ACADEMIC PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS’ LIVES: NEGOTIATING THE BORDERLINES

by

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Abstract

This study presents the life stories of four selected Ethiopian public intellectuals among the diaspora. The overall study is presented in a form of fictionalized narrative based on the entire life experiences of the intellectuals. It is framed using the political economy of Ethiopian higher education as its context. Using fictionalized narratives in educational research is a relatively recent phenomenon. In the larger debate of the fact-fiction distinction (Brockmeier, 2013), the notion of panfictionality suggests that it is hardly possible to draw a hard and fast dividing line between representations that are labeled as fact and fiction (Brockmeier, 2013). This allows for the possibility of presenting real-life stories in a form of fiction. The intellectuals in this study are selected because they had worked in the academy in Ethiopia, are currently employed in a tenure-track position in North America, and are engaged in addressing the public both as an academic as well as public figure. They were asked to participate in the life story interviews which are informed by the notions of public intellectuals and Jakobson’s (2012) symmetric-criticality framework. Interview transcripts were sent back to the participants for accuracy and validity. The author’s subjectivity, positionality, and other ethical issues are addressed to meet institutional requirements. The fictionalized characters narrate stories related to academic freedom, public intellectualism, and speech and silence. They narrate vibrant stories. They tell their stories and speak out about issues that matter to them.
Lay Summary

This study presents the stories of four selected Ethiopian intellectuals in North America. The intellectuals are selected because they had worked in the academy in Ethiopia, are currently employed as academics in North America, are engaged in speaking for the people. To collect their stories, the researcher used life story interviews. The researcher sent the written versions of the interviews back to the participants to check its accuracy, and presentation of the stories as told by themselves. The researcher used the historical contexts of the time the intellectuals lived in Ethiopia and the development of higher education in the country as a context to the story. The researcher’s world views, experiences, and perspectives are acknowledged in this work. The researcher observed all institutional requirements and procedures that are deemed necessary to ensure the ethical conduct of the research. The fictionalized characters narrate vibrant stories and their inevitable memories from their past. They reflect on diverse interrelated academic and political issues throughout the story.
Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, and independent work by the author. UBC’s Behavioral Research Ethics Board (BREB) provided ethical clearance for this study (approval certificate number: H16-02350).
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Dedication

To My Mother

Yeshi Maru Senbete
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

1.1 Background to the Topic

Intellectuals are a specific segment of a society who contribute to the betterment and better understanding of the human condition. In spite of common knowledge about such contributions of the intellectual, scholars argue that intellectuals’ future is at stake and they are in decline (Carroll, 2008; Jennings, 2008; Kling 2006; Miller, 2006; Schalk, 1997). For instance, Kling (2006) argues that the intellectual will soon “wither away” (p. 164). Similarly, Etzioni (2006) argues that such a being is “an endangered species” (p. 1). Embarking on Foucault’s (1988) notion of the non-existence of “such animal” (p. 325), Carroll (2008) also contends that it is not yet known what the end of the intellectual will be. Recognizing the open-ended nature of such multifarious arguments, a further study into some of the issues related to the intellectual, and the existential threats to the intellectual, will ensure the continuity of academic conversations about intellectuals. In a more specific context, studies about intellectuals from the Global South, where the intellectual is in danger, would add multiple perspectives to illumine readers and researchers in this area.

Studies related to the public intellectual in the Global South are rarely available. However, a number of studies that address issues related to academics and/or academic freedom in higher education institutions relate to the current study with the implicit understanding that some academics are themselves intellectuals. Most of the studies related to academics in Ethiopia primarily focus on academic freedom and the compliance of higher education institutions with international frameworks and conventions such as the 1997 United Nations Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) Recommendation which outlines the duties and responsibilities of academics in the higher education sectors (Assefa, 2008; Degefa, 2015). Other studies explore academics’ perception of academic freedom qualitatively (Degefa, 2015), and institutional barriers and issues related to collegiality that undermine academic freedom (Ayalew, 2011). In contrast to these, studies that embark on the personal life experiences and individual stories of intellectuals from the Global South, specifically Ethiopia, are rarely available. The personal perspectives of intellectuals regarding various issues ranging from academic freedom to the practical aspects of the public-intellectual engagement are missing from the arrays of literature that are available under the label of educational studies. It is hardly possible to find such studies that document why academics play the role of public intellectuals, why they challenge a status quo and what their experiences look like in such engagements in Ethiopia.

My focus on intellectuals from Ethiopia is not only because of my knowledge about the context in which intellectuals in Ethiopia operate, but also due to the historically antagonistic relation between academic intellectuals and the political elites in the country. Moreover, the researcher’s positionality which is discussed in section 1.6 of this dissertation also dictates the choice to study the situation of Ethiopian intellectuals than approaching the issue of intellectuals in an overarching manner, including African intellectuals in other countries or black African intellectuals in exile in the United States and/or Canada.

Scholars argue that higher education in Ethiopia has a history of over sixteen centuries of highly organized religious education by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) (Saint, 2004; Wagaw, 1979 as cited in Telila, 2010). They extend the historical location of the emergence of
higher education in the religious tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC). This leads
to a possible conclusion that the public intellectual tradition also existed in Ethiopia long before
the introduction of the Western idea of the university. In any case, the public intellectual identity
entails the task of speaking truth to power and challenging the existing political system. Such a
conception of the intellectual still persists.

A potential context in which public intellectuals operate is the political economy of
knowledge production. The political economy of knowledge production in Ethiopian higher edu-
cation system, similar to the reality of the situation in most of the universities in Africa, is char-
acterized by inherent complexities which are the result of the influences and pressures exerted
by “Glonacal” (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002, p. 281) political and economic institutions. That
means, higher education institution exists in, interacts with, and is influenced by three simultane-
ously significant dimensions of global, national, and local forces. It is also characterized by
trends emerging from the inevitable interactions with such institutions, and related praxis within
and beyond the historical context and geographic boundary of the country (Austin & Jones,
2016).

At all times, Ethiopian higher education institutions and intellectuals couldn’t escape the
inevitable pressures that emerge from coercive regimes, global trends, and cultural dynamics,
among others. Similarly, almost all contemporary regimes in Ethiopia encountered resistance
from the intellectuals for challenging and meddling with academia. The political-economy of
higher education in the country sheds light on such encounters and the context under which aca-
demics discharge their duties. Therefore, this study locates the notion and practice of public in-
Intellectualism in Ethiopia within the country’s contemporary political economy of knowledge production as a context.

Mindful of these, the current study specifically focuses on the lived experiences of academic public intellectuals whose personal life stories offer perspectives on the situation of academics, the role of academic public intellectuals, and the challenges they face in committing their lives to their public-intellectual calling. Unlike most of the narrative inquiries that rely on the thematic analysis of narrative data or fictional re-presentation of such data, the current study conjoins narrative research practices in educational research with a concept in literary narratology, which is termed as panfictionality to re-tell the stories of the research participants. The study builds upon existing studies pertinent to higher education in the country while focusing on a small portion of academics who are qualified to be called and hence referred herein to as academic public intellectuals.

1.2 Research Purpose and Questions

A vast literature can be garnered about the lived experiences and the challenges of Western intellectuals. This suggests that what the Western academic public intellectuals’ experienced in exercising their conscience is well documented. In stark contrast to this, research about intellectuals from the Global South and their lived experiences is rarely available. Few studies have examined the situation of African public intellectuals in different contexts (Adem, 2010; Mkandawire, 2005; Zeleza, 2006). Some of these are interdisciplinary studies which discuss the intellectual in relation to pan Africanism, nationalism, and gender (Mkandawire, 2005; Semela, 2017); others are biographical (Adem, 2010). Zeleza (2006) discusses African diaspora in the
United States and “the roles academic diaspora play and can play in African knowledge produc-
tion” (p. 209). An interesting perspective worth noting in relation to African diaspora in the Unit-
ed States is their representation.

Black intellectuals are very small in number in the academy in the United States. For ex-
ample, there were only 6.1 percent black faculty members (40, 369 out of the total 707, 345 full-
time instructional staff members with faculty status) in 2016 (The Chronicle of Higher Educa-
tion, 2018, p. 20). African intellectuals within African continent are represented by a dim stat-
uette, if anything; and they exist in institutions where intellectual freedom is combating with “the
dual tyranny- domestic tyranny and Eurocentrism of academic culture” (Mazrui, 1978, p. 260).

While discussing the Third World intellectuals and their dwindling faith in the ideals of
universal intellectual community, Beteille (1980) argues that these intellectuals “confront the re-
alities of the distributions of power among nations and reflect on the realities of academic colo-
nialism” (p. 4). The reality of the situation is somewhat similar for Ethiopian intellectuals among
the diaspora in the sense that they also belong to visible minorities, and they operate in academic
environments that are primarily Eurocentric, among others.

Studies about Ethiopian higher education institutions and academics fall short of provid-
ing a clear picture of the individual life experiences of intellectuals. Such studies focus on the
administrative and/or governance issues that relate to academia, among others (Akalu, 2014;
Alemayyehw, 1969; Alemu, 2008; Areaya, 2010; Assefa, 2008; Degefa, 2015; Gebremeskel &
Feleke, 2016; Kenaw, 2003; Molla, 2018). They are not directly related to individual academics’
entire life experiences. Thus, they are detached from lived experiences of individual academics;
they lack the human element. It is high time we need to listen to the personal stories of academic
public intellectuals in order to understand what it feels like to engage in the (academic) public sphere and beyond.

Discussing the public engagement of academics necessitates a particular study that takes into account the real-life experiences of public intellectuals who are also renowned academics. Such discussions about the engagement of Ethiopian academic public intellectuals both in academic and public life would require to reflexively engage in meaning-making, construe life events and relationships. It helps to bring the voices and experiences of such individuals to the attention of academics in the Global North and offer additional perspectives in keeping the conversations about public intellectualism going.

Mazrui (1978) argues for studies focusing on the intellectuals in the Global South. He argues that these studies are essential for the intellectuals in the Global North as well as in the Global South because there are values such as intellectual freedom which are upheld by intellectuals across cultures. He contends “When intellectual freedom is suppressed in one part of the world, there may be repercussions from intellectuals in other parts of the world” (Mazrui, 1978, p. 357). It is in such connections that the significance of this study about the intellectuals in the Global South is justified from Western intellectuals’ perspectives. Mazrui (1978) also argues for the solidarity of intellectuals across continents in what he calls “pan-intellectualism” (p. 360).

This study offers an opportunity for higher education scholars and researchers to enhance their understanding of what it feels like to be an academic public intellectual from the Global South. The current research aims to understand intellectuals’ perspectives on various academic and public engagements, and various socio-cultural and political contexts that initiate such engagements of individuals. It presents the realities of academic public intellectuals in a form of
fictionalized stories to shed light on their life experiences, the challenges they face as well as the values they uphold. In classifying different types of educational research, Coe (2017) notes that the aim of educational research can be described as ideographic, a term which refers to the “aim to understand and explain what is unique and distinctive about a particular context, case or individual” (p. 10). As a research based on the life experiences of selected intellectuals, this study is ideographic. It aims not only to explain what is unique about the particular context from which intellectuals of the Global South emerge but also to understand the uniqueness of their experience in a form of fictionalized narrative. To achieve this, the study is launched with a general invitation requesting participants to tell their life stories as a public intellectual, how they developed a public intellectual identity and what their lived experiences as a public intellectual looks like.

