is adequately controlled. In a work of literature, like the oral narrative tradition, our analysis must be able to explain the work's aesthetic value and the artistic merit of that work can perfectly be addressed as long as our judgement involves the effective use of poetic ornaments or tropes.

Human feelings and passions are best painted and made more colourful by the use of figurative languages which can create a particular mental image. The literary devices may be called the driving force of folklore dynamism. The transformation from traditional folk narrative to a well-articulated form of modern literature obviously requires the striking use of poetic language. This part discusses the dynamics of rhetorical languages (technical terms) in the context of verbal communicative strategies. In their functions as tools for socialization process, the Oromo oral traditions are enriched and reinforced by idiomatic expressions emanated from the cultural and historical background. By and large, the artistic expressions of folk-literature themselves are the cumulative effects of a critical observation of events and experiences in a given social and historical environment. Literary devices are articulated through the analogical imagination, which takes a variety of forms in the exploration of events and human experiences.

Figurative language is a departure from what users of the language apprehend as the standard meaning of words, or else the standard order of words, in order to achieve some special meaning or effect. Such figures were long described as primarily *poetic ornaments*, but they are integral to the functioning of language, and indispensable not only to poetry, but to all modes of discourse (Abrams, 1993: 66)

In the investigation of the aesthetic taste of folk literary tradition, both New Critics and classical rhetoricians make effective use of literary ornaments. The literary tropes are striking features of the oral tradition in which words and phrases are used to embellish the language of literature in such a way that it produces *evocative and profound social meaning* that transcends the standard meaning. It should be noted that the departure from the standard usage of literary language is essentially associated with seriousness and the discovery of literary value. In writing the Oromo oral narrative, our interpretive efforts become successful as long as we pay close attention to the decorative language of the discipline. Many interpretations focus on the use of tropes because the artistic aspect of the work of literature reveals to us if these devices are skilfully explored. Comprehending the proper functions of poetic vocabularies and their appropriate employment in oral literature, allows us to bring out into the open what the verbal texts suggest and explain colourfully the textual meanings. In order to be understood, recognized and appreciated, the aesthetic merit of Oromo oral literature should be written and cultivated within the context of the society which it belongs to. In the study of oral art, a thorough examination of the functions and basic concepts of each term enables us to grasp the social meanings, together with the central message they convey in a given cultural circumstance. In oral literary criticism, tropes encompass the whole range of figurative vocabularies which give us the basic concepts we use in writing and the general framework within which the critic works. They constitute the technical dimension of literature and are most useful for students of folklore to define what art is, its formal characteristics and what categories exactly of description are used in linguistic analysis and literary criticism.

In a folklore society like the Oromo, the tropes, which already exist in everyday utterances in various forms, need to be identified, properly documented and defined in the same way as modern literary works. This is to say, the unidentified and unnamed Oromo literary devices have to be assembled in written form so that the development of vernacular literature will be ensured. Most importantly, the Oromo oral narratives as part of the world literary work should meet the standards of literatures of the civilized nations.

“As Plato has put it long ago: it is the same with written words. You would think they were speaking as if they were intelligent, but if you ask them about what they are saying and want to learn, they just go on saying one and the same thing forever” (Okpewho, 1992: 11). This underscores the idea of a *static existence* of oral literature. Unless we employ various styles and

techniques to make verbal narratives come alive and be more dynamic, unless the process of recreation or adaptation continues, the old oral texts of centuries remain in the same fashion without having aesthetic value. The effectiveness and qualities of oral performance lie in the scrupulous work of modern critics and their organization of words in such a way that they appeal to the senses; and this helps ensure the permanent existence of oral tradition. Styles and techniques are the aspects through which the artistic form of folklore literature is created. Obviously, the creativity of the work of art requires a good command of devices in the absence of which oral literature has no power to gain literary form.

Specialized language is used to communicate experiences and concerns, life events, human struggles that orature articulates, and such language exhibits artistic beauty in content and draws its power from specific linguistic features, such as alliteration, rhyme...parallelism...allegory....These devices not only make the expression unusual but also make it appealing (Gikandi, 2003: 417).

As the study of language involves the constant creation of new vocabularies and sentences, the performance of oral literature also requires the generation of new narrative ideas. The functions of Oromo oral literary genres become more effective only if the new generation is capable of creative talent and great imagination rather than repeating the work of centuries in the same old tone. The full appreciation of literary culture cannot be achieved unless the investigation of useful ideas and new terms is given prime importance and unless modern writing styles are introduced in learning institutions to meet the needs of the changing outlook. The Oromo oral literature lacks ‘Oromiffa Literary Terms,’ without which its effectiveness and relevance cannot happen. In order to enhance oral literary studies and facilitate the path for folklore students and new researchers, I have incorporated “*Oromo Literary Terms*” in this work. This broad approach is the first of its kind in the Oromo literary studies.

Afiffa (Oral): wanti barruun osoo hin ta’in, afaaniin himamee sanyii irraa sanyitti darbu *afiffa* jedhama. Fakkeenyaaf, wanti akka *geerarsaa*, *weedduu sabaa*, *mammaaka*, itf., *afiffa* jechuun hin danda’ama. The term oral is properly applied to that which is uttered and transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth. Literally, oral refers to acroamatic, spoken, unwritten, verbal or vocal as for example, in literary tradition (folk songs, proverbs, riddles, heroic tales, etc.).

Afiffa Faayina (Oral Art): *afiffa faayina* yoo jennu, waan faaya (gaarii) jireenna/jireenya saba tokkootiif murtteessaa ta'e kan afaaniin himamu yookaan *misila* (sculpture) bara durii kan dhakaa irratti hojjatamee seenaa fi aadaa saba tokkoo calaqqisiisu jechuu keenna. The oral art refers to the oral tradition of centuries of the non-literate society and this includes the work of antiquity such as sculpture and others. It is the transmission of cultural traditions and values by word of mouth (see oral literature).

Afiffa Raagiinsa (Oral Narrative): Waa'ee afiffa ofbarruu yoo dubbannu, odeessii (story), muuxannoo fi kan kana fakkaatu, kan dhugaa ta'eef dhugaa hin ta'in, kan afaaniin himamu waliqabatti *raagiinsa* jennaan. Oral narrative in the context of modern tradition indicates the story of events, experiences, or the like, whether true or fictitious, told for any purpose, with or without much detail. *Raagiinsa* is derived from the word *raaguu*, meaning to tell or narrate the story. It also means to say what will happen in the future (or to prophesy).

Afiffa Ofbarruu (Oral Literature): *ofbarruun*, “ofbaruu” kajedhu irraa kadhufe yoo ta'u, innis eennummaa/eenyummaa saba tokkoo, waan sabni sun ittiin beekkamu fi dhugaa inni irratti ijaarame agarsiisa. *Afiffa ofbarruu* jechuun ammoo ofbarruu durirraa jalqabee afaaniin himamu yoo ta'u, kunis *faaruu*, *weedduu sabaa*, *durduri*, *geerarsa*, *mammaaka/mammaaksa*, *hibboo*, itf., ilaala. Oral literature refers to the literature delivered by word of mouth and handed down from one generation to the next. It is also popularly known as folklore and this includes all forms of literary traditions such as poems, proverbs, riddles, fables, folk songs, heroic tales, lyric ballads, etc. *Ofbarruu* is derived from the word “*ofbaruu*,” meaning proper self-perception or self-realization.

Agarsii (Performance): *agarsiin*, ‘agarsiisa’ kan jedhu irraa kan uumame yoo ta'u, innis waan qophaayee waltajjii tokko irratti ummata barsiisuuf yookaan gammachiisuuf dhiyaatu muldhisa. *Dinqiniin (drama)*, *tiyaatirri*, *geerarsi*, *taphni*, *hibboon*, itf., fakkeenya agarsii ta'uu nidanda'an. Performance literally means accomplishment, play, portrayal or production. In the oral tradition, it shows the action of performing musical plays or other entertainment, like theatre, dramas, folk songs, riddles, etc; for certain purposes. *Agarsii* is derived from the word ‘*agarsiisa*,’ meaning the portrayal of something.

Agarsii fi Hirmaataa (Performance and Audience): Ofbarruun saba tokkoo dagaagee sanyii irraa sanyiitti darbuu kan danda’u, yoo sabni ofbarruu san uume akka barbaachisutti irratti qooda fudhate qofa. Kana jechuun, wanti agarsiisan tokko (*agarsiin*) ummataa alatti guddachuus jiraachuus hin danda’u. Kanaafuu, hariiroon qopheessaanii fi sabni waan qophaaye irratti hirmaatu qaban, jabiinsa yookaan laafiinsa agarsii tokkootiif murteessaadha...“An audience is the only context within which an oral literature makes any sense” (Okpewho, 1992: 57). In the absence of audience, the work of the oral artist cannot develop because oral literature without the close interaction of the producer and the people hardly gains recognition and popular appreciation. This means, any oral performance secures a true existence as long as there is an audience, who promote the status of the narrator (performer) and the performance. More importantly, without the living audience, folk-literature remains stagnant and the performer *keeps on saying or talking one and the same thing forever*. The true survival of the oral tradition depends on the active involvement of people. In the absence of such a living environment, it is likely to disappear or will continue to be told in a stereotyped manner.

Agiboo (Satire): akkuma saboota kaawwanii, sabni Oromoollee yoo dogoggora, badummaa fi wallaala nama tokkoo saaxil baasuu barbaade, ifa baasee namicha salphisuu osoo/oduu hin ta’in, daglaan dubbachuudhaan balleessaa namatti himuu jaalata. *Agiboona* ‘haasawa daglaa’ kan jedhuun walitti bikkama. **“Biyya fardi hin jirre harretu garmaama”** yoo jennu, waa’ee namoota dandeettiii hin qabnee daglaan (akka hin beekkamnetti) haasawuu keenna/keenya. The Oromo often prefer to correct the faults, malice and follies through *veiled expression* rather than degrading or attacking a person directly or openly. If we take the line **“where there is no horse, the donkey plays the race”** (proverb 9), we see that the oral artist satirizes the phoney individuals who have no vision. Satire is a literary device or technique, which is not only the direct opposite of the literal meaning, but also holds up human vices and follies to ridicule or scorn. It is a figure of speech used as a *biting wit* to expose and discredit human irrational act. If we examine the aphoristic saying ***namni lafatti walsodaate muka waliin hin koru***, literally “those who are afraid of each other while on the ground do not dare (to) climb a tree together,” we can see how those who reward mistrust and insincerity are doomed to falling apart.

Akkina (Form): wanti dubbatamuu fi wanti barreeffamu maal irratti akka hundaa'e, waldiddaa, walfakkaatiinsa isaatii fi gamtaan yookaan ijaarsi isaa maal akka fakkaatu agarsiisa. The 'form' of literary art is the organization and placement or relationship of basic elements so as to produce a vivid image.

Ammumii (Relevance): wanti bara dheeraan dura afaaniin dubbatamaa ture, yeroo ammaa kana keessatti (ammaantana) barbaachisaa ta'uu isaati muldhisa. Fakkeenyaaf, mammaakni durii ardhas *ammumii* qaba yoo jennu, guddina ardha addunyaan keessa jiruun walitti qabamee (qixxaayee), barreeffamee dhiyaatuu qaba jechuu keenya. In a literary setting, relevance denotes adaptation or the continuity of the significance of the oral tradition in a contemporary world.

Anniisee (Content): 'qabata' (text) tokko keessatti, waan akka anniisaatitti/dhukaatitti laallamu, yookaan yaada filamee, cuufamee/dhimbiibamee dhiyaatu kan muldhisu. Fakkeenyaaf, Qeellam keessatti waa'ee sirna abbaa lafaa yoo laallu (geerarsa 26), "*bara baraan joore kaa*" kajedhu akka *anniisee* geerarsa saniititti fudhachuu hin dandeenna. In any work of art, content shows the subject matter or the whole information contained in a literary text.

Basweda (Soloist): jechi *basweda* jedhamu kun yoo gabaabinatti hiikkamu, weedduu baasuu/weeddisuu kan jedhu ta'a. Akka aadaa Oromootitti, yoo *daboon (jigiin)* midhaan haaman, namichi faaruu hujjitiin dandeettii qabu, weedduu baasa. Namoonni kuwwan ammoo waan inni jedhu san deebisanii jalaa fuudhan. Akkuma asii olitti kaayametti, *basweda* jechuun '*weedduu baasuu*' yoo ta'u, namicha weedduu baasu agarsiisa. The soloist is a person who performs a solo or solos (see work song). The term *basweda* is derived from two segments-that is, "*bas*" and "*weda*." The former refers to chanting, whereas the latter denotes the song. Thus, *basweda* refers to a person who chants a song.

