

Deviation as a Stylistic Feature in *The Thirteenth Sun*¹

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyze deviation as a stylistic feature in Daniachew Worku's novel The Thirteenth Sun. There are no literary studies that draw on stylistic approach (a linguistically oriented literary criticism) to the analysis of The Thirteenth Sun in Ethiopian context. In addition, The Thirteenth Sun is opaque, and hardly lends itself to impressionistic interpretations: it seems difficult to draw conclusions on its thematic significance without an analysis of its linguistic making. The ambiguity of its literary meaning seems to be shelved rather than partly solved. The stylistic ambiguity of the novel can also create divisions among readers in terms of its literary effect. This ambiguous nature of the construct of the novel is discussed in this article. The main aim of this article is, unlike earlier studies on the novel, to show the integral link between style and meaning.

Keywords: Ethiopian literature – belletristics – stylistic approach – deviation

Background

Daniachew Worku's novel *The Thirteenth Sun* (Heinemann, 1973) is a fine example of Ethiopian literature in English. The novel, which Soyinka (1976) points out as having many similarities to Hamidou Kane's concerns in *Ambiguous Adventure*, has also been considered to have open-ended portrayal and ambiguous meaning by Wren (1976). The novel, despite its ambiguousness, has also been a subject of impressionistic thematic interpretations, done without linguistic analysis, by MA theses submitted to Addis Ababa University and articles published in the *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*: Debebe's (1980) thesis on "Ethiopian Literature in English", Debebe's article on "The Thirteenth Sun: An Eerie Novel of a Society", 1994, Vol. I, Teklu's (1983) thesis on "Daniachew Worku's Writings: Three Plays and Two Novels", Taye's articles on "The Imagery of Decadence in *The Thirteenth Sun*", 1994, Vol. I, and "The Narrative Architecture of *The Thirteenth Sun*", 2000, Vol. XXXIII. And my aim in this brief article, unlike previous studies on the novel, is to show the integral link between style and meaning. More specifically, the

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aim is to show how the stylistic features contribute to the interpretation of meaning in the novel, heralding the significance of studying Ethiopian literature through language. To this end, I first want to state the problem, objective, and methodology of the study by way of introducing the research article.

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to analyze deviation as a stylistic feature in Daniachew Worku's *The Thirteenth Sun*. The following reasons are also considered as to why I chose to take up such a topic of literary analysis. Above all, the absence of literary studies that draw on stylistic approach (a linguistically oriented literary criticism) for the analysis of *The Thirteenth Sun* in Ethiopian context has prodded me into doing so.

I also contend that *The Thirteenth Sun*, like Daniachew's earlier novel, *Adefris*, is opaque, and hardly lends itself to impressionistic interpretations: it seems difficult to draw conclusions on its thematic significance without an analysis of its linguistic making. The ambiguity of its literary meaning seems to be shelved rather than partly solved. The stylistic ambiguity of the novel can also create divisions among readers in terms of its literary effect. This ambiguous nature of the construct of the novel has got the quality of fitting to our aspiration and impression, and may trick us into drawing conclusions about its meaning which can't be supported by textual evidences. Debebe's (1980) association of "redness" with revolution is some becoming of a reader of the novel in the context of socialist Ethiopia, and is a good case in point. That is, he tends to interpret redness – which recurs in the novel – as a symbol of the need to struggle through blood and iron to bring about a revolution in Ethiopia. But, such a literary effect is to be conceived in a social context in which the issue of revolution is fresh in the reader's mind. So that the reader is more likely to use part of a literary text to back up a text-extrinsic ideology which would tend to fall below the threshold of his/her perception when the text is read in a different social context. Thus, impressionistic analysis hardly conjures up a literary meaning which the linguistic making of a novel promises, and consequently falls into making confirmatory bias, as impressionism is highly imbued with text-extrinsic norms and values of a social milieu which a reader is not conscious of and which are assumed obvious. Hence, a stylistic approach is realized as a remedy to narrow down the diversification of impressionistic interpretations to a possible meaning worthy of inter-subjective validity. It also has an advantage over other approaches in terms of producing the sense of meaningfulness before some "interpretive community" that holds and shares strategies of interpretations while reading texts. Stylistic analysis,

then, helps a reader to acquire an explicit and rational basis for deciding between interpretations.