The study is guided by the following research questions: How do academic public intellectuals from Ethiopia negotiate the personal, the social and the political of their particular context in between the Global North and the Global South? How does their public engagement interact with academic freedom? In this study, I desire to understand the views of academic public intellectuals about crucial issues such as the role of the intellectual, what drives their public intellectual engagement, and how intellectuals see their entitlement to speak out or remain silent about issues that matter most to them and/or their society. I ask participants to tell me why they speak to people as a public intellectual. I ask their views about academic freedom, tenure, speech and silence and whether these issues enabled or prevented their public intellectual engagement from their location as tenured academics in the universities in the Global North.
1.3 **Research Context**

This dissertation research is framed taking the contemporary political economy of Ethiopian higher education sector as its context. In line with this, the research will make frequent reference to Ethiopia’s contemporary history, Ethiopian higher education, and engagement in knowledge production as a way to allude to the general context in which public intellectuals enact, live and re-live their own personal stories. As a fiction-based research, the narration of the lived experiences of the intellectuals will also provide readers with historical and socio-political contexts and perspectives relevant to the stories.

1.4 **Limitations**

This research presents the lived experiences of four Ethiopian academic public intellectuals living in North America: a female professor and three male professors, all of whom are faculty members in tenure-track positions. The researcher recognizes the limitations and risks involved in broader generalizations that are based on the real-life situation of such a small number of individuals. It is hardly possible to take such stories for granted as stories that perfectly replicate the experiences of all Ethiopian intellectuals as well as all intellectuals of the Global South in exile. However, the stories presented here provide perspectives of at least some public intellectuals’ lives and the realities of their situations in the particular context under discussion.

1.5 **A Note on Subjectivity**

As an ethical commitment to the study, the researcher ought to recognize his/her subjective position. This might be because subjectivity “influences how researchers’ interpret their research” (Luis & Barton, 2002, p. 2). The researcher is encouraged to reflect on his or her subjectivity, as it provides the opportunity “to reflect on whether it facilitates or impedes objective
comprehension” (Ratner, 2002, p. 3). Personal narratives are valued for accommodating subjectivity, for “their rootedness in time, place and personal experience in their perspective-ridden character” (Personal Narratives Group, 1989b, pp. 263-264 as cited in Riessman, 1993, p. 5).

Subjectivity is all about “how one experiences the world as a subject in that world” (Costa & Matzner, 2007, p. 36). It is also related to the concept of self, the latter being defined as “an unfolding reflective awareness of being in the world including a sense of one’s past and the future” (Ochs & Capps, 1996, p. 21). As an awareness of one’s being in the world across time, subjectivity is then “a source of knowledge” (Bruce, 2008, p. 8).

Meanwhile, Zahavi (2006) equates subjectivity with ‘self-construction’ (p. 105), Costa and Matzner (2007) consider subjectivity as overlapping with the notion of the self. I engage in reflecting on my own subjectivity to provide readers with some ideas about my own positionality and how it shapes the current study. This is is presented in section 1.6 of this chapter. Most importantly, I consider my research participants’ perspective as their subjectivity, and hence as “a source of knowledge” (Bruce, 2008, p. 8) about how they experienced the world. To allow my study participants engagement in unlimited self-expression, I opt for the Personal Experience Narrative as my approach. The Personal Experience Narrative helps researchers to accommodate multiple levels of subjectivity. In line with this, it is essential to note that scholars also draw attention to the possibility that researchers can learn from their research participants (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, as cited in Atkinson, 1998). This reinforces the notion of subjectivity as a source of knowledge (Bruce, 2008).
In view of the myriad possibilities of seeing and interpreting the world, it is essential to recognize the complexity of human subjectivity and recall that “Human beings are always in process, existing in multiple places of present experience, and in complex relation to the past and future” (Josselson 1995, p. 37 as cited in Bruce, 2008, p. 8). This allows for insight into “alternative ways (for example, culturally distinct or gender-specific ways) of being, doing, thinking, and knowing” (Bruce, 2008, p. 8). The current study makes use of the Personal Experience narrative in its specific form: the life-story interview (Atkinson, 1998)— to come up with stories of public intellectuals which is a subjective re-creation and re-telling of the past in the light of one’s identity and positionality (Ochs & Capps, 1996). Subjectivity allows the participants to have their stories heard. It opens up an opportunity to represent the voices of academic public intellectuals from the Global South.

My subjectivity as a researcher also shaped the final posture of this dissertation beginning from a selection of the research agenda up until the weaving of the stories of the research participants in its current form. In addition to my belief that Ethiopian intellectuals are marginalized, I remain of the opinion that existing types of research in general fail to provide a holistic account of the lives and experiences of individuals, in this case Ethiopian academics. Even though a number of studies generate statistical evidence and numerical data about issues related to academics, including the frequency of violations of academic freedom, salary issues, expansion of higher education and its impact on the quality of performance of the teaching personnel (Alemu, 2008; Assefa, 2008; Degefa, 2015; Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016; Teferra, 2004, 2007; World Bank, 2003, 2010; Yimam, 2008), none of them provide an overarching and storied account of the challenges intellectuals face every day.
In addition to my view of the existing research as indicated above, I should also acknowledge that my earlier training in English language and literature, and my appreciation for post-colonial African literary works visibly influenced the final outcome of the work, as can be seen in the way the stories in this study are presented, among others. It has also influenced the way I understand the place of storytelling in educational research. These issues influenced me to consider employing the notion of panfictionality for it allows researchers to come up with such a dissertation which compels readers to favor subjective understanding and interpretation of stories. Unlike qualitative thematic analysis or other quantitative studies, the narration of the stories and lived experiences in this work affirms the notion of subjectivity in telling, re-telling and interpreting stories. Readers also add another subjective perspective in their reading and interpretation of the stories of the intellectuals presented in this work. As a result, this work involves multiple and potentially infinite levels of subjectivity.

1.6 Researcher’s Positionality

Researchers should also engage in reflexivity of their positionality, a broader concept which enfolds subjectivity itself (Luis & Barton, 2002). Researchers are able to “bring honesty to the fore” and gain control over self-serving tendencies “through systematic, ongoing reflexivity” (Bishop & Shepherd, 2011, p. 1283). Reflexivity as “a process of self-examination” (Russell & Kelly, 2002, p. 3) helps researchers form clear thoughts about their positionality. Positionality is a "knower's specific position in any context as defined by race, gender, class, and other socially significant dimensions" (Maher & Tetreault, 1994, p. 22 as cited in Luis & Barton, 2002, p. 3) and a physical location described by the margin/centre binaries (Hooks, 1984, as cited in Luis & Barton, 2002, p. 3).
I struggle to locate myself in terms of the *margin vs. centre* continuum. On the one hand, I feel I am capable of speaking about intellectual life in the Global South because I was an academic until I moved to North America. On the other hand, I feel that I am not qualified to speak of such matters with my limited life experience while working at a university in Ethiopia. Perhaps, this is due to my being an early career professional, feeling less secure to discuss sensitive issues, or suspecting that my views might not be representative. On the contrary, due to my experience working in different academic and administrative positions, I would also dare place myself in the centre. I now feel that I was in a privileged position within the academy. My thoughts also oscillate back and forth as I think of myself in terms of the insider/outsider perspective. As a person who belongs to a country, I may appear an insider who can critically reflect a lot on real-life issues. I am living and studying in Canada now, and my outlook, which is the way I see and evaluate the external world, might have changed after having been influenced by my exposure to Western thought as well as my epistemic uncertainties.

My view of the position of academics in Ethiopia is that they are located at the margins of the society. As a member of the academic community, I noticed that academics were considered less influential members of the society compared to other white-collar professionals who are employed in the industries other than the higher education sector. They were rarely heard by their own academic administrators as well as political elites. The cultural productions regarding the life of the intellectual is full of unfavorable portrayals. I was not pleased by the local cultural productions and the narratives about the intellectual in the creative arts. This might be due to my belief that discourses emerging in Ethiopia that undermine intellectuals and academic career in general seem to perpetuate the marginalization of the intellectual in the country. Even though it is
still unknown to me whether the local cultural production of such works is deliberate or inadvertent, a number of works of art in Amharic portrayed a very contested representation of the intellectual. For example, in the Amharic novel entitled የሰማእከ ወርቁ / Yismahal ለርቁ (2002) and in some locally produced movies, some of the major characters who are academics were portrayed as incompetent, poor, unethical, and mere political coteries. In general, narratives that disrespect local intellectuals and their contributions to the society are growing.

Such representations create unfair and undermining representations of the intellectual class. I believe that this is a dangerous path for a poor nation like Ethiopia to follow, and the cost and unfavorable outcome down the road will be unbearable. This might be one of the reasons why I became eager to focus on the lives and experiences of academics and academic public intellectuals. My subjectivity may also have dictated my choice of the research area. In general, my experience, my identity, my location, and my citizenship status as an African international student, and my experience as a black person and as a guest on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish First Nations may have strengthened my interest and inclination to study the lives and experiences of Ethiopian diaspora intellectuals.

1.7 Overview of the Dissertation

The sections so far introduced the overall idea of the dissertation. In Chapter two, I discuss the notion of the intellectual and proceed to the explication of the term public intellectual. I touch upon different views about the idea of the public intellectual in order to conceptualize what the term represents. I discuss some of the basic conceptions of the term intellectual to capture the core meaning of the term as well as the semantic constituents of the term public
intelligent. These discussions clarify the meaning of the term in the context I intend to use in this study. This will be followed by the “declinist narrative”, a plethora of arguments which state that such a being is disappearing from the face of the earth. I will then relate the idea of public intellectualism and academic freedom to affirm the social status of my research participants as academic public intellectuals.

In Chapter three, I present the political economy of higher education in Ethiopia which is a historical analysis of the developments in the sector. This is because the intellectuals whose experiences and life stories are dealt with in this study are originally from Ethiopia even though they are currently employed in North America. In this literature review, I discuss the political economy of knowledge production in terms of higher education expansion, enrollment, academic freedom and governance in the country. I relate the discussion with the situation of intellectuals and how this interacts with the political developments in three regimes in the country, namely the Monarchical regime (1930-1974), the Socialist/Derg regime (1974-1991), and the current Revolutionary ‘Democratic’ regime (1991 to present). This is then used as a context to the stories that will be developed latter based on the life story interviews with the participants of the study. It is essential to note that the political economy of higher education is used as context in which academic public intellectuals operate.

In Chapter four, I introduce Panfictionality, a concept in literary narratology, as an approach to conduct educational research in the form of fiction. In this section, I make the case that what is termed as fiction-based research actually existed long before its emergence in educational research in the mode educational researchers claim it to date. I advance the argument that pan-
fictionality, though considered by critiques as a postmodern exercise, existed much earlier in the Greek intellectual tradition, in the days of Plato and Aristotle. I draw on earlier works to strengthen the multidisciplinary approach in educational research and the possibility of adopting literary frameworks from narratology to educational studies research. I then argue for the convenience of narratology in general, and panfictionality in particular, to present stories that are garnered through the life story interview.