Beekkomsaba (Folklore): waan jireenna/jireenya sabaatiif murteessaa ta'e keessaa tokko afiffa ofbarruudha. *Beekkomsabni* yoo gabaabinaan hiikkamu, "*beekkomsa sabaa*" kan jedhu muldhisa. Jechi kun "beek" kan jedhuu fi "saba" kan jedhutti kaqoodamu yoo ta'u, inni duraa 'beekkomsatti' hiikkama. *Mammaaksa, hibboo, himnana, geerarsa, walaloo, durduri*, itf; beekkomsaba jalatti

kaayuu nidandeenya. The term folklore is derived from two words; namely, “folk” and “lore.” The former refers to people in general, whereas the latter shows the body of knowledge of a people concerned. Thus, folklore is defined as the body of knowledge (lore) of a particular society; and it further connotes the survival of a people through the transmitting of wisdom. “The word ‘folklore’ became popular as a term to describe the supposed customs, beliefs, and culture of both early and its presumed equivalent today” (Okpewho, 1992: 317-318). Folklore also refers to the collective name applied to sayings, verbal compositions and social rituals that have been handed down by word of mouth for centuries. It is the foundation of literary revival; and as part of people’s values, it may also be defined as ‘*the study of the survivals.*’ This implies that oral art is the basis for the true existence of people in a sense that people’s definition of themselves is based on this body of knowledge. Therefore, folklore functions in the national culture as standard-bearers of the values and goals of the nation.

Bifina (Genre): ofbarruu yoo barannu, jechooninii fi himiinsonni hundinuu/martinuu bifa yookaan akkaataa itti hiikkaman qaban. Jechi yookaan himiinsii (sentence) tokko akkamitti akka qoodamee kaayamee fi faayiniffi (artistic value) inni qabu, *bifina* jedhama. A genre can be defined as a class or category of artistic endeavours having a particular form, content or technique. It is a particular type or style of literature that we recognize because of its special functions and features. “*Nama argaa hin quufanii, argan quufan.*” Literally, “a person cannot be judged by his appearance unless you see him closely.” We see that the Oromo stress the element of not judging a person by what he appears to be in the genre “*argaa hin quufanii*” (appearance won’t be enough), and they unfold the element of demonstrating personal qualities in the genre “*argan quufan.*”

Bikkiinsee (Simile): waan lama kan wal-hinfakkaanne walitti fidanii walitti bikkuun *bikkiinsee* ta’a. Fakkeennaaf, *inni akka leencaatitti aada* (he roars like a lion); *haga/hamma arbaati guddaadha* (he is as big as an elephant); yoo jennu, waan wal-hinfakkaanne walitti bikkuu keenna. A simile is a comparison between two distinctively different things by indicating the word ‘like/as.’

Boqonna (Pause): *boqonna* jechuun, yoo dubbannu bakka barbaachisutti yeroo xiqqoof haragalfachuudha. Pause is generally used for slight breaks within a sentence or sentences by dividing words or syllables.

Dalqaba (Digression): jechi *dalqaba* jedhamu kun jechoota lama irraa uumame; ‘dalga’ fi ‘qaba.’ Baldhinaan yoo laallamu, waan tokko ibsuuf gara biraatitti tarkaanfachu, yookaan dagla qabanii karaa biraatiin qabxii irratti dubbatamu san addeessuudha/ibsuudha. In a standard sense, digression refers to diverting from the main line of the subject to comment on something. In oral literature, digression is used as a device wherein the oral performer shifts from the main point of discourse either to address someone on the scene or to comment on something which is closely or remotely related or connected to the subject under discussion. It is an attempt to illustrate the subject with diversified details and examples. The term *dalqaba* has its root in “*dalga*” and “*qaba*” and the combination of the two shows shifting or diverting from the main subject. For instance, if a professor, who gives a speech on the current social aberration and Oromo political fall-out, suddenly shifts his subject of discourse to the Oromo democratic tradition of the *Gadaa period* just to compare the past with the present situation, we can say that she/he is using a *digression* technique.

Deddeebiinsa (Alliteration): dubbii keessatti, qubee yookaan dubbata (phoneme) walfakkaatu kan yammuu tokkoo ol deddeebi’ee barreeffamu jechuudha. Alliteration is defined as the repetition (*irdeeba*) of speech sounds in the arrangement of words; and when the recurring sound occurs at the beginning of a word or of a stressed syllable (*jabeessa qoodii*) within a word. Alliteration is one of the main literary devices, which is employed in texts written in verse wherein each line is divided into segments and marked by stress and pause. It may as well be used to achieve stylistic effects if we want to reinforce certain meanings and expressions, and this involves syntax, semantics and phonology.

Alliteration can be categorized into two parts: ‘consonance’ and ‘assonance’ or vocalic. The former refers to the repetition of a sequence of two or more consonants with intervening vowels in rhyming words. The alliteration of consonant sounds can occur in syntactic structure wherein a reported

speech is arranged in such a way that the consonant sounds in the second stanza recur in the form of ‘*internal rhyming*’ (*toksalga keessii*) as for example in the following lines:

Galii kee kan waggaa natti himi, jedhe qorataan qotataan.

Baraan barruu horan, jedhe daldalaan dardaraan.

Albeen abbaan qare abbaa qale, jedhe hayyuun hattuun.

Baradhaa mirga keessan eegsifadhaa, jedhe beekaan beeraan.

↓

Tell me your annual income, says *the researcher to the farmer*.

Prosperity is achieved through time, says *the trader to the youths*.

The knife sharpened by the owner takes his life, says *the wise to the thief*.

Educate yourselves and protect your rights, says *the intelligent (wise) to the women*.

In the above rhyming words, the speech sounds /*q, d, h, b*/ are alliterating consonant sounds. Besides alliterating, it is also evident that the underlined initial speech sounds (consonant phonemes) are arranged in a linear order of *syntagmatic (dalginiffa)* relations in which they occur in the same horizontal position. The rhyming words are semantically different, whereas each pair of sounds shows the existence of phonological correspondence.

In much the same way as the consonance, the *assonance* deals with the repetition of similar vowel sounds in each word. It refers to ‘*internal rhyming*’ in which the repetition of a sequence of the same vowel sounds recurs with intervening consonants as for instance in:

Akka maatii kiyyaatitti silaala, jedhe abbaan arbaan.

Qalbii deeguu irra horii deeguu wayya, jedhe Eebbumaan eessumaan.

Ijji dhugaa hin laalle hin argitu, jedhe Ifaan isaan.

Hundeen jireenna/jireenya dhugaa baruumsa, jedhe odeessaan ogeessaan.

Anaa mitii/motii uf ajjifadhu, jedhe Urgeessaan ufdessaan.

↓

I see you as part of my family, says *the owner to an elephant*.

The destitution of wisdom is worse than the destitution of property, says *Eebbuma to his uncle*.

The eyes that cannot see the truth are without sight, says *Ifaa to him*.

Education is the foundation of meaningful life, says *the reporter to the skilled man*.

Blame not me but yourself, says *Urgessa to the self-impooverished man*.

Like the consonants, the above vowel sounds /a, e, i, o, u/ do not only alliterate, but are also alike in sounds and in the same position in each rhyming word. This shows the existence of a phonological comparison between the two sounds with semantic variation of each word. We have seen that alliteration involves rhyming elements emphasizing its phonological and semantic implications in poems. Now, we shall examine how the two types of rhymes-the *terminating* (*xumurtuu*) and *internal* (*keessii*) function in the following verse lines:

- 1) waraana walitti *baasee* (a)
- 2) waraanaa jedhee *kaasee* (a)
- 3) dhiira harka *mursiisee*, beera harma *mursiisee* (a)
- 4) isa kanaaf mee *ragaa* (c)
- 5) Aanoleen dhaya *maqaa* (c)

In the poem, numbers are assigned to the verse lines on the left side for the convenience of putting together the lines, which rhyme with one another. Correspondingly, each line is marked by an alphabetical symbol on the right side. The assigned repeating symbols indicate the verse lines having identical terminating rhyming elements. Thus, the elements in verse lines 1, 2, 3 and 4 and 5 are ‘*terminating rhyming*,’ and such rhyming also involves the existence of phonological ‘contrast’ between a pair of phonemes in the two morphemes. We also see that those elements in line 3 are ‘*internal rhyming*’ because the phoneme /m/ appears twice within the same line. The rhyming elements consist of *stressed* and *unstressed* syllables as for instance in:

1. baasee- kaasee→ stressed
2. ragaa- maqaa→ unstressed
3. mursiisee- mursiisee→ unstressed

Deebrakkii (Puzzles): jechi kun “deeb” kajedhuu fi “rakkii” kajedhu irraa kan uumame yoo ta’u, innis oduu durii kan *deebisaan* isaa nama *rakkisu* jechuudha. Deebrakkiin obsaa fi gamnummaa (intelligence) barbaachisa. Qabxii kana baldhinaan hubachuuf, mee ‘*qeerransa*,’ ‘*re’ee*’ fi ‘*baala*’ haa fudhannuu. Namni tokko waan kanniin sadiin/sadeen laga ceesisuu barbaada. Garuu sadiinuu waan wal nyaataniif, bakka tokkotti walitti qabanii ceesisuun hin danda’amu. Waan kanniin sadiin

akkamitti rakoo malee laga ceesisuun danda'ama? Kajedhu *deebrakkii* ta'a. Deebisaan deebrakkii kanaa: dura re'ee ceesisi. Ittaansii qeerransa ceesisi. Qeerransa gamatti dhiisii re'ee fuudhii gamanatti deebi'i. Ammas re'ee gamanatti dhiisii baala gama ceesirii qeerransa biratti dhiisi. Amma gamanatti as deebi'ii re'ee ceesisi. A puzzle literally means something, which is difficult to understand or to explain. In its broader sense, a puzzle implies a contrivance or clever trick designed to amuse by presenting the most difficult questions to be resolved by ingenuity or patient effort. In a literary context, however, it is a folk wisdom, which is aiming at enriching the faculty of reasoning through entertaining. Like riddles, puzzles are verbal games in which the oral narrator entertains his audience by presenting amusing and instructive questions. This verbal game is one of the most popular games in Oromo society because it depicts the importance of resolving the mystery of our times with an open mind and great patience. For further elaboration of this point, let us examine the story of the three camels. A person wants to lead three camels with loaded goods. One of the camels eats camel's flesh; the second eats human flesh; and the third eats the goods loaded on the other camels. In order to lead them safely together, drive the camel which eats other camels' flesh in front. Then, lead the one which eats human flesh next. Pull the one which eats the loaded goods behind.

Dhawata (Style): akkaataa yookaan tooftaa qabata (text) tokko ittiin barreessinu jechuudha. Kunis qoonqa/sagalee fi filannoo jechoota itti fayyadamnuullee hin dabalata. The style of a particular work has been analyzed in terms of the characteristic modes of tone, diction or choice of words. These include its sentence structure and syntax, the density and types of its figurative language, other formal features and its rhetoric aims and devices.

Dimimmii (Romantic): dubbii baldinaan itti yaadatame oduu hin ta'in, irra caalaa fedhii fi jaalala waan tokoo qofa irratti kan hundaa'e. Weedduu sabaa keessatti, weelluun bara durii akka dimimmiititti laallama. It is used to describe literature, especially of the 19th century, which is concerned with strong feelings, emotions, love imagination and a return to nature like that of Wordsworth (see weedduu/weelluu in chapter 6).

Dirrisa (Prose): haasawa/dubbii diriiree barruun kaayame yookaan afaaniin himame kan walaloo tokسالga hin qabne (that does not rhyme like a poem) jechuudha. A ‘prose’ is a short narrative or the ordinary form of all discourse, spoken or written form without ‘metrical’ structure, as distinguished from the rhyming verse in poetry.

Dubdeeba (Assonance or Vocalic): jalqaba jechootaa keessatti, dubbachiisa tokسالga ta’e kan deddeebi’u, yookaan sagalee dubbachiisa ta’e kan yeroo lamaa ol barreeffamu (deddeebiinsa laali). Assonance refers to rhymes in which the same vowel sounds are used at the beginning of words with different consonants in the stressed syllables of the rhyming elements (see alliteration).