I am also attracted by Daniachew's style of writing which highly makes use of description artistically and intensively to present scenes, events and happenings with a photograph-like appearance, which is also made possible through the use of deviant features at linguistic and graphological levels. Such a dramatic presentation of story events is likely prodigal and prolific of various interpretations. Then, the only way out from yielding appealing interpretation relying on text-extrinsic premises is to make an analysis of some linguistic features that can be treated under a unifying stylistic feature (see 2.) for literary meaning. The question, then, is: what literary meaning can the deviant features in the novel give a foregrounding effect and a sense of perceptibility?

The objective, hence, is to describe and analyze the deviant features in the novel for literary meaning. In doing so, with close reading of the novel, the most telling extracts that are assumed to embody deviant features are selected and described. They are also further analyzed for literary meaning, which can later be evaluated against the novel. Doing so is also significant for showing the complementarity of style and meaning, thereby elucidating the role of linguistics in literary study. This is, however, preceded by a theoretical framework towards streamlining the analysis.

2. Theoretical Framework

This section presents a brief theoretical discussion on the operational conception of style, literary stylistics and stylistic features-with respect to deviation as follows.

2.1. The Concept of Style

Style as a generic term can be understood as a way of doing things and is not confined to literature; we can speak of style in architecture, behavior, dress, and other fields of human activity. Sometimes the term has been applied to the linguistic habits of a particular writer; at other times it has been applied to the way language is used in a particular genre, period, school of writing, or some combination of these. Each writer has also a linguistic thumbprint, an individual combination of linguistic habits which somehow betray him in all that he writes. Fowler (1997:21) says "choice and favor are not necessarily conscious; a writer's constructions may betray his pattern of thought without his intending that they do so." It is then difficult to generalize about the style of an author; and how much more difficult it may be to generalize about the style of a genre or an epoch. The more general the domain is, the more general, selective and tentative are statements about its style. This brings us to the most specific domain of style, which is the style of texts. In a text, we can

study style in more detail, and with more systematic attention to what words or structures are chosen in preference to others. Hence, this study considers the linguistic characteristics of a particular text as an operational definition of style, which is also the concept this study shall use in exploring the nature of stylistic value as a basis for understanding the detailed working of stylistic effect. This invites the discussion of the concept of the study of style in literature.

2.2. The Concept of Literary Stylistics

Literary stylistics, as Leech and Short (1981) and Chapman (1973) state, is the linguistic study of style and is rarely undertaken for its own sake, simply as an exercise in describing what use is made of language. Literary stylistics has implicitly or explicitly the goal of explaining the relation between language and artistic function. This ushers in the idea that style is a relational concept and hence, the aim of literary stylistics is to relate the critic's concern for aesthetic appreciation, which involves critical evaluation and interpretation, with the linguist's concern for linguistic description. This entails the presence of a cyclic motion in such a linguistic-literary explanation whereby a linguist's observation stimulates or modifies literary insight, and whereby literary insight in its turn stimulates further linguistic observation. This tends to comply with Cluysenaar's (1976) contention that literary stylistics draws descriptive tools and concepts both from linguistics and perceptual psychology. Literary stylistics, as Simpson (1997) states, is also a method of analyzing works of literature to replace the 'subjectivity and impressionism' of standard criticism with an objective, principled, rigorous, consistent, and linguistically oriented analysis of a literary text. Short (1995) and Widdowson (1975) also share this idea saying that literary stylistic analysis is a method of linking linguistic form, via reader inference, to interpretation in a detailed way, thereby showing that style and meaning are inextricably linked with each other, and how elements of a linguistic text combine to function as a form of communication. In so doing, literary stylistics deals with stylistic features which are discussed as follows.

2.3. The Concept of Stylistic Features

Leech and Short (1981) contend that literary stylistics studies the relation between the literary meaning of a text and the linguistic characteristics in which it is manifest. This implies two criteria of relevance for the selection of stylistic features: a literary criterion and a linguistic criterion. And these two criteria converge in the concept of foregrounding. Hence, this study operationally defines stylistic features as the linguistic characteristics of a text that are relevant for foregrounding a certain literary meaning. Deviation, as Short (1995) says, can then be viewed as having an important psychological effect on a reader, and the psychological effect produced as a result of