Chapter five presents the intersecting personal life stories which are written based on the life story interviews I conducted with four academic public intellectuals in the United States and Canada. I will leave the interpretation and evaluation of the story open to my readers, with acknowledgment of the complexities of the issues discussed in the narration as well as the intricate web of incidents and emotions, both personal and social, and my own subjectivity and positional- ity entangled and interwoven in the story in some way. There is variation in the narration and interpretation of particular perspectives and viewpoints from which the stories are told, be it at the level of the participating characters or the narrators (Jahn, 2017). Taking the fact that people “live stories all the time” (Leggo, 2012, p. xiii) into account, it seems unfair to infer conclusions about the lives and experience of others. The readers of a particular story understand and interpret the story as well as connect with the story on different planes of interpretations. I believe that any writer who endeavors to provide readers with conclusions about particular stories ventures on the risk of dismissing the feelings and emotional attachments as articulated by the story tellers. For that reason, I do not offer any conclusion to the dissertation in a formal sense, but rather leave the reader to consider implications for this research beyond the present document.
Chapter 2: Conceptualizing the “Intellectual”

2.1 Intellectual: Meaning, Origin, and Role

It is a challenging task to venture on exploring the etymology and semantics of the term intellectual. As Peter Allan (1987) puts it, “the idea of “an intellectual” has remained so fuzzy, ill-defined, and contentious as to be of markedly limited value in the field of cultural history” and it will continue to be so (as cited in Collini, 2006, p. 16). It is challenging for intellectuals themselves to succinctly define who they are and to clearly explain “their role and relevance in a world of increasing pressures” (Elmeaza, 2014, p. 1). This section lays the basis for the conceptual clarity of the term, while simultaneously recognizing that “there is no end” to how to define intellectuals (Howe, 2006, p. 71). It then develops the idea that public intellectualism and academic freedom are logically and conceptually related.

McGowan (2002) argues that the concept of the intellectual emerged in different times, in different places, and in different contexts. This has resulted in a varying fluid understanding of what intellectuals are—understandings by intellectuals themselves and by others. The term ‘intellectual’ has multiple meanings and is characterized by ambiguities and “shifts in meaning across time and context” (Jennings, 2008). The term refers to “men and women given to the exercise of the intellect, but also prone to periodic intervention in public life” (Schalk, 1997, p. 273). There is considerable overlap, particularly in the literature related to intellectuals, between “the terms ‘intellectual’, ‘writer’, and, ‘academic’. A much higher proportion of the individuals who can be described with the label ‘intellectual’ are tenured academics” (Small, 2002, p. 2). As it is the intention of this chapter to establish the nexus between public intellectualism and acad-
emic freedom, the semantic gravitation of the term ‘intellectual’ to academics is essential to this study and is discussed in detail in the subsequent sections in this chapter.

As a way of entering into the discussion, however, it is essential to briefly touch on the historical origins of the term. A number of writers agree that the term *Intellectual* first emerged in France during the time of the *Dreyfus Affair* as a charge against the ‘Dreyfusards’ (Brouwer & Squires, 2006; Jakobson, 2012; Jennings & Kemp-Welch, 1997; McGowan, 2002; Schalk, 1997). ‘Dreyfusards’ is a term developed in France to represent a group of people who advocated for the innocence of Captain Dreyfus. Captain Alfred Dreyfus was sentenced to life imprisonment for an alleged treason when in fact he was innocent. The trial took six years since 1894 and the intellectuals, including famous writers such as Emily Zola, joined the circle of protest. The nation was divided into two and the military tried to rescind and suppress the intellectuals’ movement.

The people who fought for Captain Dreyfus, and others who advocate for a similar cause, are since then called Dreyfusards (Jennings & Kemp-Welch, 1997; McGowan, 2002). Even though the term Dreyfusards was used with negative connotation, the Dreyfusards attributed favorable qualities to the term, and hence, its use as a specific lexicon to represent individuals of intellect (Elmeaza, 2014; Fleck, Hess & Lyon, 2009; Jakobson, 2012). They reversed the negative connotation of the term “in a classic gesture of resistance, [and] had re-appropriated the intended insult, making it a honorific title” (Jakobson, 2012, p. 71).

Despite the emergence of the *intellectual* during the time of the Dreyfusards as discussed above, sociologists argue that the notion of the intellectual was known even in the early eighteen century (Coser, 1965; McGowan, 2002). In the same line of thought, Fleck, Hess, and Lyon (2009) caution readers not to assume that there were no intellectuals before the Dreyfus Affair; it
is the existence of the term, not the individuals nor the intellectual tradition, that was non-existent before this time. It is also essential to note that some writers like Beteille (1980) state that intellectuals are “a modern phenomenon, and they come into their own with the beginning of modern history” (Beteille, 1980, p. 26). In the light of the Dreyfus Affair, what constitutes the core of the definition is intellectuals’ and writers’ “action of intervening in politics” (Jennings & Kemp-Welch, 1997, p. 7).

The term ‘intellectual’ also refers to “a person having a powerful and trained intellect who is inclined to the activities and/or pleasures of the intellect” and has a “passion” (Lyon, 2009, p. 70) for scholarship and reasoning. The aforementioned discussions of the intellectual revolve around two essential elements: the idea of intellect, knowing, and rationality; and/or passion and engagement. In the same line of thought, Stein (2013) contends that understanding the term intellectual to mean someone who uses his/her intellect sounds both logical and at the same time problematic for the simple reason that it puts everyone in the intellectual category. As a result, understanding intellectuals as people who are “passionate thinkers” would help us better identify the individuals to whom we are referring because such individuals possess not only intellectual rigor in their thinking, but also passion that pushes them “to share the excitement of their ideas with others” (Stein, 2013, p. 14). Passion and intellect, according to Stein (2013), are the two inseparable attributes of intellectuals. The function of the intellectual is to critique as an “alienated critic…guardian and gatekeeper” (Epstein, 2006, p. 189).

Gramsci (1992) argues that every social group has its own particular category of intellectuals. In Prison Notebooks, he explicitly states “By intellectuals, one must understand not [only] those ranks commonly referred to by this term, but generally the whole social mass that exercises
an organizational function in the broad sense” (Gramsci, 1992, p. 133). He thus challenges the
categorization of intellectuals. Unless it is a matter of the extent to which one contributes intel-
lectually, everybody appears to be intellectual in some way, and thus no one would be excluded
from the category. The possibility of the non-intellectual dwindles in Gramscian conception of
the intellectual. Thus, Gramsci’s (1992) argument leads to the conclusion that all people are in-
tellectuals.

Gramsci (1992) also stresses, however, that all people do not do the function of intellec-
tuals. Beteille (1980) states that being an intellectual can be viewed as a “special or unusual gift,”
as well as a “general or universal feature of the human condition” (p. 25). The later claim herein
certainly relates to Gramsci’s notion of all individuals being intellectuals. In fact, Gramsci’s def-
inition of intellectual introduced readers to the idea of organic and traditional intellectuals,
which is foundational to conceptualizing intellectuals in different roles and contexts. Other writ-
ers also advanced similar arguments which state that intellectual activity used to happen in
churches and mosques, and many other traditions which are manifest in many ways, even in
present-day secular universities (Sassower, 2014). Related literature and theories also demon-
strate that the concept of the intellectual is discussed more comfortably in terms of the role of the
subjects, the actions to be performed by a small segment of the society who are known to be in-
tellectuals. This tendency to focus on the role and function of intellectuals in defining who intel-
lectuals are leads to the conclusion that the term intellectual evolved to embrace different but
overlapping meanings throughout history.

Two basic conceptions of the intellectual are worth mentioning in this regard: the conceptual
and the sociological (Beteille, 1980). The former refers to “a certain quality of the mind…to
what people, or certain kinds of people are,” whereas the latter refers to “certain occupational roles, or certain aspects of the division of labor” (Beteille, 1980, p. 25). The sociological conception of the intellectual refers to individuals who are engaged in non-manual labour and perform mental or intellectual duties. These categories refer to the many millions of people in the modern societies (Beteille, 1980; Collini, 2002) who are graduates from higher learning institutions. In addition to them, a third category and conception of the intellectual, termed as the cultural conception, coexists with the former two and “designates those figures who, on the basis of some recognized standing … are also accorded the opportunity to address a wider audience on matters of general concern” (Collini, 2002, p. 209).

The cultural category of the intellectual seems representative of what we refer to as “public intellectuals,” which will be discussed separately in section 2.2 of this chapter. The political sense of the intellectual, the fourth conception, stresses the intervention in politics, and the fifth sense of the term refers to the free intellectual as someone who is self employed and independent (Collini, 2006; Coser, 1965; Jakobson, 2012). Despite the conceptual clarity these categories offer, no one of these terms is exclusive of the others and they “are often used together” (Jakobson, 2012, p. 63). Thus, it is hardly possible to draw a hard and fast dividing line between the five categories of intellectuals mentioned above.

It is common among intellectuals themselves to discuss intellectual identities by the role performed by individuals who are considered intellectuals. In this sense, the concern of intellectuals consists of “the content of intellectual activities, their originality and their excellence” (Beteille, 1980, p. 25). Bauman (1987) suggests that the function of the intellectual is to “bring[ing] the project of modernity towards its fulfillment” (p. 192). There is a departure in
the understanding of the role of the intellectual today. The renowned role of the intellectual of our time is that of an “‘interpreter’ and provider of ‘moral clarity’” (Sandhu, 2007, p. 2).

Said (1994) advances a notion of intellectuals as people who distance themselves from conventions. The contribution by Edward Said is probably a ground-breaking one in discussing the role of the intellectual. Elmeaza (2014) argues that “Said’s model has set the standard, as to label someone an intellectual” (p. xvi). However, let us defer Said’s expounding until the forthcoming section, where the role of the (public) intellectual will be dealt with. It seems that Said’s (1994) notion of the intellectual refers to the public intellectual in the conceptual sense of the term or the cultural sense of the term, which involves achievement in a specific field and engagement in addressing the public on issues of general concern (Collini, 2002; Jakobson, 2014).

Unlike those who define intellectuals by the roles they play, Furedi (2004) argues that intellectuals are not defined by the jobs they do, but rather by their manners, the way they act, and how they perceive themselves. In discussing about intellectuals, Furedi (2004) puts more emphasis on the values individuals uphold than the jobs they do. Thus, being an expert in a particular academic discipline does not guarantee one will be an intellectual.

Intellectuals must deploy their knowledge and skills beyond professional confines to comment on and challenge the political order and events of social significance (Furedi, 2004; McGowan, 2002). Thus, according to Furedi (2004), Einstein could not be considered an intellectual for having simply formulated universal theories of physics because he did not comment on political and social issues of significance in human life and history. Furedi (2004), like Coser (1965), recognizes intellectuals as people who are mentally distanced from the conventions and
pressures of everyday affairs, and considers them to be individuals who possess the desire to act in accordance with their beliefs rather than external influences and pressures.

It may make sense to conclude that the term intellectual generally refers to individuals who possess “a certain quality of the mind” (Beteille, 1980, p. 25) such as having a “recognized standing in a creative, scholarly, or other non-instrumental activity” (Collini, 2002, p. 209). It refers to individuals who are passionate thinkers who excel in their intellectual rigor, who are “mentally distanced from conventions and pressures of everyday affairs” (Furedi, 2004, p. 33), and who can be labeled as either philosophers, thinkers, writers, academics, or all of these. They are also individuals who “live for different ideas,” (Furedi, 2004, p. 36), and who are an ‘interpreter’ and provider of ‘moral clarity’” (Sandhu, 2007, p. 2). In general, to discuss intellectuals seems to be to discuss a particular segment of the society that is independent and recognized for its intellectual excellence and rigor, and to define these subjects by what they do in different social contexts.

2.2 Public Intellectual: A Sub Category?

The historical origins and meaning of the term intellectual are discussed above to serve as a springboard to discussing a subcategory of intellectual, the public intellectual. Here, the term intellectual appears more qualified when coupled with the word public, constituting two core elements which could possibly be conceived as two separate, as well as interrelated, qualities: public and intellectual. Thus, the questions What is public? and What is intellectual? require more deliberation.
Similar to the attempt to conceptualize the term intellectual, arriving at a succinct definition of what *public* and *public intellectual* entail seems not straightforward. The notion of the public intellectual is characterized by “contextual dependencies on national and cultural traditions,” and “historical situatedness and gendered bias” (Wisselgren, 2009, p. 225-26). Discussing the difficulty of putting the concept in a specific analytical framework, Posner (2013) states “The subject seems formless— the term itself, ‘Public intellectual,’ undefined” (p. 2). However, it is essential and helpful to look into the semantic core of these terms and the existence of any potential conceptual and linguistic overlaps to elucidate the meaning of the term.