Durduri (Fable/Trickster Tale): *durduri* yoo gabaabatti hiikkamu, waan hamilee, hiree fi xabiyaa (behaviour) ilma namaa yookaan bineensaa ilaalu ta’a. Waa’ee ilma namaatii fi bineensaa yoo xiinxallinu, badummaan yookaan shira/dhara yaaduun, garaalaafinni/mishummaan, walballeessuun, waliyyaaduun, waliitumsuunii fi walmiidhuun waan darbee fi kan ammas jiru. Waa’ee *durduri* yoo barannu, waan asii olitti tuqamani kanniin cufa/hunda waliqabatti ta’uu isaa hubachuun barbaachisaadha. In the Oromo cultural context, the term *durduri* is linked with social and political problems, morality, human behaviour and fate. A fable is a short narrative, usually in prose, that exemplifies an abstract moral thesis or a principle of human behaviour. As we have already seen in chapter 4, Oromo trickster tales or fables are based on beast-centred narratives in which the animals talk, act or behave like the human beings they represent.

Dursina (Foreshadow): waan ufdurana ta’uu danda’u kan muldhisu. Fakkeennaaf, *eebjuu badaan* booda yoo balaan wayii namarra gaye/nama qunname. Akka adaa Oromootitti, oduu namni tokko durba qaadhimachuuf deemu, yoo jeedalti/sardiinni karaa qaxxaamurtee dhimma san irratti milkaayuun dadhabame, inni kun *dursina* waldiddaa muldhisu jechuu nidandeenna. It shows or represents something beforehand by a figure or type as for example “*a humid day*” (p. 4) in the poem of Lenrie Peters (“In the Beginning”), which foreshadows the ‘dark era’ of post-independence Africa. In the Oromo marriage context, if a fox crosses the road when a person travels to someone’s house for a marriage negotiation, and if the negotiation has fallen through, then this foreshadows the futility of an engagement.

Faaruu/Faarsa (Panegyric Song): *faarsi/faaruun* badhaasa jechaati (verbal reward). Nama/horii jaalatan jajuu, leellifachuu jechuudha. Faaruun aadaa Oromoo keessatti, akka badhaasa guddaatitti fudhatama. The panegyric song is a verbal reward. It is an oration, a discourse or writing in praise of a person, animal or thing (see ‘*geerarsa*’ or heroic tale, in chapter 7).

Fakkeesiffa (Fictional): Waan dhugaa hin ta’in, kan namni ufumaa uumee dubbatu/barreessu. Any literary narrative, which comprises works of imaginative narration instead of being an account of events that are true.

Fakkeesiffa Raagiinsa (Fictional Narrative): *fakkeesifi*, waan uumamee himamu jechuu ta’a. Ofbarruu afiffa keessatti, durduriin (fables) fakkeenya *fakkeesiffa raagiinsa* ta’uu hin danda’a. A fictional narrative refers to a narrative which is invented (see ‘trickster stories’ in chapter 4).

Fakkina (Allegory): odeessii tokko keessatti, *wabiileen* (characters) bakka bu’aa ta’anii yoo waan tokko muldhisan fassara jenna. Fakkeenyaaf, waa’ee wabicha (character) tokkoo yoo laallu, haalbada (corruption), obsa, badummaa, hinaaffaa, gamnummaa, itf, qaba jechuudha. Enyummaan wabicha sanii isaan kanniiniin beekkama. Ofbarruu Afrikaa keessatti, Nelson Mandeellaa akka nama seenaa/sirna saba tokkoo keessatti kaayameetitti (as historical personage) yoo laallamu, nama addunyaa keessatti olaanttummaa qabu, kan sabaa fi saboota sanyiin osoo gargar hin baafne qixxetti laalu, hayyicha Afrikaa kan bilisummaaf ofkeenne jedhameeti beekkama. Akka fakkina yaadaatitti (as allegory of ideas) ammoo, qabsaayaa, fayyaalessa, amanamaa, ufiin boonaa, jannaa fi gamna jennaan.

An allegory refers to prose narratives and poems in which the characters and the plot of a text represent abstract entities such as patience, villainy, kindness, jealousy, tyranny, wisdom, etc. The allegorical approach is one of the narrative strategies which can be employed in oral literary genres. Abrams recognizes two main types of allegory: (1) historical and political, and (2) the allegory of ideas. The former deals with a situation in which literally signified characters and actions allegorize or represent a historical personage and events. The latter shows that the literal characters represent abstract ideas; and in terms of the plot of a given text or story, these ideas epitomize principles, a

doctrine or thesis. For instance, Nelson Mandela as a historical personage in modern history allegorizes a truly successful global man and a powerful image that can forge human brotherhood. The allegorical ideas that he represents are: freedom, heroism, ingenuity, compassion and moral excellence of the rising generation of modern times. Since literary work involves social, political, historical and religious aspects, the allegorical categorization of Abrams seems to be insufficient. Thus, the first part should include historical, political, social and religious aspects.

Fassara (Allusion): nama/waan tokko osoo maqaa isaatiin hin ta'in, akka biraatitti maalummaa isaa ibsuu. Karaa biraatiin, eennummaa/eenyummaa nama sanii nama biraa ka isa fakkaatuun walitti bikkuu/fassaruu jechuudha. Akka aadaa Oromootitti, “*mootiin mukaa*” bifa biraatiin yoo waamamu, ‘*muka yaa’ii*,’ ‘*odaa jilli dhaabatu*,’ itf., jedhamuu hin danda’a. Isaan kunniin, “mootiin mukaa” maal akka ta’e addeessan/ibsan. “Allusion in a literary text is a reference without explicit identification to a person, place or event” (Abrams, 1993: 8). It is a literary device that *compares* aspects or qualities of people with their counterparts in history, mythology, popular or contemporary culture and literature. In literary tradition, allusion as a brief or indirect reference to a person, place or event enables us to explore the vanity or sanity of a character. Let us examine in *Gulliver’s Travels* (1939) the story of the *Lilliputian* society. Lilliput is the country inhabited by the tiny Lilliputian people. Though tiny in stature, the Lilliputians have all the vanities, petty strife of the human race. Today a narrow-minded petty person might be called a Lilliputian. This shows that the name Lilliputian in satirical allusion implies corruption, vanity, hypocrisy and spite. In the Oromo *geerarsa*, the expression ‘*booyyee boorataa*,’ meaning “the warthog that digs” is often uttered to disparage pomposity and hypocrisy. Like Lilliputian, this satirical expression is used as indirect reference wherein those who pretend to be the hero vanguards are attacked for their hollowness. Literary allusion may be categorized in two parts: *illustrating* (clarifying) and *satirical*.

In heroic epic (chapter 7), the oral narrator has described the qualities of a fascinating tree, which according to him is ‘the king’ of all trees-*mootii mukaa*.

mootiin mukaa waa sadii

gaafa firri bulfatu

odaa jilli dhaabatu

tokko muka yaa’iiti

There are allusions to *mootii mukaa*. All the alluded expressions: *firri bulfatu*, *odaa* and *muka yaa'itti* illustrate the subject, that is, the *selected tree* which Oromo society sees as sacred because of its symbolic representation.

The ironic allusion is aiming at describing the action or characters through derogatory remarks. In the following lines, a poet expresses his disappointment concerning the unfairness of the three characters: Ras Gobana, Dajjach Wale and Ras Michael.

<i>Goobeen Faalle quba nyaataa</i>	<i>Gobana eats Falle's fingers</i>
<i>Waleen Yejjuu quba nyaataa</i>	<i>Wale eats Jeju's fingers</i>
<i>Mikuun Wolloo quba nyaataa</i>	<i>Michael eats Wallo's fingers</i>

The recurring phrase *quba nyaataa*, literally, “eating fingers” is used as ironic allusion. It is an indirect mode of expression to echo discontent. The action of eating fingers implies exploitation and embezzlement.

Fonjollii (Antithetic): *fonjolliin*, jecha fonjollisa jedhu irraa uumame. Innis, faallaa, waan wal-hin fakkaanne kajedhu hiika. Fakkeennaaf, “*argaa toleef goromsi hin ottoomu*,” kajedhu yoo fudhanne, waan lamaa kan fonjollisa ta’an hubachuu hin dandeenna. Isaanis, “*hin ottoomuu*” fi “*argaa toleef*.” Qodubbiin (phrases) kunniin lamaan, akka fonjollisaatitti kaayaman. Maaliif yoo jedhame, bifti sa’aa *bareeduunii* fi *ottoomuu* (aanan baa’ee kennuu) dadhabuun waan faallaa walii ta’aniif. Antithetic literally refers to the contrast between two things or ideas as for example in “*gowwaan bakka itti bade warra seeya*,” literally “a fool thinks that the place where he lost himself is his home.” If we examine the two phrases, that is, *bakka itti bade* “where he lost himself” and *warra seeya* “he thinks that it is his home,” it is observable that the two parallel ideas are contrasting or antithetic.

Gamnii (Witticism): jechi *gamnii* jedhu, ‘gamnummaa’ (wisdom) kan jedhu irraa uumame. Akka afiffa ofbarruu Oromootitti yoo laallamu, ofbarruu gamnummaa saba Oromoo calaqisiisu jechuu ta’a. *Mammaakni*, *hibboonii* fi kan kana fakkaatan hundinuu *gamnii* jedhamaniiti beekkaman. The term *gamnii* is derived from *gamnummaa*, meaning wisdom. In a literal sense, witticism is a witty remark, which may be used for amusement. In a wider literary concept, it implies the collective

wisdom or folklore like proverbs, riddles, etc; which reflects the fertile mind of the ingenious ancestors.

Hargalchii (Consonance): jecha tokko jalqabarratti, *irdeeba* (repetition) qubee fi *dubbata* (phoneme) yookaan sagalee *hargalcha* (consonant sound) jechuudha. The use of the repetition of consonants or consonant sounds as a rhyming device at the beginning of words (see alliteration).

Hariirsa Ammumii (Social Relevance): ofbarruun tokko hariirsa ammumii qaba yoo jennu, waa'ee ummataa, aadaa ummata saniitii fi hariirsa naannisa (social environment) ofbarruun sun keessatti uumame agarsiisa. Hariirsi, barabaachifnini fi ittifufiinsi afiffa ofbarruu tokkoo isaan kanniin irratti kan hundaa'edha. According to Okpewho (1992), social relevance in the context of folk-literature refers to the broad cultural and social environment within which the oral tradition is set. It is this social relevance, which helps us understand the significance and pertinence, which guarantee the permanent feature and continuity of literary tradition. The recreational ability of the oral artist is one of the main factors, which contributes to the positive achievement and excellence of folk-literature. In a broader concept, social relevance includes the scenes which dictate oral narratives.

Himnana (Tales): waan tokko himuu/odeessuu agarsiisa. Kunis, oduu durii (traditional sayings), durduri (fables) fi kana kan fakkaatan ilaala. Himnani 'odeessii gabaabaa' (short story) yoo ta'u, irra caalaa waa'ee farrisaa (trickster) irratti kahundaa'e. The tale or according to Abrams, story of incident, is a short story, which stresses the course and outcome of the events, as for example in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Golden Bug" (1843). Like the tales of other black Africans, most Oromo tales are stories of tricksters, which focus on the moral qualities of the characters, especially of the protagonists (see chapter 4).

Himnansaba (Folktales): jechi kun himnana kajedhuu fi saba kajedhu irraa kan uumame. Innis oduu yookaan 'himnana sabaa' jechuu yoo ta'u, oduu durii (traditional tales/sayings), durduri (fables), geerarsa fi odeeffama (myth) dabalata. Himnansaba is the derivation of two words; namely himnana (tales) and "saba" (folk or people). The folktale is a short oral narrative in prose or verse of

unknown authorship, which has been transmitted orally. It gives useful insight into people's way of life and is the reflection of human fertile imagination. Any type of oral prose narrative, which has been handed down by word of mouth through generations from the past, that is, from whatever society could be is referred to as folktales; and is treated as a sort of survival of human values of the past. "Folktales are popular stories ingrained in people's memories which are centuries old and testify to a core of truth" (Gikandi (2003: 417). They play vital role in the oral narratives and provide us with useful insights into human condition and imagination. The folktales include myths, tales of heroes and fables.