deviation from linguistic and non-linguistic norms of various kinds is termed as foregrounding, which is also an act of stylistically giving special prominence to part of a text. Deviation from the language code itself produces qualitative and (vis-a-vis some expected frequency) quantitative foregrounding. It is also evident that some effect is foregrounded with a background and even if nothing in a work of art is insignificant, the matter in the foreground is more important than the rest. In language, the background is what is linguistically normal – the rules, norms and expectations which we associate with a particular kind of writing; the foreground is, in large part, those portions of a text which do not conform to these expectations. Hence, the especially noticeable and perceptually prominent part of a literary text involves the stylistic features that have the psychological effect called foregrounding. It is of course true that one can't determine in advance which part of the language of a text will be exploited stylistically and which will not. The burden, thus, falls on the reader's ability to respond to linguistic codes. In light of the foregoing discussion, I proceed to analyze the deviant stylistic features for literary meaning in the novel.

3. An Analysis of Deviation as a Stylistic Feature in *The Thirteenth Sun*

Before describing and analyzing the deviant features for literary meaning, it is methodologically sound to start by presenting the general interpretation of the novel, as it orients the selection of the deviant features that substantiate how the interpretation came about.

3.1 General Interpretation of *The Thirteenth Sun*

Before directly presenting the general interpretation of the novel, it is of value to touch upon its context, which has subtly influenced my response to its content. The novel seems to be partly entitled after the motto of the Ethiopian Tourism Commission, "Ethiopia – A Land of Thirteen Months of Sunshine", and *The Thirteenth Sun* seems to refer to the sun of the five/six-day mini-month in between August and September, called *P'agumé* in the Ethiopian calendar. These days are also known for having a rainy, foggy, chilly, cloudy, swampy atmosphere with the sun high and hidden behind the thick mist in Ethiopian context. The streams during these days are also assumed to be blessed with the Holy Spirit and are used for their healing power. Ethiopians are then sandwiched in between the dark edge of summer and the bright threshold of autumn, yet in the horizon to come. With the title of *The Thirteenth Sun*, Daniachew seems to carry over these natural phenomena to his novel, whose story time falls in the historical period in which the reign of feudalism was on

the verge of collapse, and both the ruler and the ruled were despondent about their prospective commitments.

Coming to the interpretation, *The Thirteenth Sun*, in the abstract, conjures up a state of having low standards of behavior and morality, a state of moral decline and falling to a worse level. This can be well expressed in terms of dehumanization, decadence, and animalism. To substantiate these abstractions: *Fitawrariy*³ Woldu, who was a man of status and influence, is seen as lowered to the extent of sprawling under the priest and the conjure-woman for cure. He is also seen to be bathed with filth and blood. The parishioners dwelling around the church are shrouded with self-humiliation and the act of showing too much respect to the saints and dignitaries. They are no more important than the mules and horses of the landladies and *Fitawrariy*, and it is difficult to draw a sort of distinction between them and the fauna and flora around them, because (like the animals and plants around them) their existence only seems to be monitored by God's will through nature. If there is rain, they harvest well but fail to manage using it – they seem to be in gay abandon, eating to satiety. If there is no rain, they hardly survive the aftermath; they are what nature makes them be. They are complacent and take no action against the grim effects of nature; they are coated with dust to the extent of having the look of old decaying wood, and reek of stench like the mire inside and outside their hovels; they have got a ragged body like the rugged hills and they have got a heart devoured with stagnancy; they are reduced to emaciated figures of human being as a result of suffering from the agonies of existence. The priests also do not live up to their reputation and perform and behave against what is expected of them: they are seen causing pandemonium and a topsy-turvy situation whenever there is a memorial feast. The poor, who are referred to as 'human offal' and 'crippled creatures', fight in an inhuman manner for food offal, like what the dogs and vultures do over leftovers. The beggars, lovingly nursing their wounds as a source of sympathy, cry and whine for alms. And the novel also amplifies the people's existence in rigid, circular and the-same-year-after-year pattern and in fear of living, with contorted and convoluted faces reflecting their repressed feeling and internal turmoil. The educated ones, like Goitom and the dwellers of urban centers among the pilgrims, prefer commenting and smacking their lips over what they encounter to taking action to bring about change towards a positive end. It is also possible to infer that there is unbridgeable gap between the poor peasants and the dignitaries; but paradoxically, both of them are in the same boat, equally shrouded in chronic problems of their own.