### 2.2.1 The “public” in *public intellectual*

A public intellectual is a person who gives voice to those who lack access to the public arena to address their issues (Barlow, 2013). From this, it follows that the public intellectual is a person with access to a particular space, the public arena, also called the public sphere. He or she has the role of speaking on behalf of others who have no access to such a space, and in fact, possesses the “intellect” that enables him or her to do this.

The term *public* originated from the Greek *polis* which refers to “a separate sphere of activity” (Alexander, 2009, p. 19) that involves engagement in discourse, reasoning, argument and rhetoric, among others. Discussing the semantic possibilities of the term *public*, Lyon (2009) states that as an adjective the term constitutes something by/for a whole community/nation/people in general; it also refers to something which is “known, accessible to all, done in public”; and as a noun it stands for “a community, or nation or any section of the community considered in some way as an audience for information and communication” (Lyon, 2009, p.70).
In general, both etymological and semantic integrants of the term evoke such variants of public, as referring to majority, accessibility, and openness (Brouwer & Squires, 2006; Lyon, 2009). Such variants of meaning and reference to public suggest that the mention of ‘public’ does not always mean one and the same thing (Brouwer & Squires, 2006; Lyon, 2009). This leads to understanding the fluidity of the notions ‘public’, ‘publicness’ and ‘public sphere’ (Ryan, 2003, as cited in Lyon, 2009, p. 70). In Britain, the idea of public relates not only to the notion of the public sphere but also to the emergence of “men of letters,” “scholars,” or “intellectuals.” Treating the notion of public and public sphere as semantically equivalent, Lyon (2009) argues that the public sphere is a “fluid one with changing boundaries depending on the nature of particular economic and political processes, but also on the vagaries of fashion and culture” (p. 70).

Elmeaza (2014) traces the notion and the emergence of the public sphere in the early 17th to late 18th centuries to “the Salons, the Coffee houses, Royal societies, the literary or table societies, literary journalism” (p. 1), where the exchange of ideas and intellectual debate used to take place. This was followed by the Victorian period in which men of letters, also called literary men or scholars, gained prominence. Elmeaza (2014) also posits a utilitarian view of men of letters who “were basically (a) generalists, their frame of mind is not far from the Victorians’ who were believed to be fact oriented thus they (b) valued knowledge for a purpose” (p. 22).

These individuals were known as “moralists, cultural guides and spokesmen for the public”; they were also known for their moral function, which has greater significance for their society (Elmeaza, 2014, p. 24). However, shifts occurred in the public sphere due to the rise of the “welfare state of mass democracy,” the emergence of consumer culture shifting the trend from the “rational-critically debating public to a consuming public” in a culture of commodification of
knowledge, and “a tendency of professionalism and specialisation” (Elmeaza, 2014, pp. 35-37), which was seen in the growth of science and the emergence of the university. From the beginning of the 19th century onwards, the rise of the university and the development of science, along with the aspiration to build a scientific community/nation, brought about intellectuals of specialization in the sciences. The heyday of the men of letters had to shift and men of letters themselves had to question their relationship with their public.

Mindful of the origin of the terms public and public sphere and their relationship with the intellectual, a further look into endeavors by other scholars to conceptualize, define, and operationalize the public intellectual is crucial. Collini (2002) defends the ‘public’ role of the intellectual as embedded and inseparable from the very essence of being an intellectual. As a result, speaking of such a role of the intellectual is “pleonastic” for the simple reason that “in so far as individuals occupy the role of the intellectual, they are by definition playing a “public role” (Collini, 2002, p. 209). Thus, being an intellectual involves not only talent and creativity but also close connection with a particular audience, and hence, the notion of the public. The notion of a wider audience suggests multiple publics moving the discussion from “public” to “publics.”

It is not uncommon to find the notion of public as referring to the middle and upper class policy makers, administrators, and professionals. Such an understanding casts aside local communities (Brouwer & Squires, 2006; Cushman, 2006). This makes definitions of the public intellectual “problematic” (Cushman, 2006, p. 101). However, the notion of the plural, publics, leads to the notion of multiple publics at various levels and locations which in turn opens up the oppor-
tunity to “better recognize and affirm the meaningful work that scholars do for local, particular communities” (Cushman, 2006, p. 101).

The term public intellectual is a “modern invention” (Brouwer & Squires, 2006, p. 33) and “a fairly recent addition to the vocabulary of cultural debate” (Small, 2002, p. 1). It is often used “interchangeably with classical intellectuals” (Melzer, 2003, as cited in Wisselgren, 2009, p. 226). As a result, it is sometimes challenging to make a clear distinction between public intellectuals and the classical conception of intellectuals from the definitions provided by scholars in this area (Wisselgren, 2009, p. 226). Said (2008) also underscores that “the word intellectual unfailingly carries with it some residue of the public realm” (p. 20). Thus, it follows that “the notion of the ‘public intellectual’ is redundant, as forms of intellectual production are invariably conducted, produced, and consumed for a literal or imagined ‘public’” (Hill, 2012, p. 155).

Clearly, public engagement is an attribute that makes intellectuals public, and public intellectuals are those “subspecies of [these] intellectuals, those who believe in the possibility of dialogue with the public” (Stein, 2013, p. 15). In general, it can be argued that an orientation toward the “public realm” (to use Habermasian terminology) is an inherent quality of the intellectual, and that the notion of public(s) has a bearing on and direct relevance for the public role of the intellectual, as will be discussed below.

2.2.2 The role of public intellectuals

It may rightly be questioned why we need to discuss the public role of the (public) intellectual as a self-standing entity when it is possible to consider it as being part and parcel of the discussion about the public in public intellectuals. One should be cognizant of the overlap, both
linguistic and conceptual, in the notion of the intellectual and the public, as well as the overlap of the intellectual and public intellectual, which is highlighted in the earlier discussions (Collini, 2006; Melzer, 2003, as cited in Wisselgren, 2009; Said, 1994).

A look into the role of the intellectual can still be justified in view of the fact that there has been “not enough stock of the image, the signature, the actual intervention and performance” of the intellectual despite “the outpouring of studies about the intellectual” (Said, 1994, p. 10). In fact, this claim is also part and parcel of the interest in researching the current situation of public intellectuals and their challenges, commitments, hindrances and prospects in the practical world.

Be that as it may, Hill (2012) operationalizes the term public intellectual to refer to “an individual whose intellectual production is articulated to a non-academic community” (Hill, 2012, p. 155). This conception of the term alludes to intellectuals’ role in addressing the “non-academic community” as one’s public. This foregrounds the idea of accessibility on the presumption that the academic community, which could be considered the default public of the intellectual, is able to grasp what one offers as the “intellectual production” of one’s intellectual labor. Thus, the role of the public intellectual should be to reach a non-academic public in an accessible language. Otherwise, it could be argued that the role of the intellectual is to address communities in the “civil sphere” (Alexander, 2009, p. 19), beyond academia. In addition to such issues related to language and/or accessibility of public-intellectual thought, which will be dealt with in the next section of this chapter, there are a plethora of similar conceptions worth looking at to capture the diverse roles of the public intellectual.

The (public) intellectual should be the kind of person to defend “innocent victims like Dreyfus” (Howe, 2006, p. 73). Such a person is regarded as “a moral conscience of the
society” (Brouwer & Squires, 2006, p. 31). The very term public intellectual affirms the notion of “engaged intellectuals,” ascertaining engagement in political affairs and criticism of nations (Brouwer & Squires, 2006, p. 33). In the same line of thought, Said (1994) has pointed to “questioning authority” as the main intellectual activity of our time (p. 67). However, Said (1994) also states that “This doesn’t always mean a matter of being a critic of government policy” (Said, 1994, p. 17).

These ideas elicit the issue of location, the insider vs. outsider controversy, of the intellectual who is engaged in the task of questioning and critiquing authority in any socio-cultural and political context. Reflecting on Said’s (1994) seminal work, *Representation of the Intellectual*, Nagy-Zekmi and Hollis (2012) contend that Edward Said “conceives the role of public intellectual as an ‘outsider’ and ‘amateur’ and ‘disturber of the status quo’” (p. 5). Said (1994) himself states that the task of the intellectual is “to unearth the forgotten, to make connections that were denied, to cite alternative courses of action that could have avoided war and its attendant goal of human destruction” (p. 17).

The notions of “non-academic community” (Hill, 2012), language, and “civil sphere” (Alexander, 2009, p. 19), along with the idea of reaching a public in a clear language, necessitate a discussion which looks into the link between public intellectualism and language. This is dealt with in the following section.

### 2.3 Public Intellectuals and Public Language

A public intellectual can be understood as “a person who seeks communication with a broader audience with the aim of raising the collective, critical consciousness” (Comer & Jensen,
Such an intellectual “work(s) with and on behalf of a public or group of publics for social and political effect in a language that is understandable to the average person” (Young, 2007, p. 13). She or he works “to convey the importance and complexity of those ideas in an accessible language” (Spizzirri, 2003, as cited in Kushins, 2006). To work with the broader audience, the public intellectual should consider usage of a language that appeals to all audiences involved. Such a language should by default transcend specific discursive practices and disciplinary boundaries that draw the lines between people as professionals belonging to specific groups and societies, and those who fall outside of such circles.

Intellectuals who address a specific academic public may exercise exclusionary discursive practices, as they are speaking to a limited public in their area of specialization. In this sense, save the notion of the generalist public intellectual who endeavors to reach a wider public beyond professional domains and academic discursive practices (Jakobson, 2012), the intellectual employ specific jargon and disciplinary clichés which require not only particular familiarity to decipher the meanings of such jargons, but also professional authority and membership to respond to. Certainly, such an individual “who work[s] in any field connected either with the production or distribution of knowledge is an intellectual in Gramsci’s sense” (Said, 1994, p. 4).

There is no doubt that these (specific) intellectuals contribute to the sphere of knowledge and also address specific publicus. The problem, however, lies not in the issue of the intellect but in the issue of accessibility and intelligibility of the content they are referring to. Such intellectuals “speak and deal [in] a language that had become specialized and usable by other members of the same field, specialized experts addressing other specialized experts in a lingua franca largely unintelligible to unspecialized people” (Said, 1994, p. 7). In this sense, the intellectual’s contri-
butions to the sphere of knowledge can hardly serve the purpose of universal improvement of the human condition without simultaneously excluding a large portion of the “unspecialized public” (Said, 1994, p. 7).

In Fearless Speech, Michael Foucault (Foucault & Pearson, 2001) advances a similar argument regarding the issue of language. In what he refers to as parrhesia (i.e., to say everything, free speech), he states “the speaker is supposed to give a complete and exact account of what he has in mind so that the audience is able to comprehend exactly what the speaker thinks” (Foucault & Pearson, 2001, p. 12). Foucault also argues that the speaker should be very straightforward in the selection and use of the forms of expression, and without any preference or inclination to employ “rhetorical forms” (Foucault & Pearson, 2001, p. 12) that may preclude the potential meaning of the speaker’s opinion.