Hirmaataa (Audience): yoo agarsiin (performance) tokko jiraate, namoonni irratti qooda fudhatan/hirmaatan waliqabatti hirmaataa jedhaman. Wanti afaaniin himamee sanyii irraa gara sanyiiitti darbu/lufu, ammumii (relevance) qabaachuuf yookaan oduu hin badin ittifufuu kan danda'u, yoo hirmaataan akka barbaachisutti qooda fudhatee 'ofbarruun sabaa' (folk-literature) akka dagaagu godhuu danda'e qofa. Yoo kana ta'uu baate, ofbarruun afaaniin himamu laafuu qofa osoo hin ta'in, baduulleen nimala. The groups of participants, readers, listeners or viewers collectively are known as audience. The survival, continuity and development of oral tradition are guaranteed if the active involvement of the audience takes place; and if that work of art gains popular importance within a given cultural and social context.

Hubsirra (Expressive): hubsirra yoo jennu, dhawata (style), anniisee (content) fi qindinee (structure) waliqabatti jechuudha. In the folklore literature, expressive implies the style a narrator uses, the content and structure that show the distinctive character of each genre (see chapter 1).

Hundii fi Agarsii (Composition and Performance): hundiin, akka raagaan (narrator) afiffa ofbarruu itti qindeessee dhiyeessu kan addeessu/ibsu. Akkaataan ofbarruun tokko qophaayee itti kaayame, dagaaginaa fi laafiinsa isaatiif murteessaadha. Yoo yaanni yookaan ilaalchi hirmaataan (ummanni) agarsii tokko irratti qabu badaa ta'e, agarsiin sun laafaati deema. Gabaabinatti, fudhatama agarsii tokkoo hundii isaatitu murteessa. A composition is the act of combining parts or elements to form a whole. It is the organization or grouping of the different components of a work of art so as to achieve a unified whole. As we have already examined, the true existence and

recognition of any oral literature depends on the context within which it is created. This means a composition of a piece of folklore decides the direction of the growth of that verbal art. The way the oral poetry or narrative appeals to different audiences, the positive or negative feedback of the consumers or audience to the performance facilitates the interaction between the oral narrator and the society. This eventually creates immediate contact between the oral artist and the audience; and the active participation on both sides actually means the enrichment of the composition of literary tradition. (see chapters 4 and 5).

Ijoo (Theme): yaada qabata (text) tokkoo kan anniisa (core) ta'ee fi waan inni irratti hundaa'e gabaabsanii kaayuu agarsiisa. Fakkeennaaf, *guddaan keessan hin dubbatu, diqqaan/xiqqaan keessan hin guddatu*, kajedhu yoo fudhanne, abootiin yoo garbummaa jalatti ofukkaamsan, ijoolleen isaanii jireenya hin qaban,' kajedhu ijoo mammaaka kanaati ta'a. A theme is the central, controlling and generalized idea of any literary work (novel, short story, drama, play, or film). Modern literary scholars sometimes use motif and theme interchangeably. The theme of a particular text is sometimes used interchangeably with 'motif' in which the term is more appropriately applied to a general concept, doctrine or principle. A motif is a distinctive standard; often recurring narrative element in a literary work. It deals with conspicuous elements as for instance a type of incident, device, reference, or the like, which frequently occur in a work of art, whereas a 'theme' is usually applied to the generalized central idea of a given literary text. "*Mana abbaan gube, cidiin birmataniif.*" Literally, 'if the owner sets his own house on fire, others add straws to it.' The possible theme of this aphoristic statement would be the disruptive effect of foolishness and irresponsibility.

Irdiba (Metaphor): yoo waan wal hin fakkaanne walitti fiduudhan itti fayyadaman. Jecha, qodubbii (phrase), meeshaa fi yaada isaan hin fakkaannetti yoo fayyadaman. Hiikkaa ifatti hin muldhanne jechuudhas.

Inni yoo lolu leenca.

Isiin qeerransa.

Kankoo garaan rafee kee garaan maajirree→Irdibiffa: *ani qalbiitti sifudhadheera ati maaf*

najbbite

A metaphor is a word or phrase, usually a figure of speech, used in an imaginative way to describe something, in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the description more powerful. It also works on developing meanings on the assumption that there exist semantic similarities or comparisons.

He is a lion in fight (inni yoo lolu leenca)

The saddle God has put on someone cannot be removed (kooraa Waaqni namarra kaaye

buusuun hin danda'amu)→ Metaphorical: God's retribution is irreversible

Maliffa (Technique): maliffa yoo jennu, tooftaa ofbarruun saba tokkoo ittiin barreeffamu irratti hojjachuu agarsiisa. Goodaan (engineer) yoo mana gaarii ijaaru, duraan dursee karoora mana ittiin ijaaru kaaya. Ittaansee, waan mana san bareechisu irratti hojjata. Maliffi, ofbarruu sabaa akka barbaachisutti tolchanii, barreessanii dhiyeessuuf maluu/mala dhayuu muldhisa. The maliffa in a literal sense refers to skilful way of writing or treating literature. An engineer or architect as an artist devises the way he constructs a durable and fascinating building. Like an architect, in dealing with literary tradition, our primary concern must be how to build a permanent storehouse of knowledge; and in fact this requires artistic talent or technique. In a literary setting, the term technique depicts the manner and ability with which an artist, a writer, a narrator, etc; employs the technical skills of a particular art or field of endeavour. It implies the use of literary devices or tropes, which enables us to add colourful expressions to a particular work of art.

Mamii (Dilemma): yaada lama jiddutti rakkachuudha. Yoo yaanni namaa garagara tamsa'ee/faca'ee, waan fedhan murteeffachuu/filachuu dadhaban. A perplexing situation or problem, often one in which people have to make a very difficult choice between things of equal importance.

Moggina (Metonymy): maqaa waan tokkoo bifa biraatiin, jechuun, waan biraa kan isaan walfakkaatu yookaan kan isatti dhiyaatuu/bikkamuu danda'utti jijjiiruu jechuudha. Gabaabinatti, *moggina* yoo jennu, waan tokko maqaa jijjiiranii akka biraatitti waan isa fakkaatuun waamuu kajedhutti hiikkama. Karaa biraatiin yoo laallamu ammoo, yaada walitti hidhame kan walduraa

duuba dhufuudhaan waltimphisu/irkisu jechuu keenna. Fakkeenyaaf, *dabaan muka qottoo ofumaa ofmura*, isa jedhu yoo fudhanne, dabuun/jallatuun ofballeessuu akka ittifide muldhisa. Kana jechuun, yaanni duraa ‘sababii’ (cause) yoo ta’u, yaanni lammaffaa umdura (effect) ta’a jechuudha. Sirna Abbaa Gadaa keessatti, maqaan ‘surriiruufaa’ (turban) jedhu alaabaa Oromootitti fassarama. Kana jechuun, maqaan surriiruufaa jedhu kun, waan isaan walitti dhiyaatu alaabaa kajedhuun moggaafama/waamama jechuu keenya. A metonymy is the use of the name of one object or concept for that of another to which it is related, or of which it is the part. It also shows a cause and effect relationship. It is the term used in semantics and stylistic wherein one thing is applied to another with which it is closely associated because of contiguity or proximity in common experience. For instance, ‘turban’ (*surriiruufaa*) in the context of *Qaalluu* institution of the *Gadaa* system stands for national flag.

Muldhisee (Symbol/Symbolism): wanti tokko akkuma jirutti yookaan bakka waan biraa bu’ee akka waan saniititti yoo muldhatu. *Guddateef tiisifni qodaa hin buqqisu* kajedhu yoo laalle, tiisifni akka muldhiseetitti, namoota baayyinni isaanii bu’aa hin qabne agarsiisa. The *muldhisee* literally means to stand for or represent something. “A symbol is a concrete or familiar object that is used in reference to, or as an explanation, of an abstract idea or a lesser familiar object or event. It is a particular means of conveying certain important truths or lessons about human life and the problem of existence” (Okpewho, 1992: 101). A symbolism is thus a system of using indirect references or symbolic elements to represent something as good or bad. It is the practice of representing things by symbols, or of using things with symbolic meanings or characters. For instance, in the Oromo Trickster Tales (chapter 4), the ‘fox’ often symbolizes false prophet; whereas in the statement, *guddateef tiisifni qodaa hin buqqisu*, literally ‘flies cannot open a jug though they are many in number’ (chapter 5), *tiisisa/tiitisa* (flies) represent the cowardice and incapable people who cannot use the golden opportunity and prefer to live up to the will and interest of their adversaries.

“Many of the major writers of the period exploit symbols which are in part drawn from religion and esoteric traditions and in part from their own invention. Some of the works of the age are symbolist in their settings, their agents and their actions, as well as in the object they refer to” (Abrams, 1993: 209). The suggestiveness of the French symbolists had strong influence throughout Europe. This was followed by greater symbolist movement in England, Germany and America in

the 1890s and after. The era of modern symbolism in literature began after 1918, that is, after the First World War.

Namiffa (Personification): wanti nama hin ta'in yoo akka namaatitti fudhatamu. Fakkeennaaf, '*bubbeen hin fiissa*,' yoo jenne, bubbeen waan akka namaatitti fudhatameef, *namiffa* ta'a. When an inanimate or abstract concept or notion is spoken of as though it was endowed with life or human attributes of feelings, it is called personification. In the following three lines: 1) *halkan kafana dukkanaatii fi nagayaati nutti uwwise*- 'the night spread its blanket of dark and peace over us;' 2) *aduu bobayu numiidhe*- 'the blazing sun is harming us;' and 3) *bubbeen hin fiissa*- 'the *wind* is whistling;' the three words, *halkan* (night), *aduu* (sun) and *bubbee* (wind) are personified.

Odeeffama (Myth): odduu bara duriitii fi seenaa saba tokkoo kajalqabaa kan odeessu. Odeeffamni, dhugas ta'uu yookaan ta'uu dhabus nimala. Namni odeeffama himu, waan uumaan ta'e ufumaa uumee yookaan ammoo dhugaa jiru kadhokate (kan hin beekkamne) ifa baaseeti (addeesseeti) akka ilaalcha isaatitti kaaya. Kana qofa osoo hin ta'in, odeeffamni ilma namaa akka maleeykaatitti (as supernatural being) kamuldhisu/kaayu yoo ta'u, kunis seenaa saba tokkoo keessatti muuxannoo ilmi namaa qabuu fi waan ifatti beekkamuun alatti uumamee kan himamu.

Kanaafuu, odeeffamni waan muuxannoo seenaa saba tokkoo keessatti muldhatuu hin dandeenne uumuudhaan yookaan ammoo akka dhugaatitti ummataa dhiyeessanii akka amananii fudhatan godhuu irratti kan hundaa'e.

A myth is one part of folklore that occurs in the history of all human traditions. It is one of the basic constituents of culture. In a narrow sense, a myth may be defined as a system of traditional and hereditary stories, true or fictional, usually with or without determinable basis of facts, so as to explain either natural events or to describe the ancient history of people, the creation of the world and its inhabitants. This unproved collective belief is often accepted uncritically by a particular cultural group to justify a social institution, as for instance the belief in the biological inferiority or superiority of a people. It is also concerned with a specific account of superhuman beings in which the systematically related events are altogether different from that of the natural world and the ordinary historical time of human experience. The term myth has also been extended to denote

supernatural tales that are intentionally invented by some folk narrators and writers to meet their own end.

Bara durii, yoo Waaqni waan hunda uumuu jalqabu, samiinii fi lafti walitti dhiyaatan ture. Bara san, bonaa fi ganna akkuma roobetti. Kanarraa kan ka'e, gaangeen samiin akkana jette, "Maaliif yeroo hunda roobda? Jiraachuu dadhabee rooba gannaa fi bonaa kana nurraa dhaabi." Samiin rooba irraa dhaabuu dide. Kanarratti walta'uu dadhabnaan, gaangeen dallantee samii dhiittee jennaan, lafarraa olfagaatee diriire. Achiin booda yeroo hunda roobuun hin hafe. Waaqayyo gaangetti dallaneeti hin horin jedhee abaare. Abaarsa kanarraa kan ka'e, gaangeen maseena taate.



In the beginning of the creation of the world, the sky and the earth were closer to each other. In those days, the rain used to fall incessantly throughout the year. A mule, which was sick of the rain, asked the sky whether it can stop raining all seasons. The sky refused and a mule kicked it. From that time on, the sky receded higher up into the distance. The rain stopped pouring down constantly. God cursed a mule; and as the result of this, it became barren. The above text underscores the way the romantic oral narrator has invented his own mythological theory to explain his vision of the creation of the world in which the continuity of melancholic life is attributed to the retribution resulted from disobedience to the supernatural power (God). According to this mythology, defying his natural creation and the method of using violence has always been the tragedy of the world. Many classical thinkers have invented variety of mythologies in order to explain their dreams, visions, far-fetched ideas and mysterious events.