How these ideas are perceived, then, is the question to be addressed. By way of answering this question, the stylistic features which are considered

³ Traditional title of a dignitary (in transliteration: *fitawrariy*).

relevant in giving prominence and a foregrounding effect to the interpretation are described and analyzed under the unifying stylistic feature of deviation, as follows.

3.2. Analysis

The nature of deviation investigated in the novel is external in kind, as the deviation concerns some norm which is external to the text. It is also manifested in terms of violation of the existing genre norm, that for the novel, and of the selective-combinative rule-system which constitutes the English language. This can be illustrated by taking extracts from the novel as follows.

Extract 1:

And suddenly, (...)

(...) He [the preacher] jumps down from his
Tree and trotted up to the church.

And at long last, the *tabot*⁴ started to move.

Following him slowly upwards –

The brave-looking warriors

The horses and mules

And the rabble. (p. 154)

As a genre norm, ideas in a novel are expressed in sentences, and the sentences are always placed within the normal margins. And sentences should not be visually chopped up and cut into pieces when it is possible to put them continuously along the same line. The above text could also be written as follows: *And suddenly... he jumps down from his tree and trotted up to the church. And at long last, the tabot started to move. And the rabble, the horses and mules, the brave-looking warriors move slowly upwards following him.*

But, leaving such a possibility aside, the above extract is selected to foreground a certain effect. As can be seen from the layout of the extract, expressions are arranged in such a way as to visually evoke the arrangement of the retainers along the Ziqwala mountain while they keep company with the *tabot* all the way up to the church, positioned at the top of the mountain. The use of fullstop (.) after ‘the church’ also marks the destination, and after ‘the rabble’ the beginning; there is no fullstop (.) after the ‘brave-looking warriors’, as there are the horses and mules and the rabble still to come behind. Here, the horses and mules are positioned in between the brave-looking warriors ahead of them and the rabble behind. They are, hence, positioned to the extent of

⁴ The square canopy of the Holy Ark with the Ten Commandments kept in the *meqdes* of Ethiopian Orthodox churches, to be carried on the head by deacons during ceremonies at church.

being accompanied by the rabble (the lower class, the common people). The sense of dehumanization is foregrounded as the horses and mules are found humanized by seizing the position at which the rabble should have been placed. Such a literary effect is made perceptible through the use of a deviant graphological design showing the genre influence of poetry. The text might have been presented as in the form of the italicized version above, but then it would be devoid of such a literary effect. This can be proved to have been the case by the narrator's description of the retainers' arrival at the church compound as follows.

Extract 2:

“Then, the *tabot* with all its retainers – *priests, dignitaries, merchants and farmers* [in the order of their arrangement, it seems]. And all of them *walked around the church three times.*” (Italics mine, p. 155).

Here, as the retainers are within the church compound and as the horses and mules are tied to the nearby trees, the sense of dehumanization seems to be suspended. But if we look critically through the text, we can find it being foregrounded by another feature, as embodied in the extract given below.

Extract 3:

1. A heron, her long neck outstretched, rose from the tree, flapped lazily across the face of the sun, sailed towards the grove of... trees around the church, *circled it two or three times*, uttered a wild and piercing cry, and came back and landed where she had started. (Italics mine, p. 149).
2. A bird sitting in the tree fluttered twice from branch to branch with a whistle, then *jerking its tail flew up towards the church.* (Italics mine, p. 73).

Here we can notice the parallelism between the retainers' movement around the church and that of a bird (a heron). A heron is described (see extract 3.1) as acting instinctually (circling [the church] two or three times) just like what the retainers (see extract 2) seem to do consciously (walking around the church three times). We can also compare the sudden movement of the preacher trotting up to the church (see extract 1) with the jerking of the bird flying up to the church (see extract 3.2), each of them starting from their respective tree. In fact, human beings seem to possess trees the way that birds do: “the conjure-woman noticed, and sent her son to stand by *his tree* in acknowledgement” (italics mine, p. 151). A beggar is also described as going up to the church while jerking his feet, like what the bird did in jerking its tail: “most of the

beggars, however, had already gone up to the church... He [a beggar] fell, rose heavily from the dirt, and left the place swaying weirdly and *jerking his feet*. The rest waited for additional left overs” (italics mine, p. 84). This points out a quasi-synonymy between human consciousness and the instinctual motives of non-human creatures, which is a good mark of dehumanization with the attendant features of moral decay and animalism. This is also well rendered in the novel through the description of human shelters in a way proper to animals, as follows.