With reference to the role of the public intellectual, it is not only the language through which the public intellectual speaks to people that matters most. Taking as given the role of the public intellectual to question authority, it is also essential to consider the issue of language in speaking truth to power and challenging authority. Related to this, Said (1994) portrays the intellectual as “the author of a language that tries to speak the truth to power” (p. xiv). I am obliged to further quote at length another example from Said’s (1994) Reith lecture, which clearly illustrates an issue that may very well demonstrate the notion of unintelligibility to the unspecialized public. Said was approached by an older graduate student at Columbia, an AirForce veteran who wanted to join a seminar with limited enrolment. Said (1994) states,

“I shall never forget the shock I received when in responding to my insistent question, ‘What did you actually do in the airforce?’ he replied, ‘Target acquisition’. It took me several more minutes to figure out that he was a bombardier whose job it was, well, to
bomb, but he had coated it in a professional language that in certain way means to ex-
clude and mystify” (p. 63).

In a graduate seminar on October 19, 2015, at the Department of Educational Studies of
the University of British Columbia, Professor Ali A. Abdi said that this incident is “the act of
humanizing the dehumanizing act of mass killing.” This would epitomize the need to consider
the issue of language to speak to power and authority as well as to the public with out concealing
anything. Similarly, Posner (2013) suggests that readers regard the contribution of academic pub-
lic intellectuals as “modest extension of academic work (for example, translating it into language
that the lay public can understand)” (Posner, 2013, p. 6). The issue of translation relates with the
issue of language and/or clarity of ideas when they are presented to the lay public. This notion of
translation as establishing clarity while addressing the public also implies the role of the public
intellectual as interpreter of concepts, ideas and knowledge to the vast public (Bauman, 1987;
Posner, 2013; Sandhu, 2007). Thus, in addressing the public and/or authority, and thereby per-
forming the role of a public intellectual, the public intellectual should climb the double helix of
clarity, clearly communicating ideas to reach both the unspecialized people as well as the pecu-
liar power and authority.

Discussions pertinent to the notion of the public intellectual are challenged by some
scholars who look at the issue through the gender lens. These scholars argue that such issues
evoke the image of the public intellectual tradition as a masculine territory. For instance, Sandhu
(2007) states “Women still have to battle with the powerful degree of hegemony between sup-
posedly unrelated social and political spheres that together ensure … patriarchal privilege” (p.
51). Similarly, in an article entitled “Can Women be Intellectuals?”, Evans (2009) argues that in
spite of the empowerment of women in gaining access to education, the professions and the vote and legal autonomy, knowledge production is still carried out with gender difference taken into account.

2.4 The ‘Declinist’ Narrative

A number of writers argue that public intellectuals are in decline (Carroll, 2008; Etzioni, 2006; Jennings, 2008; Miller, 2006; Posner, 2013; Schalk, 1997). These writers argue that the public intellectuals are ‘ending,’ ‘disappeared,’ ‘at risk,’ ‘endangered,’ and ‘are the kiss of death,’ (Etzioni, 2006, p. 13). Miller (2006) even goes so far as to advance the argument that the word intellectual itself “has become a bit moldy” (p. 195). Similar studies about public intellectuals reiterate the decline and/or disappearance of intellectuals. For instance, Small (2008) argues the literature about public intellectuals shows two essential issues: it is basically characterized by the declinist narratives, and it urges us all to look for signs of their re-emergence.

The decline of the intellectual is often echoed both by the “conservative anti-intellectuals” and intellectuals alike (Carroll, 2008, p. 107). It is not uncommon to see intellectuals arguing in a way that is inimical to the situation of intellectuals. For instance, George Orwell, who is himself an “extreme intellectual and violent anti-intellectual” (Collini, 2002, p. 203), is known most for his writings that appear to be critical of intellectuals. In view of this, Collini (2002) asserts “nearly all extended attacks on intellectuals as a category are by those who, in at least some senses of the term, would have to be classified as other intellectuals” (p. 204). Similarly, there are African intellectuals, though very limited in number, who level severe criticism against their fellow intellectuals. For instance, Ayittey (2006) criticizes African intellectuals for “dismissing the indigenous system as ‘backward’ and ‘archaic’ ”(p. 308)
In an interview first published in *Le Monde* on April 6-7, 1980, Foucault denies the existence of such a figure, and he mentions that he “has never met an intellectual because the intellectual is a mythical figure rather than a real person, a rhetorical abstraction and personification of a national or universal subject” (Foucault, 1988, p. 324). In mystifying the intellectual in this way, Foucault is hiding his own intellectual identity to allow “discourse to function on its own” (Carroll, 2008, p. 107) rather than to identify oneself with such a being.

Coser (1965) argues that independent intellectuals, who are generalist (public) intellectuals, are declining in number compared to salaried intellectuals and academic men which is partly due to the “academization of intellect in America” (p. 263). In a more deliberative way, Jennings (2008) notes two important developments in the United States that justify the notion of intellectuals’ decline. First, independent intellectuals are increasingly moving into the academy, leaving “their urban habitats for the university campus” (Jennings, 2008, p. 117). The consequence of this movement is the birth of intellectuals who are more concerned about specialization and professionalization in academic disciplines, which in turn has brought about “depoliticization” and “careerism.” Second, the newly emerging intellectuals are academics who are productive in a very specific disciplinary inquiry, and turn away from social responsibilities and engagements in universal issues that matter to humanity.

Pondering whether intellectuals are a ‘dying species,’ Schalk (1997) contends “the decline of belief in universals is most likely permanent” (p. 283). In the light of Jennings’ (2008) idea of growing *specialisation* and *careerism*, and Schalk’s (1997) notion of the likelihood of permanence of dwindling universal notion of truth above, it is possible to hold the view that the declinist narrative seems to represent the notion of the declining generalist independent public
intellectual. This runs parallel with the flourishing of specialized public intellectuals in the academy.

Another important development to justify the notion of intellectuals’ decline is the emergence of multiculturalism. The birth of the intellectual is related with the era of modernity and enlightenment. This is, however, being contested in the postmodern era, particularly in the light of multiculturalism, in which thinkers of the multicultural tradition are persistently engaged in questioning authority and therefore also questioning the “authority of the intellectual” (Jennings, 2008, p. 117).

Of the explanations that justify the decline of the intellectual, three reasons remain “remarkably stable across time and cultural barriers” (Jakobson, 2012, pp. 70-71). These are: (1) “media promotion of superficiality, celebrity culture and commercialism,” (2) “snobbism and reclusion of scholars and scientists and the growing incomprehensibility of their discourse,” and (3) “the purported decline of the universal standards and value with which intellectuals are expected to engage” (Jakobson, 2012, pp. 70-71).

In another scene, the declinist discourse is also accompanied by the “always peculiarly anti-intellectual” view of countries, termed the universal provincialism (Jakobson, 2012, p. 72). Jakobson (2012) states that intellectuals of almost all countries complain about the anti-intellectual culture of their respective countries. This, argues Jakobson (2012), is best explained by the Bourdieusian school as intellectual intervention “facing with the constraints of national context,” the former being internationalism outright (Jakobson, 2012, p. 72). In Africa, the situation of the intellectual is characterized by a rise, decline, and revival (Mazrui, 2005). Many factors contributed to the revival of the intellectual in African continent. According to Mazrui (2005), the
pro-democracy movements, flourishing radio stations and newspapers that published voices of dissent, and the end of the Cold War were some of the factors that played key roles in the revival of the African intellectual. At the end of the Cold War, Western countries supporting African dictators, as long as the dictators were anti-communists, turned their face to the emerging pro-democracy forces.

At the far end of the ‘declinist’ spectrum is a different perspective, which challenges the notion of intellectuals’ decline. Scholars in this school of thought argue that there is in fact a decline and even a disappearance of intellectuals in the left wing following the fall of communism and leftist ideologies. However, to equate the decline and even disappearance of intellectuals from the left as the disappearance of all intellectuals and social critics from the face of the earth is not only to engage in hasty generalization, but also “to mistake a political shift for a sociological trend” (Starr, 1995).

There is hardly sufficient quantitative evidence to show that there is a declining number of public intellectuals. Such intellectuals “have hardly vanished” (Etzioni, 2006, p. 15). Another assertion is that technological developments, the internet, and online publishing opportunities have contributed to the decline of the intellectual. “The growth of online venues has stimulated rather than retarded the quality and diversity of public intellectuals” (Drezner, 2009, p. 49).

Despite the arguments that account for the decline of the intellectual, it seems probable that it is rather the scope of their public sphere rather than the number of intellectuals that is declining. This might be a result of, but not limited to, the dynamism in the medium through which they reach the public and engage in the public sphere. No doubt, both the generalist as well as the specialized public intellectual reach their target public through language, though by using differ-
ent outlets. Academics may use journals and books, reporters and editors may use newspapers and magazines, and comedians and film makers may use audio-visual outlets to reach a particular public. Such outlets are characterized by fragmentation and differentiation as a result of the growth of technology and multiple options through which intellectuals can reach their publics. These things considered, it seems reasonable to note that “Public intellectuals have far from disappeared” (Etzioni, 2006, p. 21). However, the reality of the situations manifest in recent history shows intellectuals still face challenges and apparent limitations when they assume the role of challenging orthodoxy and addressing the wider public.

Kling (2006) notes “economically the intellectual is better fed, better housed and more elegantly pampered than ever before” (p. 164). However, it does not mean that there is no threat to the actual function of intellectuals and their contributions to society. In the light of the challenges that emerge from “technology, science, mathematics and expertness,” the intellectual “will not be abolished, he will wither away” (Kling, 2006, p. 164). Similarly, independent intellectuals are in decline as more and more intellectual youth are monopolized by the universities. This results in “academization of the intellegentia” and “a future without independent intellectuals” (Jacoby, 2006, p. 171). These suggest the compelling circumstances intellectuals are expected to find themselves in. Referring to Foucault’s notion of non-existence of “such [an] animal” called an intellectual, Carroll (2008) contends that it is not yet known what the end of the intellectual will be.

2.5 Public Intellectualism and Academic Freedom

The literature related to intellectuals is discussed in the earlier parts of this chapter, ranging from the origins of the intellectual to the public intellectual ideals and the declinist narrative
of the intellectual. This section advances the argument that public intellectualism and academic freedom are related and overlapping concepts. It establishes the nexus between public intellectualism and academic freedom. It seeks theoretical affinities and overlaps between theories of (academic) freedom and public intellectualism. In general, this section recognizes academics as public intellectuals and the theoretical convergence of public intellectualism and academic freedom as inevitable.

To begin with, the political economy of higher education—the context in which academic freedom is necessitated—serves as a background to this argument. Therefore, an at-a-glance look at the higher education trend might be of some help. It is certain that there is a phenomenal increase in enrolment and expansion in the political economy of knowledge production. Parallel to this global trend, increasing demand for productivity of academics has resulted in “the public moralist of old [giving] way to the disciplinary specialist,” which makes universities “an emerging academic public sphere” (Jennings, 2008, p. 122). This assertion offers, on the one hand, a sense of “the public moralist” (Jennings, 2008) as an intellectual in decline, and on the other, it heralds the notion of the disciplinary specialists (academics) as emerging intellectuals. This follows from a recognition of the academy itself as a public sphere (Dobrin, 2006; Jennings, 2008).

Similarly, academics are recognized as a category of intellectuals in the prevailing proliferation of the intellectual which includes such labels as academic intellectuals, scientific intellectuals, unattached intellectuals, and intellectuals in power, among others (Coser, 1965).

A more common cultural trend in the United States is that of recognizing the term intellectual as referring primarily to “college professors” (Collini, 2002, p. 210) whose engagement is limited to the academic public sphere. In contrast, the term public intellectual is employed to
designate only those (academic) intellectuals who step outside the academic public sphere to “address a non-specialist public on matters of general concern” (Collini, 2002, p. 210). In this sense, the generalist academic is referred to as a public intellectual implying that being an academic is not a sufficient condition to be a public intellectual (Coser, 1965; Beteille, 1980).