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1968), French structuralist, sees the myths of a particular culture as signifying systems whose true meanings are unknown to their opponents. He believes that myths need to be analyzed, identified and interpreted on the model of linguistic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure. The German romantic author, Friedrich Schlegel, suggested that modern poets can write great literature and develop a new unifying mythology which will help synthesize the insight of the myths of the Western past with the new discoveries of philosophy. William Blake (1757-1827) incorporated in his poems a system of mythology which he had created. In the system, he fused hereditary myths, biblical history and prophecies; together with his own intuitions and visions. Many modern writers also believe that whether invented, integrative

mythology is essential to literature. For instance, James Joyce, Eugene O'Neill and several others have intentionally woven their work on the ancient model of abstract myths.

Akka oduu durii irraa hubannutti, namoon waaqeffattoota ta'an, amantii Islaamummaa ka Nur Hussein fide diduudhan fincilanii hennaa/yeroo heddu lolanii turan. Gaaf tokko, osoo inni Quraana barsiisu, loltoonni waaqeffattootaa yoo reeban, harka olkaasee ufirraa tooybannaan (abaarraan), namoonni isa irratti duulan sunniin martuu/hundinuu dhakaa ta'anii hafan jedhameeti himama. Achiin booda, Arsiin Waabee gamaa-gamana jiraatan baayinaan amantii Islaamummaa fudhachuudhan Sheik Husseinii akka nama Waaqni filateetitti laaluu jalqaban; isa jedhu kana akka fakkeena odeeffamatitti fudhachuu nidandeenna. In Oromo traditional story, the Arsiis who were the followers of traditional belief (waaqeffattoota) revolted against Nur Hussein and attacked him several times when he introduced Islam religion to the region. One day, when he was preaching Quran, the soldiers who held traditional belief came to attack him; but when he raised his hands and rebuked them, they became stone. Thereafter, Nur Hussein was accepted as a spiritual leader chosen by God; and the majority of the Arsiis became the followers of Islam religion. This inventive myth is still linked with the holy place called Sheik Hussein.

Many modern writers also believe that whether invented, integrative mythology is essential to literature. For instance, James Joyce, Eugene O'Neill and several others have intentionally woven their work on the ancient model of abstract myths. Like his predecessor, William Blake, W. B. Yeats is different from these romantic writers in a sense that he invented his own systematic mythology, which he set forth in 1926. In his mythology, he included several poems as for example "The Second Coming" and "Sailing to Byzantium." There are numerous mythical beliefs in many parts of the world and such abstract ideas have their own social and political origin. Whatever its origin, it is necessary to probe into the wider function of a myth in human history and the bewildering variety of applications of the term in contemporary criticism.

Odeessa (Legend): odeessii durii (traditional story) keessatti, yoo wabichi duraa (protagonist character) akka 'maleeykaatitti' (supernatural being) osoo hin ta'in, akka namaatitti kan dhiyaatu/odeeffamu ta'e, odeessiin durii sun odeeffama (myth) oduu hin ta'in, 'odeessa' ta'a. Yoo odeessiin tokko akka 'odeeffaa' titti (mythology) uumamee kan hin dhiyaatin ta'e, odeessiin sun himnansaba (folktale) jedhama. If the main character or protagonist is presented as a person rather

than supernatural being, that traditional story is classified as a legend, but not a myth (see also Abrams 1993). If the story is not part of the systematically created or invented mythology, then that story is often categorized as a folktale.

Odeessii Gabaabaa (Short Story): oduu gabaabaa afaaniin yookaan barruun kaayamee himamu. Odeessiin tokko kan dhugaa yookaan kan uumamee dubbatamu (fakkeesiffa) ta'uun nimala.

Garaagarummaa odeessiitii fi galmodu (novel) yoo laallu, waan sadihii sirriitti hubachuun barbaachisaadha. Tokkoffaa, odeessiin gabaabaa yoo ta'u, galmodu baldhaa fi dheeraadha. Lammaffaa, wabiileen (characters) odeessii xiqqaa yoo ta'an, wabiileen galmodu ammoo baa'eedha/heddu. Sadaffaa, tartiibeen (plot) odeessii gabaabaa fi salphaa yoo ta'u, kan galmodu ammoo baa'inaa fi baldhina qaba. Kanaan alatti, garaagarummaa baa'ee hin qabani. Akkuma galmodu, odeessiin gabaabaan, himakka nama-duraatiin, first-person point-of-view (ana/ani, nu'u/nuti) yookaan himakka nama-sadaffaatiin, third-person point-of-view (isa, isii, isaan) dhiyaatuu hin danda'a. "A short story is a brief work of prose fiction, and most of the terms for analyzing the component elements, the types, and the various narrative techniques of the 'novel' are applicable to the short story as well" (Abrams, 1993: 193). Like the novel, in the short story, we organize the actions, thoughts, together with interactions of the characters so as to achieve the artful shape of the plot. Like that of the novel, we use various styles of writing: tragedy, humour, tragic-comedy, romantic, satire, etc; and the story can be imaginary (fictitious) or real. The story is presented to the audience or readers in one of the different points-of-view, that is, either in the first-person point-of-view (I, we) or in the third-person point-of view (he, she, they).

There are three main differences between the novel and the short story. First, the former is long and consists of great variety of writing. Second, there are fewer characters in the short story than in the novel. Third, the plot of the novel is much broader and complex than that of the short story.

Oduu Durii (Traditional Tale/Story): oduu dhugaa hin ta'in kan fakkeessanii/uumanii ijoollee gammachiisuuf yookaan akka waan badaa hin hojjanne itti odeessan. Oduu Oromoo kan durii keessaa bulguun isa tokko. Baldhinaan hubachuuf, durduri (trickster tales) laali. In the Oromo society, traditional tale is a story, usually for children about something which may or may not be

true; as for example the story of *bulguu* or cannibal and other creatures (see fables/trickster tales in chapter 4).

Ofbarree (Literary): ofbarreen, dubbisuu, baratuu, beekkomsa ofbarruu qabaachuu fi ofbarruu barreessuu jaalachuu muldhisa. In its narrow definition, literary refers to studying or writing literature. It literally means versed in or acquainted with the work of literature.

Ofbarruu (Literature): ofbarruun yoo gabaabsinee laallu, aadaa, seenaa fi waan jireenna saba tokkoo irratti hundaa'e kan fedhii, dhugaa fi eennummaa/eenyummaa saba sanii calaqisiisu. Ofbarruun, hundee beekkomsaa fi dagaaginaa qofa osoo hin ta'in, qabeenna hin dhumne kan sabni tokko ittiin beekkamu. A literature is a body of artistic work of a people, which is characterized by beauty of expression wherein the universality of intellectual and emotional appeal are underlined. It is a piece of work, which characterizes nation's identity and true existence.

Qaabata (Flashback): wanti darbe tokko akka qaabannootitti mataa keenna keessa dhufee, waan san akka tasaa kaafnee yoo dubbanne, qaabata jedhama. *Gaafattii guyyaa lolaa, kabombii dhukaase, kamajanni mandi'e*, isa jedhu yoo xiinxxallinu, Gaaddisaan geerarsa kana keessatti, 'dhukaasa bombiitii' fi 'majanni mandi'uu' akka qaabannootitti tuqe/kaase. Kanaafuu, jechoota kanniin lamaan qaabata jechuu nidandeenya. A flashback is interpolated narrative or scenes, often justified or naturalized as a memory, a reverie or a confession by one of the characters, which represents events that happened before the time at which the work opened. It is the scene representing an earlier event inserted into the current situation depicted in a work of art. For instance, in the *geerarsa* narrative, the phrase...*akka waan dhibba qabnuu*, literally 'as if we had thousand heads of cattle,' was told in flashbacks .

Qindinee (Structure): ofbarree qabata tokkoo keessatti (in a literary text), akkaataan yaanni qabata sanii itti qindaa'ee yookaan ijaaramee kaayame jechuudha. Gabaabatti, yaanni adda addaa yoo sirriitti walitti qindaa'ee guututti kaayame, qindinee ta'a. It is the organization, relationships or proper placement of the constituent parts so as to produce the coherent image (see formal principle in chapter 1).

Qonqixa (Stanza): walaloo keessatti, sarara (lines) dhumarratti sagalee walfakkaatu qaban bakka tokkotti ‘qonqixa’ jennaani.

1. bara dheeraa sibaadhee narraa bu’i hinjiree
2. mataan sibaatuu didee amma maaltu falaree
3. narraa ka’i dadhabee silaa namaa hin yaadduu
4. hireen similixxeertii lamuu foon kiyya hin nyaattuu



- | | |
|----|---|
| 1. | lice, I have carried you for years and I want you to leave me free |
| 2. | the head has refused to carry you, and so what would be the solution |
| 3. | you care not for others; I am tired of you and will not let you stay |
| 4. | there is no chance for you, and so you will not eat my flesh any more |

Walaloon kun qonqixa lama qaba. **1** fi **2** bakka tokkotti qonqixa tokko yoo ta’an, **3** fi **4** ammoo bakka tokkotti qonqixa lammaffaati jechuudha. A stanza is an arrangement of certain number of verse lines. It refers to a group of lines in a repeated pattern that form a unit in the rhyming poems. The above poem is divided into two stanzas; that is, **1** and **2** and **3** and **4**.

Qoosina (Humour): qoosinni, qoosaa kajedhu irraa kan uumame. Innis nama busheessuu, jecha nama kolfisiisu/koflisiisu dubbachuudha. Qoosina bakka lamatti qoonnee laaluu hin dandeenna. Tokkoffaa, kan nama salphisuu irratti hundaa’e; lammaffaa, ka akkanumaan yoo taphatan nama kolfisiisuuf dubbatamu. Walaloo asii gaditti kaayame kana keessatti, namichi Jaldo jedhamu kan ummanni isaa akka janna guddaatitti laalu, diinaan loluu sodaatee, gaangee ufii gatee, Amaarticha Baqqalaa jedhan dheessuun isaa, ‘qoosina’ nama salphisu muldhisa.

*gaafa dilii Baqqalaa Jaldo gatee gaangee
guddaa guddaa dheessu si ajabee waankee*



the very battle day, Jaldo was defeated by Bekele and lost his mule
seeing the big being chased by another big, I deeply ashamed of you

In a standard sense, the term humour may be defined as comic utterance, a comic quality causing amusement, a comic appearance or mode of behaviour. It evokes, as it is sometimes said, sympathetic laughter, or else laughter which is an end in itself. If we extend the distinction between

harmless and harmful utterances, one may say that humour is a harmless form of comedy. The theory of satirical comedy of Abrams shows the way humour is used to injure human feelings. Humour becomes harmful if we mock a person or if we use derogatory remarks of contempt.

If the utterance is purely comic, that is, if it is used merely to provoke amusement and sympathetic or genuine laughter, then, it becomes harmless humorous utterance rather than witty utterance. In contrast, if the utterance provokes laughter just to harm, ridicule, or injure somebody's feelings, it becomes satirical or ironic humour.

In the above poem, the constituents *Jaldo gatee gaangee*, literally "Jaldo lost his mule" and *guddaa guddaa dheessu*, "the big being chased by another big;" are humorous expressions. They are not purely comic utterances, which provoke genuine laughter; rather, they are expressed in the form of satirical humour, or tendency wit/comedy, in which Jaldo, whom the society sees as an important figure, is ridiculed. Thus, the laughter the poet is trying to provoke is harmful, not genuine or sympathetic.

Qopheessaa fi Waraabaa (Performer and Recorder): nama dinqinii (drama), tiyaatira, hibboo, tapha, itf., waltajjii tokko irratti ummataaf dhiyeessu. Afiffa ofbarruun akka qabeenna/qabeenya sabaatitti waan laallamuuf, akka hin banne waraabanii kaayuun barbaachisaadha. Waan barreeffamee yookaan waraabamee galmeen hin kaayaminiif, ofbarruun Oromoo baa'etu badeera. Hayyoonni Oromoo kadurii yoo hin jirre ta'e (yoo du'an), galmeen afiffa ofbarruu (dictionary of oral literature) bade jechuun hin danda'ama. A Performer is a person who performs for an audience in a show (drama, play, etc). Oral literature as one of the treasured assets of any society needs careful documentation without which an authentic account and permanence of the work of an artist seldom occur. For example, due to lack of proper documentation, a large number of Oromo verbal arts have disappeared. Every time the oral narrators pass away, the authentic account of Oromo oral tradition is also lost. This has been the longstanding problem of African folk-literature at large. In order to ensure the permanence and originality of the work of oral art, the oral performance should be properly recorded, filmed, or written down.