A. On some of the hills, you saw nestling some solitary half-rotten human shelters (*leaning walls and dilapidated roofs*)... And from their *hole-like doors*, you saw issue out their inhabitants – stained, it seemed, by the sun, by the dust, and by the rains, and all of them reminding you, again, of the dusty color of old decaying wood. (Emphasis mine, p. 6).

B. You would open *your coat*, blow out your chest as hard as you could, and start wending your way to the church... *A lean old jackal shedding her coat appeared from some bush*, sniffing, perhaps, for a decomposing body. (Emphasis mine, p. 7).

C. Drawn and haggard faces *peeped out from every bush*, looking with their hollow eyes and sunken, corpse-like cheeks. (Emphasis mine, p. 7).

D. And Woyntu *peeping at him [the peasant] through the bush* was thinking, (Emphasis mine, p. 93).

In the descriptions above, we can see the doors of human shelters reduced to a hole-like appearance, which is proper to animals' hovels. It is not proper for humans, who (unlike animals) can think and create, to live in such shelters which animals with the help of their instinctual motives can possess. We can also see human bodies emaciated and reduced to faces, and jackals [animals] leaning like the walls of the human shelters. Here, humans, animals and non-living beings [human shelters' and bushes] are described as victims of the natural forces around them. This brings to the fore the reduction of human consciousness to the instinctual motives proper to animals, as humanity in the novel is also depicted falling prey to the animalish in itself; humanity hasn't yet been exorcised from the human-animal to bring about a system of human existence with a reasoned account of man's dialectical relationship with his natural environment. Hence, dehumanization and animalism seem to be autonomized and automatized to reduce man to exist in a vicious circle without being conscious of how he exists, like animals. And in the above descriptions, humans and animals are described as sharing the bushes equally, but the description tends to further foreground the sense of dehumanization by collocating the verb “to peep” (see C and D) with humans and “to appear” with animals: humans are described as peeping from (looking through a hole

or other small opening) and peeping out (producing a short weak high sound as made by a young bird or a mouse) in the bush – which is proper to animals, while the jackal [animal] is described as appearing (emerging out of) from the bush – which is what the humans should have been positioned. This shows that animals are charged with a [+human] and a [-animal] character, as was displayed by the graphological deviation in extract 1, to foreground dehumanization (-human character) with a corresponding emphasis of animalism in human behavior as was analyzed above. A jackal is also humanized, accentuating the absence of a border line between human beings and animals as humans are living outside humanity proper. This is effected through the narrator’s borrowing of a register proper, under normal circumstances, to humans when he describes the jackal’s shedding of her fur (see B above) – instead of saying “shedding her *fur*”, it says “shedding her *coat*” to evoke the idea that one would respond to animals’ and humans’ existence with the same mind setup and sensibility that tends to use the same linguistic expression for signification. This can also be compared with such expressions in the novel as “a naked tree” (p. 7) to mean a tree shedding its *leaves* [coat?]. Doing so brings to the fore the diffusion of the feeling and consciousness of being naked to non-human creatures. But, animals and trees cannot be described as being naked, because they exist without consciousness of their nakedness, while man is naked as he exists being conscious of his nakedness – that is why he makes clothing as a supplement over his skin, a covering which animals are not naturally in need of. And the use of “shedding her coat” has such a poetic relevance of foregrounding the assimilation of humans and non-human creatures in terms of consciousness. That is, the relevance consists in stimulating the impression that man is as conscious as an animal is; he is as naked as an animal is, or he isn’t ashamed of being naked and has no sense of modesty to live up to; he interacts with nature with the help of instinctual motives like animals, and lives on nature under nature’s control like animals and trees; he hasn’t yet civilized the animal in him with the help of consciousness to emerge out of the bush and nature’s control by launching a system of human existence instead of the nonhuman and rigid pattern of existence proper to animals. It is possible to strengthen the argument with textual evidence from the novel: “However, he himself was a horse... People said that he was under the influence of the horse in him” (p. 143). This can also be complemented with such a character narrator’s conception and interrogation in the novel as: “These men, these men – *Fitawrary*, the preacher, the peasant – Why are they all the same? What has taken from them their sense of humanity? (p. 44).