The notion of academics as (generalist) public intellectuals suggests the notion of the intellect as a capacity to detach oneself from the immediate and the momentary and to commit oneself to comprehensive values transcending traditional or occupational engagement (Coser, 1965). Similarly, Crain argues “[n]owadays, the term public intellectual merely refers to an academic in his capacity as a moon-lighter” (as cited in Comer & Jensen, 2012, p. 139), implying that reaching the general public is an additional duty or second calling of academics above and beyond their engagement in the academic world.

Such conceptualization of academics as generalist public intellectuals is, however, contested for it may project a sense of the impossibility of the emergence and existence of generalist public intellectuals beyond universities’ frontiers (Comer & Jensen, 2012). In contrast, most of the intellectuals in the academy are specific public intellectuals, also referred to as “safe specialist[s]” (Posner, 2013, p. 5), who operate within the frontiers of specific disciplinary specializations. Notwithstanding such perspectives, scholars argue that the modern university hosts “notable public intellectuals” (Dallyn, Marinetto & Cederstrom, 2015, p. 1034).

Regardless of whether they are engaged in the academy where they are regularly addressing specific disciplinary audience or committed to “values transcending traditional or occupational involvement” (Beteille, 1980, p. 29), academics are public intellectuals (Posner, 2013). They have a particular public to address within and/or beyond the university as well as their dis-
cipline. Posner (2013) takes the idea even further to advance the argument that “The general and the special critics overlap” (p. 10). Despite the dual understandings of the public such as the general as well as the specific public, which help to establish the notion of academics as public intellectuals, Wright (2012) contends that the idea of academics as public intellectuals “is not universally embraced” (p. 51). Thus, academics are “de facto or potential public intellectuals” (Wright, 2012, p. 51). This claim is also reminiscent of the notion that all academics are not default public intellectuals. It is probably due to such reasons that Posner (2013) opts for “distinguished academics” (p. 6) while discussing the notion of the public intellectual.

No doubt, academics have a target public, at least within their professional boundaries. It thus necessarily follows that all academics are public intellectuals but only some of them are generalist public intellectuals. Academics need academic freedom to properly conduct their duties. By way of transitivity logic, it necessarily follows that academic public intellectuals need academic freedom, for they belong to a universal set of academics. Thus, the academic public intellectual is at the interface of public intellectualism and academic freedom.

By virtue of being an academic, a public intellectual is in a privileged position to address the general public on issues of general concern using academic freedom and one’s location in the university as an “intellectual institution” (Beteille, 1980) and safe space which is “safeguarded against the unstable outside world” (Preez, 2012, p. 59). For the engagement of academics in the generalist public intellectual exercise, safety emerges not only from one’s physical location of being in a safe space (Preez, 2012), but also from the right granted through tenure. Public intellectualism and academic freedom are therefore related deductively by way of a transitivity logic.
Tenure is “a guarantee of appointment until the age of retirement” (Brown & Curland, 1993, p. 325). It provides intellectuals with academic freedom, which in turn enables these intellectuals to engage in extramural activities and generalist public intellectual praxis. However, tenure is under attack in the current neoliberal era. For some writers, tenure itself appears to be conceptually problematic, financially unjustifiable, and resulting in the inefficiency of academics (Ceci, Williams, & Muller-Jhonson, 2006); for others, it is a crucial instrument to defend academic freedom because “academic freedom will be jeopardized” in the absence of tenure (Chemerinsky, 1998, p. 640).

Another way to establish the nexus between public intellectualism and academic freedom is the symmetric criticality framework (Jakobson, 2012) and its relationship and convergence with the theory of academic freedom. Collini (2006) argues for a similar concept while referring to the intellectual as someone who “is going beyond his special activity and speaking out on a matter of general interest” (p. 61). This highlights the notion of generalist academics who go beyond disciplinary frontiers and specific audiences, unlike specific intellectuals who are committed to knowledge production and engagement with specific academic publics. The following example – “An atomic physicist is not an intellectual just because he’s good at questioning the papers of his colleagues but only when he signs a petition against nuclear testing” (Jakobson, 2012, p. 79) – would illuminate such engagement of the academic as a generalist public intellectual.

Departing from this interpretation, Jakobson (2012) argues for the self-referential tendency of symmetric criticality. Thus, Jakobson’s (2012) notion of symmetric criticality and interpretation of the atomic physicist example through the symmetric criticality lens is focused on knowing one’s engagement, what one is doing, and reflecting on the rationale for why it is done. In-
stead of the specific vs. generalist frame, Jakobson (2012) advances a line of thought which favors looking inward and reflecting on the subject and the rationale of intellectual engagement. In this sense, symmetric criticality is an act of inward reflexivity, and “self referentiality” (Jakobson, 2012, p. 79), which offers the opportunity to question one’s own performativity as a public intellectual.

The object of public intellectual praxis in this sense is academic culture and academics’ engagement in “reflection upon academic culture from within” (Hopper, 1995, p. 58). Symmetric criticality is co-opted in this study both as a self-referentiality and as a generalist performativity of academics who engage in issues of general concern. Both self-referentiality and generalist performativity require a considerable degree of autonomy, freedom, and intellect. Recognizing that the subject who engages in symmetric criticism is an academic, I consider academic freedom as a necessary condition for public intellectual praxis. Based on this, I argue that the academic public intellectual ought to be a generalist public intellectual in order to address both the specific academic society as well as the general public beyond disciplinary frontiers if s/he is entitled to academic freedom. This is possible wherever academic freedom is the underpinning principle of learning institutions.

Public intellectuals in Africa, as elsewhere, have intellectual debt to their society. The life and works of the famous Kenyan intellectual giant Ali Mazrui implicitly suggests the role of the African public intellectual as an individual “who interpret the world with intellectual consistency” (Adem, 2010, p. 197). His life and scholarships can be taken as a representation of the African intellectual’s responsibilities not only in defining the future of Africa and African identity but also positioning Africa’s locational coordinates in the global intellectual arena such as al-
ternative knowledge production. It can be taken as an intellectual exercise ventured forth to lead the masses towards a better living condition. While discussing the formation of the intellectual in South African liberation movement, Suttner (2005) implicitly states the same understanding of the intellectual as an interpreter who “provide meaning to situations, guidelines for escaping from oppression as well as visions of alternative social conditions” (p. 118). Similarly, Soyinka’s (1965) narration of the challenges and aspirations of five intellectuals in his novel entitled *The Interpreters*, along with the very title of the novel itself, could be taken as another evidence to back up the representation of the African intellectual as an interpreter.

In Ethiopia, studies that directly entertain the issue of the public intellectual are rarely available. Zewde's (2002) *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia* profiles the life and contributions of early twentieth century Ethiopian intellectuals. His work is a historical analysis and documentation of the first generation and second generation intellectuals who studied abroad and returned back home to take various political appointments and administrative positions. In fact, some of the intellectuals discussed in *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia* (Zewde, 2002) also played the role of a public intellectual in the sense of the term used in this dissertation. For instance, Tayya and Hiruy were mentioned to be “critical of Emperor Yohannes for his forcible conversion of Muslims” (Zewde, 2002, p. 135). Zewde (2002) also mentioned the case of Masala Tebaba Walda-Ab, a woman from western Wallaga, who challenged the attitude towards women and gender issues in a series of articles published on Berhanena Selam: the then state-owned newspaper, in 1929. She challenged gender issues, advocated for girls’ education, and argued that central to the emancipation of women is “the enlightenment of their husbands” (Zewde, 2002, p. 137).
Even though Zewde (2002) presents the intellectuals in modern Ethiopia, these individuals were returnees from studying abroad, almost all of them were appointed by the emperors of their time for administrative or other ministerial positions, and in most cases they were pro-government. They were not academics, and therefore they were not exercising academic rights and freedom to challenge the status quo. There were not even western-style higher education institutions in the country during their time. As a result, the intellectuals discussed in *Pioneers of Change* (Zewde, 2002) do not qualify as academic public intellectuals even when they played a similar role of challenging the status quo. The idea of the Ethiopian intellectual as an interpreter is discussed by Zewde (2002) in its literal sense where the intellectuals play the role of “intermediaries between the Ethiopian rulers and the foreigners” (pp. 182-183) specially in translating and interpreting French, Italian and English.

In the recent history and current political atmosphere, there are compelling circumstances such as frequent violations of human rights, the neglect of constitutional rights of people, land grabbing and dispossession of people from their ancestral lands, state coercion and control of academia all of which require Ethiopian academics to delve into the role of a generalist academic public intellectual. These are clearly additional responsibilities on top of the unquestionable moral obligation of the African intellectual towards educating, decolonizing the mind, and culturally emancipating the people.

Given academic public intellectuals entitlement to self-expression and academic freedom, there is a need for such intellectuals to act as generalist public intellectuals. Intellectual activities can neither be understood nor exist separate from “the contexts of social arrangement in which they take place” (Beteille, 1980, p. 25). Because this dissertation presents the case of Ethiopian
academic public intellectuals, it is necessary to discuss the contexts from which these intellectuals emerged as an academic public intellectual and the social arrangements that compelled, inspired, motivated, or obliged them to answer their calling as a public intellectual. As a result, chapter three presents a historical analysis of the political economy of higher education in Ethiopia, which provides readers with a clear picture regarding the political atmosphere, socio-cultural dynamics and the state of academic freedom in the country.

2.6 Summary

The literature regarding intellectuals shows that conceptualization of the term resonates with the meaning of who they are and what they do—their identities and their performances. It also depicts the challenges for intellectuals themselves to explicitly define who they are, “their role and relevance in a world of increasing pressures” (Elmeaza, 2014, p. 1). Others contend that intellectual is a term that has multiple meanings characterized by ambiguities, and “shifts in meaning across time and context” (Jennings, 2008). However, most writers agree that the term intellectual emerged in relation to the Dreyfus Affair in France (Elmeaza, 2014; Fleck, Hess & Lyon, 2009; Jakobson, 2012). It is “a fairly recent addition to the vocabulary of cultural debate” (Small, 2002, p. 1) and a “modern invention” (Brouwer & Squires, 2006, p. 33). It is hardly possible to locate a clear distinction between public intellectuals and a classical conception of intellectuals from the definitions provided by scholars of interest in this area (Wisselgren, 2009, p. 226). For this reason, scholars such as Said (2008) underscore that “the word intellectual unfailingly carries with it some residue of the public realm” (p. 20).

A public intellectual is regarded as “a moral conscience of the society” (Brouwer & Squires, 2006, p. 31). The very term public intellectual affirms the notion of “engaged intellectu-
als,” while ascertaining their engagement in political affairs and criticism of nations (Brouwer & Squires, 2006, p. 33). In the same line of thought, Said (1994) has pointed to “questioning authority” as the main intellectual activity of our time (p. 67). However, he also states “This doesn’t always mean a matter of being a critic of government policy” (p. 17). Understanding public intellectualism as a necessary engagement with a public, scholars caution the need “to convey the importance and complexity of those ideas in an accessible language” (Spizzirri, 2003, as cited in Kushins, 2006). Other writers suggest that the role of the intellectual in general and the public intellectual in particular is that of an interpreter (Bauman, 1987; Posner, 2013).

Whereas a number of writers argue that the public intellectual is in decline (Carroll, 2008; Etzioni, 2006; Jennings, 2008; Miller, 2006; Posner, 2013; Schalk, 1997), others contend that it is hardly possible to advance such arguments, as it is practically impossible to provide quantitative evidence of such decline nor predict the end of the intellectual, specially amidst growing diversification of technology to reach the public (Carroll, 2008; Drezner, 2009; Etzioni, 2006). The situation of the east African intellectual is characterized by “a rise, and decline of African intellectuals” (Mazrui, 2005, p. 58) which is due to the local political contexts and global dynamics related to the end of the Cold War era.