Raagaa (Oral Narrator/Producer): akka afiffa ofbarruutitti, raagaa yoo jennu, nama barreessu qofa osoo hin ta'in, waan barbaachisu hunda/cufa akka 'galmeejechaatitti' (dictionary), mataatti qabatee afaaniin sanyii irraa gara sanyititti dabarsu jechuudha. Raagaan tokko akka himakka nama-duraatitti, 'first-person narrative' (ana/ani, nuti/nu'u) yookaan akka himakka nama-sadaffaatitti 'third-person narrative' (isa, isii/ishee, isaan) raagu hin danda'a. Akka nama-duraa yoo jennu, wanti inni dubbatu sun waan isa ilaalu akka ta'etti yoo fudhatame, jechuun, waan san irratti qooda fudhachuu isaati agarsiisa. Akka nama-sadaffaa yoo jennu ammoo, akka nama alaa ta'ee (qooda osoo hin fudhatin) waan tokko dhiyeessuu kajedhutti hiikkama. Oral narrator simply means a person whom the folk-literature is attributed to. In African context, the oral artists are unable to gain recognition in the same way as modern novelists and playwrights simply because African oral tradition had hardly existed as modern literature before the 1950s. The Oromo oral literature cannot be different from this. Like other African societies, due to lack of education and modern thinking, numerous Oromo oral artists or wise men (the hayyuus), who have contributed to the birth of folk-literature, were unable to win authorship status. Thus, oral literature is characteristically different from other literary arts of modern times (plays, short stories, novels and dramas) in that there is no individual authorship.

If there is anything of artistic or literary merit in African oral literature, then it should be possible to examine those who perform this literature and see in what sense they could be given the same sort of recognition that we give to novelists, playwrights and poets in the culture of writing (Okpewho, 1992: 20).

The oral narrator is a person who gives an account or tells a story orally. Like written literature, folklore also deals with first-person narrative (I, we) and third-person narrative (he, she, they). In the former, the oral narrator himself/ herself to a greater or lesser degree is a participant in the story; whereas in the latter the narrator does not participate (stays outside) in the story. In other words, the oral narrator is a looked-on (observer) of the event rather than being part of it. In the Oromo fables, the oral artist usually narrates the story without taking part in it; whereas in heroic tale (*geerarsa*) the narrator is at the same time the participant of the event.

Raagiinsa (Narrative): akka afiffa ofbarruutitti, raagiinsi waan seenaa fi aadaa saba tokkoo keessatti ta'e afaaniin himuudha. Karaa biraatiin, raagiinsa yoo jennu, odeessii himamu/odeeffamu,

kan dhugaa ta'e yookaan kan uumame dubbatamu jechuu ta'a. A narrative is a story, whether in prose or verse, involving events, characters, and what the characters say and do. Narrative is the general term for a long or short story; of past, present or future; factual or fictitious; told for any purpose, with or without much detail.

Riqa (Irony): akka waan nama jajanii/jaalatanii fakkeessanii daglaan jechaan nama tuquu. Fakkeennaaf, nama haalbadaa (corrupt) ta'e tokko akka nama Waaqaatitti/gaariititti kaayuu; nama lugna (lunna) ta'e akka jannaatitti jajuu, nama kijibaa akka nama dhugaatitti leellisuu. Gabaabinatti, riqa yoo jennu, dubbii hiikkaan isaa waan jedhame saniin faallaa ta'e jechuu muldhisa. Irony is a mockery or scorn use of words to express the opposite of what one really means; that is, words of praise are given but blame or ridicule is often intended. A kind person, isn't it? A remark made when a person is actually unkind, cruel, self-seeking, jealous or prejudiced. "In most of the modern critical uses of the term irony, there remains the root sense of dissembling or hiding what is actually the case; not, however, in order to deceive but to achieve special rhetorical or artistic effects" (Abrams, 1993: 97).

An ironic language is one of the most popular literary devices in modern criticism. Modern literary scholars have classified irony into nine parts, of which verbal irony, dramatic irony, tragic irony, cosmic irony and romantic irony play significant roles in modern criticism.

The *verbal irony* is a term in which the meaning that the speaker implies sharply differs from the meaning that appears to be real or true. The *dramatic irony* deals with a situation in which the audience shares the knowledge or idea with the protagonist character or narrator concerning the current or future condition of which the minor character or characters in the story are ignorant. In such a situation, the characters simply act or imitate without knowing what the outsiders assume to be impertinent to the actual situation they already know. In fact, they do all this without understanding the exact purpose the main actor wants to achieve. The Impossible Imitation of the Oromo trickster tales: fable one (The Ambiguous Journey) and fable five (The Reward of the Unwise) are examples of the dramatic irony in which the deceived characters who are totally ignorant of the situations lost their lives.

The *tragic irony* deals with the melancholic state. In the wake of the revolution of 1974, the farmers who were terribly affected by the *gabbaar* system supported socialism and rallied behind

the change, especially the new land reform. Eventually the captivating slogan ‘Ethiopia First without Bloodshed’ (Yaale minim dam Itiyophiyaa Tiqidam) was dashed. The great expectations of the 1970s denied. This fine slogan was followed by a cosmic change; a situation in which the naïve audience gradually returned to the drama of the old system. The tragic irony here is that the uncritical imitation of the 1970s and 1980s, together with the failure of discovering the concrete direction and the hidden motives of communism resulted in catastrophic losses and great sadness of the tricked audience, the peasant population and others.

The *cosmic irony* is a literary device wherein the false images (deities), imaginary creatures with magic powers, destinies, objects and the likes are represented as if they were controlling the events so that the protagonist actors (worshippers) enjoy false hope in order to challenge the invisible powers.

The *romantic irony* is more or less the extension of cosmic irony. It was introduced and enriched by German romantic writers during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In romantic irony, the narrator endeavours to create his own world of illusion of interpreting reality, which in a sense is to shatter people’s confidence through his/her characters, which he/she arbitrarily creates and manipulates. The world of illusion and abstract image that had been created by the trickster ‘sorcerers’ (*qaallicha/qaallittii*) of the traditional Oromo epitomize both cosmic and romantic irony. The romantic irony is that the romantic verbal narrators and writers often try to create the world in their own image, subsequent to which they sometimes become victims of their uncritical actions.

Tarrinee (Verse): waan akka walaloo kan barreeffamee tartiibaan kaayame, yookaan kan afaaniin himamu. Fakkeennaaf, walaloon asii gaditti kaayame kan toksalga xumurtuu (terminating rhyming) qabu kun tarrinee ta’a.

A succession of metrical feet written, or orally composed, is known as verse. It is a writing, which is arranged in lines, often with a regular rhythm or pattern of rhyme as for instance in the following heroic poem:

gofti guddaan baddaa jira Gomoorii
mootiin fardaa goljaa hanqisa boorii
dubbii hin beekuu nama rakkisa moognii

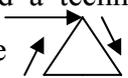


the largest tribe which dwell in the highland is Gomoorrii
 the yellow, the king of horse, overtakes the warthog
 the ignorant does not know how to speak, and so he troubles you

Tartiibee (Plot): odeessii (story) tokko keessatti, akkaataa wanti dubbatamu/barreeffamu tartiibaan itti kaayamu ibsa. Tartiibeen tokko ‘gammachina’ (comedy) yookaan ‘gaddina’ (tragedy) muldhisa. Waa’ee tartiibee yoo dubbannu, waan sadihii hubachuu qabna. Tokkoffaa, ‘wixina’ (rising action). Lammaffaa, yaada odeessii keessatti ‘muummii’ (climax) ta’e, kan waa’ee wabicha duraa (protagonist character) guututti muldhisu. Sadaffaa, ‘xumurre’ (falling action or denouement). Jalqabiin akka odeessiin gabaabaan (short story) yookaan ‘galmoduun’ (novel) tokko itti jalqabee baldhataa deemu agarsiisa. Muummiin ammoo odeessii tokko keessatti bakka yaanni cimaan (yaanni anniisa ta’e) jiru muldhisa. Xumurreen wanti barreeffame dhumarratti ifa bayuu/ba’uu agarsiisa. Kunis, hinjifannoo, kufiinsa, gammachuu, yookaan gaddiinsa ta’uun nimala.

A plot of the story is the orderly and sequentially arranged events and actions. A plot of a particular text usually deals with tragedy, comedy, tragi-comedy or romantic. In a given literary work (novel, short story, play, drama, film), plot and characters are interdependent critical concepts. In the study of a plot of a story, it is imperative to explore varieties of its forms.

In the study of a plot of a story, it is imperative to explore varieties of its forms.

Gustav Freytag 1863 (see Abrams 1993), introduced a technique of plot analysis called “*Freytag’s Pyramid*.” He analyzed plot as a pyramidal shape  consisting of rising action, climax and falling action or denouement. The rising action refers to the opening scene; the climax is the most intense and exciting part, which causes a strong feeling of eagerness and enthusiasm. The falling action (denouement) in literary work reveals the action or intrigue that ends either in success or failure, comedy or tragedy. This is to say the whole mystery is unfolded and the ambiguous or vague ideas will be made clear (see chapter 4).

Teessii (Setting): teessiin, yammuu wanti tokko ta’e, hariirsa naannisa (social environment)-namoota achi jiraatan dabalatee, bara wanti sun itti ta’ee fi bakka/hulee muldhisa. Fakkeenyaaf, *Harkaa fi Harma Mura* Aanoleetii fi *Lola Calii Calanqoo* yoo fudhanne, bara 1886 fi 1887 keessa

Oromiyaa kibbaa fi baha, jechuun, Arsii fi Harargee keessatti yoo ta’u, yeroon kun yeroo Oromoon hinjifatamee sabni bilisaan ture harqoota jala gale. The setting of a story is the general locale, historical time, and social environment or circumstances in which its action occurs. The setting of a single episode or scene within a work of art is the particular physical location in which it takes place. It is the locale or period in which the action of oral tradition, novel, short story, play, drama or film takes place. For example, the general setting of the *Mutilation of Hands and Breasts at Aanole* (1886) and the *Massacre at Calanqoo* (1887) was the empire era Oromiyaa.

The setting for collecting and recording depends on the specific strategies and needs of a researcher, and these may include short or long visit, formal interviews, explicit field collecting and others. This means the study of oral literature involves natural setting and artificial setting (see Finnegan, 1992: 76-77). ‘Natural setting’ refers to the unawareness of the participants during recording the text, whereas artificial setting implies formal or specially set up occasions during recording; and in such a situation, the audience (participants) are aware of the arrangement.

Toksalga (Rhyme): sagaleen jecha tokkoo, sagalee jecha biraa waliin yoo dhumarratti walta’e/wal-fakkaate (deddeebiinsa laali).

Ajjeenillee lafuma, lafaa gooddaa dhooqqanii
garbichillee namumaa baaduu dhuguu dhoogganii

A rhyming poetry has correspondence in the terminal sounds of the verse lines. It refers to a word having similar sound or ends with identical sound as another word in the given rhyming elements of a poem.

he walks in mist of darkness
without discovering his nakedness

Umsuura (Imagery): waa’ee waan tokkoo yoo dubbannu/barreesinu, akka wanti sun surrii namaa keesstti akka suuraatitti (misiliititti) uumamee kaayamu godhuu jechuudha. Fakkeenyaaf, geararsa Lola Calii Calanqoo yoo laalle, akki raagaan namoota Oromoo kadu’anii fi meeshaawwan isaanii ittikaaye sun umsuura ta’a. The term umsuura is derived from umuu (create) and suuraa (picture). The two terms in combination refer to creating or forming a picture or an image. Imagery is the formation of mental pictures, figures, or likeness of things through poetic words or the art of

rhetoric. It is employed just to paint mental pictures that can powerfully appeal to human feelings. If we take the line ‘human blood was gushing forth like a spring’ (Innes 1976), we see that the writer is trying to depict or form a horrifying image of shading the rivers of blood, and this excess flowing of human blood is compared with spring of water in the form of simile. The difference between symbolism and imagery is that the former refers to a system of representing something good or bad; whereas the latter is the colourful and vivid description of objects and events. Imagery is one of the most common literary devices in modern criticism. It is the creation of mental picture so as to describe objects, human characters and their qualities either through indirect reference or in the vehicles of figurative languages. In the Oromo geerarsa of Calii Calanqoo, the hero narrator has created the image of the battle of Calanqoo when he describes the whole situation with concise language. The objects that he has enumerated: arriwaan (grey hairs), filaawaan (combs), bokkuuwaan (the sceptres), calleewaan (ornamental beads), etc., and the martyrs, the war victim civilians: manguddoo (elderly men), dardara (young men), hayyoota (wise men) etc., portray the vivid image of Calanqoo massacre and the lost war of 1887.