In extract 1, deviation can also be seen in terms of the violation of some selective-combinative rules of English, which produces semantico-syntactic deviation. In the extract, it says, “He [the preacher] jumped down from his tree

and *trotted* up to the church”. Verbs like ‘trot, canter, gallop’ are normally, as a kind of register, used to describe the movements of animals like horses. They cannot collocate with humans; thus in the sentence, there is a collocational clash between the subject and the verb. The sentence can thus be said to display syntactic deviation. But this syntactic deviation is of value in foregrounding the inhuman behavior of the preacher. That is, he is made to be a trotter (an animal that trots). The semantic element of the act of trotting is diffused into the preacher, thereby investing him with [-human] character. And this shows the presence of semantic deviation caused by the syntactic deviation. It is, then, possible to conceive such deviations together as semantico-syntactic deviation, which once again underlines the sense of dehumanization, decadence and animalism.

In keeping with the analysis given above, the following expressions (except B and N) taken from the novel show semantico-syntactic deviation:

- A. The preacher *howling* about hell and heaven (p. 41).
- B. A dog *whined* loudly, then *growled* in angry alarm, and finally *barked* ferociously at the intruders (p. 72).
- C. I like a river when it is full and overflowing its banks – *roaring* down (p. 90).
- D. Men and women *chattering* and *chirping* nearby and life seething and bubbling as if nothing has happened (p. 99).
- E. He [the peasant]...*scampered* down to the lake (p. 99).
- F. The conjure woman *growling* and *whining* like a wild beast (p. 128).
- G. In the distance countryside was seen the glare of conflagration – at one place, the flames spread tranquilly over the sky and at another, having encountered some bush on fire, they burst in a whirlwind and *bissed* upwards to the very stars (p. 129).
- H. He [the preacher] *cantered* and *galloped* (p. 143).
- I. He [the preacher] *trotted* and *cantered*, *sniffed* and *snorted* (p. 143).
- J. He [the preacher]... started to *roar* again louder than ever (p. 149).
- K. The *chanters* were doing their best, to drown the *roar* of the preacher (p. 149).
- L. She [the conjure-woman] *trotted* back to the preacher (p. 152).
- M. She [the conjure woman] *howled* like a jackal. *Brayed* like a donkey. *Bleated* like a goat (p. 163).
- N. A jackal *howled* nearby (p. 162).
- O. He [*Fitawrary* Woldu] *bissed* (p. 163).

- P. In the distance, the morning train to Dire Dawa. *Rumbling* and *roaring* and emitting vigorous chuffs of steam (p. 172).

All the emphasized words above are normally used for the description of animal sounds and movements. But in the above sentences, humans (see A, D, E, F, H, I, J, K, L, M, O above), a train (see P above), a river (see C above), and a landscape (see G above) are described in these animal-like terms. This foregrounds the sense of animalism and the animation of a setting that devours humanity. Humans are described as echoing the sounds around them, thus as being devoid of uniquely human sounds, which shows their inability to exist in a uniquely human way and their succumbing to the chaotic environment. They eat to satiety to vomit, roar and chatter five or six times a year, and go hungry to whine and cry for alms. And rivers overflow their banks and roar during rainy seasons and shrink down to the rocks of the streambed during the dry season. Trains also roar and emit vigorous chuffs of steam with the help of an engine, and the countryside hisses upwards with the help of a whirlwind. This foregrounds human existence as assimilated and regulated by natural forces like animals, rivers and the countryside, and by a being outside of them like the train. So, man is not capable of mastering his own destiny and lives under nature's control and in subordination to God's spirit, denying his bodily existence to the extent of being unconscious of being part of the natural setting.

What is entailed at such a syntactic level can be substantiated by taking some telling descriptions from the novel as follows.

Extract 4:

Inside the hovel, there was another kind of commotion. Some of the priests were growing more and more befuddled, their eyes staring unwinkingly at the opposite wall, with its lower part brown with cowdung and its upper part plastered over with patches of dirt and mould. Some of them were clamouring and shouting without knowing either what they said themselves or what their companions were saying...shouting amidst that stagnation, the walls reeking with manure, the earthen floor with damp, and the *medeb*⁵ with sweat and rags and sheep- and goatskins. And yet none of them noticing it, none of them feeling it – completely befuddled. Even the flies seemed to understand the condition of the priests. Swarming in the sticky puddles on the wicker table or landing over the men's beards and faces and flexing their legs, they were having a good time. They were disturbed only when one of the priests gesticulated or sneezed or clapped his hands for more drinks, when they would rise in clouds of fury.