The ideas of public intellectualism and academic freedom seem to be conceptually related and overlapping. By virtue of being an academic, the intellectual is in a privileged position to address a particular public using academic freedom and one’s location in the university as an “intellectual institution” (Beteille, 1980) and a “safe space” (Preez, 2012, p. 59). Because of certain entitlements that come with tenure (Chemerinsky, 1998), an academic public intellectual is in a
privileged location not only to address the public within the university and specific disciplinary community but also to speak to the lay people and challenge a status quo.
Chapter 3: The Political Economy of Higher Education in Ethiopia

Discussions pertinent to the life of the mind and related intellectual activities without any considerations of their location would rarely provide a succinct representation and a clear idea of their development and evolution. It would result in a blurred account of the roles of these intellectuals in their society. It is iterated in the previous chapter that intellectual activities could hardly exist separate from the contexts in which they take place (Beteille, 1980). Similarly, Wisselgren (2009) touches upon the notion of the (public) intellectual as characterized by “contextual dependencies on national and cultural traditions” and “historical situatedness and gendered bias” (pp. 225-226). I thus, remain of the opinion that to discuss the lives and experiences of Ethiopian intellectuals, it is essential to understand the political economy of higher education in Ethiopia, specifically the trends and trajectories in knowledge production and how these interrelate and interact with the larger sociopolitical context and historical developments of the higher education sector itself (Asgedom, 2017; Molla, 2018).

In this chapter, I therefore review the contemporary political economy of knowledge production in Ethiopian higher education. The chapter will engage in an historical analysis of the developments in Ethiopian higher education since the 1950s to provide readers with a general picture of the contemporary trends in the sector, and the existing dynamics of knowledge production, using a political economy approach to offer a context for the story. This section also provides multiplicity of perspectives and complexities in the country’s higher education sector in general. The chapter makes frequent reference to Ethiopia’s contemporary history and Ethiopian higher education as a way to allude to the general conception of higher education and its nexus with political ideologies that either undermine or reinforce knowledge production.
3.1 Conceptualizing Knowledge Production

Discussions about the political economy of knowledge production relate to the often contested, conceptually vague and wider terrains of knowledge, knowledge production, and higher education and their nexus with global and local actors who have vested interests in the higher education sector. Whereas, some writers treat the terms “knowledge production” and “research” as synonymous (Collins, 2013; Hanafi & Arvantis, 2015), Kyvak (2000) distinguishes between teaching, enlightenment of the public and knowledge production. In this understanding, knowledge production consists of “basic research, applied research, development work, publishing, networking” and enlightenment of the public consists of “dissemination of research, public discourse” (Kyvak, 2000, as cited in Smeby, 2003, p. 131). Machlup (2014), meanwhile, proposes six categories of knowledge production, which include “education, research and development, artistic creation and communication, media of communication, information services, and information machines” (pp. 232-34).

It is not uncommon to find studies that apply the term research and knowledge production interchangeably with the tendency of implying their synonymous status. However, it is possible to advance an argument that knowledge production also includes education and training in addition to the primary preoccupation with research as its core element. Academics train students to do what faculty members do, to engage in societal problem solving, and “at best to transfer problem solving skills” to societies that create the universities (Verharen, 2012, p. 11). In the light of the above, this chapter therefore treats education and research as a part and parcel of knowledge production.
3.2 ‘Glonacal’ Patterns of Knowledge Production

The idea of knowledge production relates to that of the university because “the task of knowledge production and dissemination is primarily the responsibility of universities” (Molla, 2014, p. 237). In Africa, universities, which have some of the continent’s most highly skilled individuals and intellectuals, are the major centers of knowledge production, especially given the underdevelopment and small number of research centers beyond university campuses (Collins, 2013; Teferra, 2007). These universities and other centers of higher education learning, although they are contested terrains, are one of the few “knowledge industries” which are directly involved in the production of knowledge as their commodity (Gibbons et al, 2010, p. 85).

Knowledge production in Africa is influenced by global trends and local expectations. It is under direct and frequent pressures to respond to various stakeholders. It is challenged with accommodating global imperatives from highly influential “stakeholders” such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Robertson, 2009; Teferra, 2004; Teferra, 2009), dealing with unfavorable state intervention (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2015; Moja, 2004), and embracing tensions from the market as well as from within itself (Moja, 2004; Teferra, 2004; Teferra, 2009). A recommendation by the World Bank, which seems out of touch with the realities on the ground, required African countries to cut funding to higher education (Teferra, 2009). The implementation of this recommendation impacted progress in the sector significantly and slowed the development of the sector leading to its "historic collapse” (Robertson, 2009, p. 114).

In a stark contrast to the trends discussed earlier, recently emerging global trends brought a state of dynamism in the political economy of knowledge production. For instance, demo-
graphic change – namely, a growth in the number of young people – has led to the massification of higher education institutions in many regions in the world including the Sub Saharan Africa (Gibbons et al, 2010; Uvalic-Trumbic, 2009; Wohluter & Wiseman, 2013). This has been coupled with a shift in the policy orientation of the World Bank which is one of the prime financiers of the higher education sector (Teferra, 2009). There has been a global explosion of student enrolment in higher education institutions everywhere, particularly among women. African higher education shows a similar trend of significant rise in enrolment. The continent experienced increase in enrolment from 100,000 students to 1.5 million in the two decades between 1970 to 1990, respectively (López Segrera, 2010). Similarly, the dramatic rise in enrolment continued to increase from 6.0 million to 9.3 million between 2000 and 2006 which is projected to increase even further to reach approximately 20 million students in 2015 across the continent (World Bank, 2010).

Other characteristics of the political economy of knowledge production include the “massification of research” (Gibbons et al, 2010, p. 83), global student mobility, the marketization and commodification of knowledge, and brain-drain (Collins, 2013). Amidst these waves of constant change, higher education institutions face challenges in their decision making and are impelled to consider their roles and future directions. Similar to the trends in other parts of the world, Ethiopian higher education has undergone dramatic expansion in enrolment (Akalu, 2014; Reisberg & Rumbley, 2010; Saint, 2004; Tessema, 2009; Van Deuren, Kahsu, Mohammed, & Woldie, 2016). In addition to the influences that result from neoliberal ideology, the political economy of higher education and its role as a site of knowledge production is also significantly influenced by its relationship with different political and economic actors, such as the state, global and local
funding organizations, and the ideological orientations and sense of academic freedom of the intellectuals and higher education institutions themselves (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016).

Within the global context, Africa has “the most marginalized and the least competitive higher education system internationally” (Teferra, 2009, p. 156), and thus its contribution to global knowledge production is insignificant (Gilliard, Hassan & Waas, 2005 as cited in Nyanchoga, 2014). Zegeye and Vambe (2006) argue that “the underdevelopment of African knowledge production and publishing has a historical explanation” (p. 344), a claim which may imply the influences from colonization of the continent, among others. Current knowledge production from the higher education sector of the continent is dependent on funding from the Global North (Nyanchoga, 2014; Robertson, 2009). As a challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa, Teferra (2014) mentions “a lack of national policy on or political commitment to research and inadequate capacity to cope with the rising demand” (p. 18). Similarly, Musiige and Maassen (2015) concur with this view, noting that “academic research intensity and productivity in sub-Saharan African universities lags considerably behind university academic research output in the rest of the world” (p. 63), due to lack of sustainable budget allocation for research.

Other researchers have identified additional factors impacting the state of knowledge production in Africa. For instance, Harle (2010) argues that eroded culture of research, less emphasis given to the postgraduate research and education as well as “needs of researchers in the immediate post-Ph.D. years” greatly impact knowledge production on the continent (p. 88). Still other scholars have pointed to the issue of ethical conduct in research as influencing knowledge production in Africa, a region where research ethics “has received only patchy attention,” much like in many other “‘developing’ countries” (Benatar, 2002, p. 1138).
Not all of Africa’s deficiencies in knowledge production, however, can be attributed to African researchers themselves. For example, much of the research that is conducted in developing countries is done through the North-South collaboration, and yet the funding process often does not include African researchers in the “priority setting” phase (Edejer, 1999, p. 23). Such research funding generally comes “with thick strings attached,” a condition that automatically calls into question the probity of the African researchers (Zeleza, 2006, p. 92). This has a clear connection to the idea of knowledge and what counts as knowledge in the political economy of knowledge production in Africa.

A separate issue is the growing concern with how to balance the “preservation of local knowledge systems” with the need to focus on “the adoption of global knowledge systems, knowledge production and knowledge dissemination” (Zeleza, 2006). Since the establishment of the continent’s higher education system, “African universities [have been] consumers of knowledge produced in developed countries” (Taylor, 2012, p. 91), rather than its producers. Moreover, because these universities operate in European languages, they “tend to be cut off from indigenous African society and communities” (Wolhuter & Wiseman, 2013, p. 12). As a result, academics in Africa have to face the challenges and dilemmas of engaging in the pursuit of knowledge through western epistemology and methodology while simultaneously embracing indigenous knowledge and culture (Poloma & Szelényi, 2018). In line with this, Zegeye and Vambe (2006) also argue that African intellectuals are discouraged to use knowledge produced by African intellectuals. As a result, it is important to note that some African intellectuals themselves are also accountable for discouraging or dismissing African indigenous epistemologies (Ayittey, 2006; Poloma & Szelényi, 2018).
Academics in Africa must operate and succeed in academic contexts which unfairly neglect indigenous ways of knowing, and promote the de-Africanization of education and culture (Ferede, & Haile, 2015; Semela, 2014). This is a difficult, and sometimes unattainable, choice for African researchers to make. It is therefore inevitable that many African intellectuals experience de-culturalization, a state of being forced to leave one’s native culture (Nyanchoga, 2014). In line with this, it is also essential to note that “European scholars do not feel compelled to use sources of African knowledge when they write about Africa” (Zegeye & Vambe, 2006, p. 343). In fact, higher education in Africa itself is a legacy of colonization (Ferede & Haile, 2015), both instilled and “stifled by nationalism” (Mamdani, 2008, p. 6). For example, participating in it demands that one leaves one’s identity, language and cultural heritage aside (Nyanchoga, 2014). Moreover, it is characterized by a poor rate of employment, brain drain (Wolhuter & Wiseman, 2013; Zeleza, 2006), and a lack of academic freedom, all of which are hindrances to knowledge production on the continent. The situation in Ethiopian higher education system is no different from what is mentioned above.

3.2.1 The Political Economy of Knowledge Production in Ethiopia

The context of knowledge production in Ethiopian higher education institutions is not an exception to the aforementioned continental trends, despite its unique and specific historical realities and cultural contexts and dynamics. Nonetheless, the complexities of the issue and the significance of the subject requires the use of a clearly defined terminology and lexicon, which is by itself problematic. Thus, discussing the political economy of knowledge production requires us to define, at least in operational terms, what the term higher education embraces. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO), higher edu-
cation refers to “programs of study, training or training for research at the post-secondary level provided by universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent state authorities, and/or through recognized accreditation systems” (UNESCO, 1997). This definition not only mentions the role of higher education institutions in study and research, but also recognizes the role of the state in the establishment and approval of higher education institutions.

The Ethiopian Higher Education Proclamation defines “higher education” as meaning “education in the arts and sciences offered to undergraduates and graduate students who attend degree programs” (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2009). In this sense, higher education embraces only universities and colleges that award bachelor’s degrees and above, and that are mandated to engage in education, training, service and inquiry. The current study also refers to such institutions as higher education institutions (HEIs).