Walfakii Waltarrina (Parallel Comparison): yaada walmiilu yookaan waliin deemuu danda’u jechuudha. Fakkeennaaf, mammaaka “sibiilli abbaan qare abbaa qale,” jedhu yoo fudhanne, jechi qare jedhu, qale kajedhuun walfudhata. Kana jechuun, sibiila qaruun, akka ufumaa ufballeessu isa godheera. Karaa biraatiin yoo laalle ammoo, shirri/dharti inni xaxu du’a itti fideera jechuudha. Kanaafuu, yaanni kunniin lamaan walfakii waltarrina ta’an. As Crystal (2001: 376) has noted, the parallel comparison occurs if the given two ideas are close enough in their meaning to allow a choice to be made between them in some contexts. Thus, parallel comparison implies a word or expression having nearly the same meaning as another in a particular literary text (see proverbial parallelism in chapter 5).

Waltarree (Parallel): yaada walcinaa/walbira deemuu danda’u. Yaanni waltarree ta’e tokko akkasumas walfakii ta’uu yookaan ta’uu dhabuus nimala. The parallel constituents are balanced relationships of lexical and phrasal categories or ideas, which may or may not match or correspond. It is a similar order and structure in a given work of art (see proverbial lore in chapter 5).

Waltarrina (Parallelism): waltaree laali (see parallel)

Weedduu Sabaa (Folk Song): weedduu durirraa jalqabee jiru, kan akka aadaa biyya ufiititti sabni tokko weeddisee ittin beekkamu. Weedduu jaalalaa, weedduu hujii (daboo/jigii), faaruu loonii, itf., weedduu *sabaa* jedhaman. It is a song originating among the people of a country or area, passed by oral tradition from one generation to the next; existing in several versions. Folk song includes love lyric (love song), work song, cattle song, etc.

Xumurtuu (Terminating): walaloo tokko keessatti, yoo sagaleen wal fakkaatan dhuma himiinsotaa (sentences) irra oolan, xumurtuu jedhama.

qonnee gombisa(gootaraa) guunnee

dilbiin (qabeenyi) kan kooti hin jennee

↓

we laboured hard and filled the grain store

but we toiled in vain for the wealth is not ours

Jechoonni sagaleen isaanii sarara lamaan dhumarratti tokko ta'e kunniin, *toksalga xumurtuu* (terminating rhymes) jedhaman. *Terminating* in the context of rhyming poems denotes the elements having similar sounds at the end of verse lines (see alliteration).

An Oromiffa Literary Glossary

afiffa dirrisa raagiinsa	oral prose narrative
afiffa raagaa	oral narrator
dalginiffa	syntagmatic/horizontal
deddeeba	motif (incidence, device or reference which frequently occurs in a literary text)
dinqinii	drama
durduri	fable story
fakkeesiffa raagiinsa	fictional narrative
faaruu jaalalaa	love lyric
faaruu	song
farrisaa	trickster
fonjolliffa	antithetical
galmodu	novel

geerarsa	heroic tale (epic)
hariirsa naannisa	social environment
himakka	point-of-view
hirsaga	rhythm or <i>a recognizable distinctive pattern or a regular arrangement of sounds produced by emphasis and duration of notes</i>
hirsagiffa	rhythmic
hirsagiffa bikkinee	rhythmic meter. <i>It is a poetic measure or arrangement of words in a regularly measured, patterned or rhythmic lines</i>
hirsagiffa miillee	rhythmic feet. <i>It refers to unit of rhythm or a standard of measurement in a rhyming line of poetry containing either stressed or unstressed syllables or both in a given word. In much the same way as English, to determine rhythmic feet in any Oromiffa word, we need to begin at the right end of a word by <i>associating feet with the vowels from the right to the left</i>. The number of full vowels (a, e, i, o, u) in a word actually determines <i>the number of its feet</i>.</i> <p style="text-align: center;">In the study of the rhyming poems, rhythmic feet and meter play a significant role in scansion of the verse.</p>
ifinee	literal
irdibiffa	metaphorical

jabeessa	stress
jabeessa qoodii	stressed syllable
jalqabii	rising action
keessii	internal
misila	sculpture
muummii	climax
naannisa	environment
nama-duraa raagiinsa	first-person narrative
nama-sadaffaa raagiinsa	third-person narrative
odeeffaa	mythology
odeessii	story
odeessii durii	traditional story
odeessii gabaabaa	short story
ofbarree	literary
ofbarruu	literature

ofbarruu sabaa	folk-literature
qoodii	a syllable. A segment of speech typically produced with a single pulse of air pressure from the lungs; and consisting of a centre of relatively <i>great sonority</i> (audibility) with or without one or more accompanying sounds of relatively <i>less sonority</i> (less audibility)
raagiinsa	narrative
sababii	cause
suunsuma	humorous or satirical poem
toksalga keessii	internal rhyming
umdura	effect
wabicha	character
wabicha duraa	protagonist/main character
walaloo	poem
walfakii	comparison/synonymous
weedduu sabaa	folk song
xumurree	falling action

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A Summary: The Encapsulated Central Issues

The search for new ideas and the interpretation of cultural and literary movements are ceaseless human activities and every step of moving forward for broadening the alternatives demands a new way of thinking which enables man to reassess the existing values and modes of life. In every civilization the process of successful social transformation depends upon the creative needs of the new generations and their continuous effort to re-construct the wisdom of their ancestors, which arguably reminds them of a greatest sense of freedom, self-respect and dignity. The struggle of the Oromo to maintain the egalitarian norms of the *Gadaa* time throughout their history has been another transforming factor in their cultural life, and therefore, in their literary tradition.

The long road to self-discovery forms the basis of literary culture, which depicts a series of events from which the narrator's psychic state has been evolved. In their efforts to promote identity empowerment, Oromo oral narrators have formulated numerous imaginative ideas about social development and presented them in the most stylistic and effective combinations. In this project, I have argued that the New Criticism approach to these combinations evokes ceaseless possibility of creativity and legitimizes self-empowerment. To me, the study of Oromo oral literary genres deepens the meaning of freedom, strengthens our vision of the world where wisdom and peace reign, perfect national community occurs, and genuine solidarity prevails. The centrality of self-definition in the genres is meant to expand moral, political, artistic and intellectual horizons for the people trampled over and I believe this eventually gives new opportunities for being, and in the process, the society is likely to develop a sense of coping with egalitarian life. Perhaps the most liberating concept of the Oromo oral narrative tradition is its openness to broad perspectives, alternative explanations and the recognition of the possibilities of discovering values through the process of poetic imagination. In this work, I have focused on some different ways just to explicate how modern critics should respond to the questions concerning the nature and aesthetic merit of oral literature and how it is to be judged or evaluated on the basis of the truly literary ground (in its own right) that can help the mounting of intellectual interest.

This project is the outcome of a growing sense that one of the defining characteristics of recent Oromo culture and literature has been its insistence on examining the marginalized identity,

and that literary culture as the quest for knowledge and identity empowerment, has come to be the focus of my concern. It is the representation of a new wave of cultural and literary movement that reflects post-modernism and the contemporary critical methods in which the indigenous literary culture is resituated in the context of other modern literatures, and aims at developing the concept of cultural identity and democratic conduct. The work involves a broad interdisciplinary discourse of some of the vital issues concerning the greater sensitivity of representation, interpretation and evaluation of folklore genres.

The writing of Oromo oral literature has been so closely bound to the rapidly growing needs of putting in place the disappearing reality of the nation and explaining its essence in diachronic (historical dimension) and synchronic terms. As the Oromo nation moves forward to emerge from long years of marginalization, silence and predicament to the new world of hope, the struggle for vigorous self-assertion, a seeking for alternative models and the search for the centrality of the Gadaa civilization have increased with extraordinary rapidity and force. The dislocated culture and native literature (literary tradition) are to be shaped and elaborated more by a hope for the future than clinging to the stereotyped discourses of the past. The exploration of a series of socio-cultural and political waves is an attempt to show the complex developments, confrontations and the forcing circumstances that relegated the national culture and literature to nominal existence. In work, one of my central arguments is that drawing a new and truer picture of the national culture and the indigenous literature can help the rediscovery of Oromo identity and values.

Since the Oromo folklore narrative is the product of a search for cultural history, it must be examined within its artistic field, and this field involves the exploration of phonological properties, meanings in context, critics, traditions, cultural and ritual movements, philosophical ideas, political and social climate. Without paying attention to these factors, oral literature can hardly give effective response to all spheres of intellectual enquiry.

The oral narrative tradition is not an object that stands by itself and that offers the same view to each reader in each period. It is not a monument that monologically reveals its timeless essence. In a modern world where a corpus of literature is viewed as something which is created in a vacuum and periodized into static worldviews without considering its poetic structure and historical significance, it is hardly possible to validate its contemporary existence and open up a new horizon of social meaning which it contains. The periodization of the Oromo literary tradition into static

monuments, and the problem of recognizing the necessary relationship between literary interpretation and history have relegated this body of knowledge to local utterance. In dealing with this body of literature, I have tried to examine critically the responses of the burdened generations of the past to their historical situations. The interpretive response to Oromo folk-literature is, therefore, to address the interdisciplinary approach which enables us to explore the unknown territories of the human imagination, the search for identities and social meanings. It is a mode of analysis which enables us to make the suppressed literary tradition speak to the imagination.

The oral tradition is an intrinsic history of literature that covers the cultural past, social conditions, the broad sweep of historical time and its events; and the diverse artistic functions it offers are revealed through reconstructing and deconstructing the past images. The writing of Oromo literary culture demands a deconstructive method of analysis or what is commonly termed interpretation simply because we are dealing with an openness to new possibilities and a creative dimension that involve redefinition, reshaping, modification and elaboration. Even though the social meaning remains unchanged, our creative act always allows us a poetic free-play (reading and redefining without restraint), which enables us to go beyond the fixities and explain the metaphor of each spoken word or genre.

New Criticism needs to address appropriately the theoretical foundation of oral literature and to recognize the importance of inter-generic relations in its constitution of poetic configuration, social and ideological forces. This means that an indigenous genre should always be treated as a dynamic process, not as a static concept. The analysis of African oral art focuses on the performance events with little or no effort to expand this approach to a broader socio-political and historical matrix. It is, therefore, necessary to discover some different ways of examining oral literary criticism and the importance of having insight into the fundamental creative spirit generated by the subject. A dogged reliance on the interpretative dimension as a basis for an analytical framework not only gives us more opportunities to examine oral literature in a new direction, but also to define the value of the genres in a social practice. The functional and contextual-centred analysis of Oromo oral art actually means to understand the aesthetic value of the genres in terms of native conceptions.

In a meta-communication perspective, this work examines the artistic quality of the oral art as framed poetic units (expressive feature) and investigates the situations which suggest its

employment. In a meta-linguistic dimension, it explores cultural semantics, the phonological properties and the systematic disposition of the constituents, or syntactic structures in their parallel relations. Within the social environment, it discusses in stylistic terms, the core issues concerning identity empowerment, alternative values, the criticism of folly, ethical issues, egalitarian norms and the significance of social solidarity. In historical and political terms, it depicts the stable situation of the pre-conquest (the *Gadaa*) period and the moving of the centre from egalitarian life to a conflict model of the social structure characterized by polarization and the loss of the *Gadaa* democratic conduct.

In the comparative aspects, this study covers the peculiar and universal characteristics of the Oromo oral tradition. The universal approach focuses on the building of constructive and positive images of all cultures, traditional narratives and the mutual intelligibility of the human race. Within a broader African socio-political environment, the Oromo wisdom narrative reflects general attitudes, ideologies and values of the time in which it was produced. In terms of narratological thinking, it evaluates the image of the distant past within a contemporary setting. The multidimensional response to the representative genres is, therefore, to define the unknown territories of human imagination, the struggle for social meanings, democracy and national existence.