⁵ Earthen bench or bed (Amh., Tgn.).

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Otherwise they seemed contented with what fate had ordained them to have (p. 83).

Here, the narrator describes the internal appearance of the hovel and the external appearance of the priests with the same degree of emotional intensity. The narrator, being an internal focalizer, states that the priests did not feel the stench and the stagnation of the hovel – they are described as being part of the stagnation. Hence, the stench and stagnation of the scene is animated [+animate] so as to devour their feelings and to reduce them to being its mere appendage. On the other hand, the narrator humanizes the flies and shows them living up to their reputation – they have the natural reputation of living on dirt and rubbish. Nor do the flies miss their means of survival; they land on men's beards and faces that reek with the stench of the hovel. This is also an aspect of stylistic choice, giving prominence to the status of the men as part of the rubbish scene. This stylistic organization of the description foregrounds man's mere bodily existence, lacking human-proper consciousness, being part of the scene – against a background of animating the setting to have the power of influencing him. This entails dehumanization and man's inability to live up to his manly reputation.

The above point is also well rendered in the narrator's description of some sheep as darting away in terror from the hullabaloo while the people are described as fighting tooth and nail for some remains of food, which is not actually intended for them (see p. 72). Here, the sheep seem to be humanized and a bit uplifted to the level of manly thought as they move away from the chaotic situation, which the people seem to be unconscious of because they evidently do not know any other manner of behaving. And they go beyond the border of humanity to become part of the chaotic environment. This shows [-human] character on the part of the people, and is seen foregrounded against the backdrop of the sheep's seemingly human act. Focused descriptions of the above kind (extract 4), in animating the setting, also serve in the novel to enhance the perceptibility of the sense of dehumanization, decadence and animalism. The extracts given below add color to how humans are animalized to the extent of behaving like the dogs' feeding habits.

Extract 5:

A basket of gnawed bones was then thrown to the dogs, whose whimpers and bawls echoed all over the place. Snapping and snarling as they fought over the scraps, they fell upon their share snuffing, snatching and gnawing vigorously (p. 84).

Extract 6:

And no sooner had the *tabot* entered the church than pandemonium broke loose. With knives and swords in their hands, men and women ran after flesh. And everywhere in the churchyard, they began to slice the sacrificial animals alive. One cutting – another snatching – one struggling – another running. Everywhere in the churchyard animals being carved up before they kicked off, one cutting from the hind leg, another from the fore leg, another from the stomach...Everything about it – chaotic and primordial (p. 155-156).

Here, humans are seen as unable to make a difference in terms of the manner they display while they are having a meal; they behave like what the wild animals do over their prey and the domesticated wolves (dogs) over thrown bones. This foregrounds dehumanization and animalism, as human existence fails to emerge out of the chaotic environment with the resultant effect being the gratification of bodily needs in the animals' way.

The main argument of the article boils down to showing that life, as it is depicted in *The Thirteenth Sun* in the Ethiopian context, is the result of the clash between these forces: the one is religious asceticism imposed from above with the motto of “it is better to lose the kingdom of this world than to lose the kingdom of heaven” (p. 150) to repress human spirits for worldly achievement; the second is the human spirits found repressed in the human-animal but awaiting exorcism to launch a system of human existence, thereby ensuring the complementarity of the soul and the body. And the people, living without consciousness in bewilderment in between, struggle with their bodily or worldly desires by living in deference to the unchanging godly spirits to launch an unchanging, circular and rigid pattern of existence, being part of the chaotic environment in a primordial manner. Hence, the human spirit, soul, consciousness can't be civilized in a dialectical relationship with the human bodily needs as it is made to give way to unearthly spirits. Thus, the ebbing of human desires is to be gratified through the animals' way, and humans are seemingly animal-soul incarnates. This conjures up the sense of dehumanization, decadence, and animalism in the Ethiopian context, which can be a response to the *Fitawrari's* reflection: “The climate, the soil, and the water – everything here at the stretch of the hand. I don't really understand why everybody is poor and wretched around this place” (p. 60). And such a literary effect is found subtly inscribed and foregrounded in the linguistic making of the novel in the form of graphological and semantico-syntactic deviation. Hence, through the use of deviant linguistic features, the novel can be said to represent human life as deviating from what is proper for human beings in the Ethiopian context.

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