The collected, written and transformed Oromo oral art forms the new stylistic and artistic combinations which provoke intellectual arguments. In terms of modern thinking, this storehouse of wisdom functions as a driving force of ensuring an egalitarian culture, a sustainable socialization process and broadens the horizon of a fertile imagination, the imagination that sharpens human intellect.

Almost every nation has a natural desire to empower itself through the civilized power of indigenous literature, and to engross as much cultural prestige and national pride as possible, so as to build a popular image that would enable that nation to win social and economic freedom. This encapsulates the whole essence of Oromo oral literature.

Resumé: En Sammenfatning af Centrale Emner

Jagten på nye ideer og fortolkningen af kulturelle og litterære bevægelser er menneskets uophørlige aktiviteter. Og ethvert skridt fremad imod en udvidelse af andre muligheder kræver en ny måde at tænke på, som gør det muligt for mennesket at revurdere de eksisterende værdier og måder at leve på. I enhver menneskelig civilisation, afhænger arbejdet af en vellykket social forvandling af behovet for de nye generationers kreativitet og deres fortsatte indsats med at genopbygge deres forfædres visdom, som rimeligvis minder dem om den stærkest mulige bevidsthed om frihed, selvrespekt og værdighed. Oromo folkets kamp for at vedligeholde den egalitære norm fra Gadaa tiden har gennem hele deres historie været en anden forandringsfaktor i deres kulturelle liv, og derfor også i deres litterære tradition.

Den lange vej til selvopdagelse danner fundamentet for en litterær kultur, som skildrer en række begivenheder, hvorfra fortællerens psykiske evne er blevet udviklet. I deres indsats for at fremme selvstændiggørelsen af identitet, har Oromo folkets mundtlige fortællere formuleret talrige fantasifulde ideer om social udvikling og fremlagt dem i de mest effektive og stilfulde kombinationer. I dette projekt har jeg argumenteret for, at en 'Nykritisk' indfaldsvinkel til disse kombinationer fremkalder uendelige muligheder for kreativitet og legitimerer en selvstændiggørelse. For mig uddyber udforskningen af Oromo folkets mundtlige litterære genrer betydningen af frihed, styrker vores visioner om verdenen, hvor visdom og fred hersker, og på den måde indtræffer et fuldstændigt nationalt fællesskab, og ægte solidaritet vil sejre. Centrum i dét at definere sig selv i disse genrer er tænkt som en udvidelse af moralen, den politiske, kunstneriske og intellektuelle horisont overfor undertrykte mennesker. Og jeg tror, at dette eventuelt giver nye muligheder for dét at eksistere, og i processen, udvikler samfundet formodentlig en bevidsthed om at kunne klare sig selv i et egalitært liv. Det mest befriende koncept i Oromo folkets mundtlige fortælletradition er muligvis dets åbenhed overfor et bredt perspektiv, alternative forklaringer og en anerkendelse af muligheder for opdagelse af værdier gennem arbejdet med poetiske forestillinger. I denne opgave, har jeg fokuseret på nogle forskellige måder, hvorpå moderne kritikere bør give svar på spørgsmålene vedrørende karakteren af den æstetiske kvalitet ved mundtlig litteratur, og hvordan den skal bedømmes eller vurderes på grundlag af den ægte litterære grund (uafhængig af andet), der kan hjælpe med at øge den intellektuelle interesse.

Dette projekt er resultatet af en voksende bevidsthed om et af de afgørende karakteristika for den nyeste kultur og litteratur hos Oromo folket, og som har været dets krav om at undersøge folkets marginaliserede identitet, og at den litterære kultur som en søgen efter viden, og en identitetsselvstændiggørelse er blevet fokus for min interesse. Det er tilstedeværelsen af en ny bølge af kulturelle og litterære bevægelser, som reflekterer post-modernisme og kontemporære kritiske metoder, hvori den indfødte litterære kultur er omplaceret i forhold til andre moderne litteraturer, og som sigter på udviklingen af konceptet for den kulturelle identitet og demokratiske adfærd. Arbejdet indeholder en bred tværfaglig (interdisciplinær) afhandling om nogle af de absolut vigtigste emner vedrørende den største følsomhed ved folkløse (folkeminder) genren, når det gælder repræsentation, fortolkning og bedømmelse.

Nedskrivningen af Oromo folkets mundtlige litteratur har været så nært forbundet med det hurtigt voksende behov for at lægge den forsvindende nations virkelighed tilbage på plads og forklare dens kernepunkt med en historisk synsvinkel (diakronisk) og et synkronisk forhold. Netop som Oromo nationen bevæger sig fremad for at komme ud af mange års marginalisering, tavshed og forlegenhed til en ny verden af håb, har kampen for en kraftig selvhævdelse, en søgen efter alternative modeller for og en søgen efter det centrale i Gadaa civilisationen forstærket sig med ekstraordinær hurtighed og kraft. Den forvredne kultur og den indfødte litteratur skal omformes og bearbejdes yderligere ved hjælp af et håb for fremtiden ved ikke at klamre sig til fortidens stereotype diskurs. Udforskningen af en række sociokulturelle og politiske bølger er et forsøg på at vise de komplekse udviklinger, konfrontationer og de pressede omstændigheder, som degraderede den nationale kultur og litteratur til en nominel eksistens. I dette arbejde er en af mine centrale argumentationer, at det at tegne et nyt og mere sandfærdigt billede af den nationale kultur og indfødte litteratur kan hjælpe med til at genopdage Oromo folkets identitet og værdier.

Idet Oromo folkløse fortællekunsten er produktet af en eftersøgning af kulturhistorien, bør det undersøges indenfor dens kunstneriske område, og det område inddrager en udforskning af de fonologiske egenskaber, betydninger i sammenhængen, tekstkritik, traditioner, kulturelle og rituelle bevægelser, filosofiske ideer samt det politiske og sociale klima. Uden at vise hensyn til disse faktorer, kan den mundtlige litteratur næppe give en mere effektiv respons på alle de områder, hvor der er intellektuelle forespørgsler.

Den mundtlige fortælletradition er ikke en ting, som kan stå alene, og som giver det samme synspunkt til den enkelte læser, hver gang den læses. Den er ikke et monument, som monologisk afslører dens tidløse essens. I en moderne verden, hvor en tekstsamling bliver set på som noget, der er skabt i et vakuum og periodevist i et statisk verdenssyn uden at tage hensyn til dens poetiske struktur og historiske signifikans, er det næppe muligt at godkende dens kontemporære eksistens og åbne for en ny horisont af de sociale betydninger, som den indeholder. Periodeinddelingen af Oromo litteraturtraditionen i statiske monumenter, og problemet med at genkende det nødvendige slægtskab mellem den litterære fortolkning og historie har degraderet denne vidensmængde til en lokal ytring. Ved at beskæftige mig med denne litteraturmængde har jeg kritisk prøvet at undersøge svarene fra den bebyrdede generation fra fortiden i deres historiske forhold. Det fortolkende svar på Oromo folkelitteraturen er derfor at rette sin opmærksomhed mod den tværfaglige indfaldsvinkel, som gør det muligt for os at udforske de ukendte territorier i den menneskelige fantasi, i jagten på identiteter og de sociale betydninger. Det er en analysemetode, som gør os i stand til at få den undertrykte litterære tradition til at tale til fantasien.

Den mundtlige tradition er en indre litteraturhistorie, som dækker over den kulturelle fortid, sociale betingelser, den historiske tid og dens begivenheder; og de mangfoldige kunstneriske funktioner den tilbyder, bliver afsløret gennem en rekonstruktion og dekonstruktion af de fortidige billeder. Nedskrivningen af den Oromo litterære kultur kræver den dekonstruktive analysemetode, eller det, som er almindeligt kendt som fortolkning, simpelthen fordi vi for en stor dels vedkommende har at gøre med en åbenhed mod nye muligheder og en kreativ dimension, som omfatter en redefinition, omformning, modificering og bearbejdning. Selvom den sociale betydning forbliver uændret, tillader vores kreative handling os altid et frit poetisk spillerum (at læse og redefinere uden begrænsning), som tillader os at gå ud over det reelle og forklare det metaforiske i ethvert talt ord eller enhver genre.

I et sprogligt perspektiv, undersøger dette projekt 'den poetiske karakter' i folkløse litteraturen og undersøger de fonologiske egenskaber (stavelsesstrukturer og rytmiske mønstre) og den systematiske rådighed over elementerne eller den syntaktiske struktur i deres parallelle forbindelser. Den poetiske karakter i den verbale fortælling inkluderer det ekspressive træk-ændringen af abstrakte idéer til litterær form, de stilistiske træk- de vigtige ingredienser i en afhandlingsanalyse eller den kunstneriske anvendelse af sproget, det formelle princip/ den organiske

enhed- sammenkoblingen af begivenheder og afsløringerne af karakterer, og opdagelsen af den kulturelle semantik eller de kontekstuelte centrerede poetiske meninger.

Nykritikken bør passende behandle det teoretiske grundlag for mundtlig litteratur og anerkende vigtigheden af omfattende relationer i dens sammensætning af poetisk konfiguration, sociale og ideologiske kræfter. Dette betyder, at en oprindelig genre altid skal behandles som en dynamisk proces, ikke som et statisk koncept. Analysen af afrikansk mundtlig kunst fokuserer på ydelsesresultater med ringe, eller slet ingen, bestræbelser på at udvide denne tilgang til en bredere sociologisk-politisk og historisk matrix. Det er derfor nødvendigt at opdage nogle forskellige metoder at undersøge mundtlig litterær kritik på og betydningen af at have indsigt i den grundlæggende kreative ånd fremkaldt af emnet. En stædig tiltro til den fortolkende dimension, som grundlag for en analytisk ramme, giver os ikke blot flere muligheder for at undersøge den mundtlige litteratur i en ny retning, men også for at fastlægge værdien af genrerne i en social praksis. Den funktionelle og kontekstuelcentrerede analyse af Oromo mundtlig kunst giver faktisk mulighed for at forstå den æstetiske værdi af genrer i form af indfødte opfattelser.

I et meta-kommunikations perspektiv, undersøger denne afhandling den kunstneriske kvalitet af den mundtlige kunst som indrammede poetiske enheder (udtrykkende funktion) og udforsker de situationer der antyder dets anvendelse. I en meta-sproglig dimension, udforsker afhandlingen kulturelle betydningslære, de fonologiske egenskaber og den systematiske disposition af bestanddelene, eller syntaktiske strukturer i deres parallelle forbindelser. Inden for det sociale miljø, diskuterer afhandlingen i stilistiske udtryk, kernespørgsmål vedrørende identitetens skabelsen, alternative værdier, kritikken af dårskab, etiske spørgsmål, demokratiske normer og betydningen af den sociale solidaritet. I historiske og politiske udtryk, skildrer afhandlingen en stabil situation af pre-erobring (*Gadaa*) perioden og forflyttelsen af centrum fra demokratisk liv til en konfliktmodel af den sociale struktur karakteriseret ved polarisering og tabet af *Gadaas* demokratiske ledelse.

I de komparative aspekter, dækker denne undersøgelse ejendommelige og universelle egenskaber ved Oromo mundtlig tradition. Den universelle fremgangsmåde fokuserer på opbygning af konstruktive og positive billeder af alle kulturer, traditionelle fortællinger og den gensidige forståelighed af den menneskelige race. Inden for en bredere afrikansk sociologisk-politisk miljø, reflekterer Oromo visdommen generelle holdninger, ideologier og værdier på det tidspunkt, hvor den er produceret. I form af narratologisk tænkning, evalueres billedet af en fjern fortid i en

samtidig nutid. Den flerdimensionale respons på de repræsentative genrer, er derfor, at definere de ukendte områder af den menneskelige fantasi, kampen for social betydning, demokrati og national eksistens.

De indsamlede, skrevne og omdannede Oromo mundtlige kunst, former de nye stilistiske og kunstneriske kombinationer, som fremkalder intellektuelle argumenter. I form af moderne tankegang, fungerer denne guldgrube af visdom som en drivkraft der sikrer en demokratisk kultur en bæredygtig socialisering og udvider horisonten for en frugtbar fantasi, nemlig fantasien, der skærper menneskets intellekt.

Næsten hver nation har et naturligt ønske om at bemyndige sig selv gennem den civiliserede magt af et områdes oprindelige litteratur og at optage så megen kulturel prestige og national stolthed som muligt for at kunne opbygge et populært image, der gør det muligt for den nation at vinde social og økonomisk frihed. Dette sammenfatter hele essensen af Oromo mundtlig litteratur.