The history of higher education in Ethiopia dates back to the sixth century, a period of highly organized religious education by the Orthodox Church (Wagaw, 1979, as cited in Telila, 2010, p. 56). Also, unlike other sub-Saharan nations, Ethiopia was not colonized even though Italy invaded and partially occupied the country’s Northern region during the “scramble for Africa,” the roughly three decades from the 1880s to the start of the first world war (WWI), when European powers raced to claim parts of the continent for themselves. Despite having largely been spared this European imposition, modern higher education in Ethiopia is clearly modeled after the Western university model.

The following section reviews the political economy of knowledge production in Ethiopia in three regimes: the Monarchical regime (1930-1974), the Socialist regime (1974-1991), and
the current revolutionary ‘democratic’ regime (1991 to present), all of which are part of Ethiopia’s contemporary history. Researchers who studied the various issues related to the development of higher education in Ethiopia applied historical analysis and classification of various trends parallel with political change and development in the country (Asgedom, 2007; Assefa, 2008; Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2015; Semela, 2014).

The periodization I use in this chapter is not different. However, I opt for this approach based on my understanding that all the three regimes developed their own educational policies which are removed and replaced by different policies in the subsequent regimes. Moreover, due to significant differences in terms of ideological orientations of the political elites as well as global actors such as changes from the end of colonialism to socialism, and the emergence of America as a super power at the end of the Cold War era, it seems more appropriate to approach such periodization in order to understand the higher education dynamics.

3.2.1.1 The monarchical regime (1930-1974)

Modern higher education started in Ethiopia in 1950 during the regime of Emperor Haile Selassie. Before this time, only a small number of elites were sent to Europe and North America for higher education. The education that was available within Ethiopia was focused on the primary- and secondary-school levels (Asgedom, 2007). On March, 20, 1950, the Emperor decreed the establishment of Trinity College, which later changed its name to the University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA). This college began operating with just 30 students, seven faculty members and two administrators (Burke, 1960, as cited in Asgedom, 2007, p. 102). At this time, the emperor appointed Canadian Jesuit Dr. Lucien Matte as the founding president of the university college.
Because, as noted above, Ethiopia is the only country that was not colonized by Europeans (Altbach, 2007; Asgedom, 2007), the University College of Addis Ababa is a unique case of African higher education in that it began to operate in a liberated, uncolonized geography, despite the inevitable influences from “the educational philosophy and practices of its predominantly French Canadian Jesuit staff” (Abebe, 1991, as cited in Asgedom, 2007, p. 103). Unlike the other colonized African nations, Ethiopia’s higher education system was not launched as “a foreign implant imposed by colonial interests” (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016, p. 7).

A. Physical expansion

The University College of Addis Ababa was the first higher learning centre in the country and it expanded and diversified its disciplines in the following years. It also established other colleges in remote areas of the country which started functioning as satellite campuses. The College of Engineering in Addis Ababa was started in 1952, followed by the Institute of Building Technology. The later was established after two years by an agreement between the Ethiopian Government and the Swedish Government. The Haromaya College of Agriculture was founded in the same year as the College of Engineering through a joint arrangement between the Imperial Ethiopia and the United States. Similarly, a Public Health College was established in 1954 at Gondar, the historic city of the country, in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

These historical trends show the involvement of foreign governments and international organizations in launching the modern higher education system in the country (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016). Moreover, they strengthen the notion that the country endeavors to achieve develop-
opment “by emulation” (Clapham, 2006, p. 149). Ethiopia attempts to develop by imitating other developed countries, an effort which always ends up unsuccessfully. The notion of imitating development trajectories of other nations also signals the marginalization of indigenous ways of knowing in the higher education of the country (Semela, 2014).

B. Enrolment of students

The University College of Addis Ababa started operation in 1950 with 30 students. By 1960 the number of students reached 426, 45 of whom were women. Fifty (50) of the 426 students came from 14 foreign countries including Tanganyika, Kenya, Greece, India, United Kingdom, United States, and Yugoslavia. At about the same time, there were about 600 fee paying evening students who received no living allowance (Bantley, 1950, as cited in Asgedom, 2007). The university college used to cover the costs of all international students who were enrolled at this time, as Ethiopia was prosperous. Enrolment of international students was not conceived in the current sense of market-led internationalization and student mobility. In fact, the small number of local students might have also been another reason to financially support international students as there is no financial pressure in running the university in the first few years of launching.

C. University governance, academic freedom, and knowledge production

The governance of the University College of Addis Ababa included the Emperor as a Chancellor and appointed members of the university board who were also government officials and ministers including Minister of Defense, and Minister of Justice. In contrast to the University College of Addis Ababa, the other colleges and institutes were governed by respective ministries
which means Colleges of Health Sciences were supposed to be led by Ministry of Health, and the College of Agriculture was supposed to be led by Ministry of Agriculture, and the like (Asgedom, 2007). As such, higher education of the period was characterized by external governance (Austin & Jones, 2016) and steering and state control (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016).

Despite the political structure of the board during the Emperor’s time, the university college faculty and students enjoyed relative degree of academic freedom and institutional autonomy which significantly contributed to knowledge production (Asgedom, 2007; Yimam, 2008). The university college was characterized by multifarious student voices and student organizations and engagement in different societies such as “the Ethnological Society, the Debating Society, the Poetry (writers) Club, the Drama Society, the Glee Club, the Society of Artists, the Photography Club, the Radio Club” (UCAA, 1962, as cited in Asgedom, 2007, p. 104). These societies have publications of their own and engagement in the societies is considered not as extracurricular but as co-curricular activities (Asgedom, 2007).

It could be argued that students of this time were acting as public intellectuals speaking “for the people”. They engaged in awareness-raising of the society against economic marginalization and the extreme gaps in living standards between the feudal lords and the masses. They demanded equality of nations and nationalities and the right of the farmers to land, hence their movement was named after the famous slogan “Land to the tiller!” Reflecting on his visit of the university in 1973, the famous public intellectual Ali Mazrui states that the students had “profound and understandable dissatisfaction with the Ethiopian imperial system as they knew it” (Mazrui, 1978, p. 262). They were also influential as well as threats to the imperial govern-
ment due to their voices and connections with diaspora Ethiopians. According to Asgedom (2007), student publications greatly influenced public opinion during this time. These influences finally aggravated the grievance of the people, which was joined by the military to lead to de-throning of the king. Although there were some limitations on academic freedom, the existing literature shows hardly any severe measures taken against intellectuals to the extent of being existential threat to them.

Unlike the 1950s and 1960s, substantial attacks on the intellectuals of the country was also inflicted from the Italian invaders. In a lecture at the Library of Congress’ African and Middle Eastern division, Dr. Aklilu Habte discusses that Italians interrupted the development of education during their five years of occupation of the country (Library of Congress, 2010). He also describes the then massacre perpetuated against the intellectuals of the country saying, “the Italians decimated, handpicked, and killed the few educated Ethiopians [that] had been trained before the war”. This had decelerated knowledge production. It also slowed down the modernization of the country (Library of Congress, 2010).

The state of knowledge production of academic intellectuals in Haile Selassie’s regime was in a better condition compared to the subsequent regime. At that time, Imperial Ethiopia was “a unitary state” and the political situation of the day encouraged knowledge disseminations that favored respect of the King, Christian religious tradition, and unity of the country (Asgedom, 2007; Yimam, 2008). Publication of academics in this period was relatively greater than that of the later socialist Derg era in numbers. Asgedom (2007) argues that 62 articles were published during the imperial regime compared to only six articles during the Derg period (1978-1989).
In an interview on Sheger FM radio, Professor Mesfin mentions the appearance of the Emperor to Teferi Mekonen School to listen to grievances of students—a remarkable contrast to experiences of present day students who witness random killings and disappearances in many of the university premises across the country (Birru, 2014). Yimam (2008) also offers a historical account of academic freedom which implies the tolerance of the Imperial regime in its openness to criticism as well as in creating conducive academic environment which was capable of challenging political institutions, as well as social and cultural practices.

It is, however, essential to note that Haile Selassie’s regime was not a bed of roses for academics engaged in knowledge production. Gemeda (2008) argues “issues surrounding the freedom to conduct research, [to] openly criticize institutional practices, and [to] publish didn’t surface” (p. 66). This is, according to Gemeda (2008), because of too much dependence on expatriate academics during the first few years of the introduction of higher education. In line with this, it is essential to note that although there was a dwindling pattern of publications by Ethiopian academics, original research from and about Ethiopia were sustainably produced and published by expatriate faculties both in the Imperial and the socialist regime.

The significant contributions of such scholars as Professor Richard Pankhurst and the late Professor Claude Sumner in the field of Social Sciences and the Humanities are worth noting. According to Bekele (2017), Professor Pankhurst committed all his academic life and career to Ethiopian studies with over 500 scholarly publications. Bekele (2017) states “Twenty five of them are books based on research” (p. 256). Similarly, Claude Sumner is noted for his significant contribution in the collection, documentation and analysis of Oromo proverbs, and his in-
roduction of classical Ethiopian philosophy to the English speaking world. Mennasemay (2012) argues “No other scholar has contributed so much to making Ethiopian philosophical thinking and wisdom known to the world” like Professor Claude Sumner (pp. 200-202). Such enormous and sustained engagement of expatriate academics in knowledge productions from and about Ethiopia might either be due to the fact that the political system of the nation hadn’t put as much pressure and control on the freedom of thought and self-expression of expatriate staffs as it does on native intellectuals. It might also be due to academic culture of knowledge production and experiences of the expatriate staff to commit themselves more than the native intellectuals’ practice.

External influences such as influences from religious institutions were not thoroughly discussed in the literature of knowledge production for this period. There were, however, unforeseen influences and contributions that shaped the academic and research culture at this time. The role of missionaries in the national integration project of the emperor which later led to the translation of the bible into Afan Oromo, and their policy of using local indigenous languages in schools and religious centers were worth mentioning (Wolyie Hussein 1, 2008; Smith, 2013). The use of some languages such as Afan Oromo were later restricted to only the oral form by imperial decree as it was considered threat to the imperial regime (Smith, 2013). Until the early 1970s it was prohibited to write, teach, and broadcast using Afan Oromo (Tegegne, 2016).

These restrictions and suppression of other national languages “became a primary source of resentment” for speakers of indigenous languages other than Amharic (Smith, 2013, p. 102). As a result, the attempt to bring vernacular languages and indigenous epistemologies to the uni-
versities didn’t succeed, and they were not made any part of university education. Significant knowledge production occurred in literature, history, and religious catechism of the Orthodox church. Most of these publications were in Amharic except for some religious scripts in Geez, a forerunner of Amharic and currently a ‘dead-language’ limited to the monasteries and cathedrals (Asgedom, 2007).

International organizations had a role in the political economy of knowledge production since the inception of higher education in Ethiopia. For instance, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) were financing agencies in the education sector in the country along with the American Peace Corps (Alemayyehw, 1969). These organizations influenced higher education in different ways from setting enrolment targets to deciding the content of curricula. In fact, more emphasis was given to primary and secondary enrolment in this period which is also reflected in the recommendations and rhetoric of UNESCO at this time. Negash (2006) also mentions World Bank and UNESCO as partners of the country influencing the education sector at this time.

To sum up, the imperial regime occupies significant historical landscape in the introduction and development of higher education in Ethiopia. It laid the foundation for contemporary knowledge production in the nation despite “minimal growth in higher education” (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016, p. 16).
The political economy of higher education and the related knowledge production took a totally different configuration upon the coming to power of the socialist regime in 1974 (Semela, 2014). First of all, the Addis Ababa University College students’ protest was one of the reasons for the dethroning of the king, a starter of the revolution with the optimism of a socially just society that would enjoy freedom, human rights, and empowerment. However, it left the university itself to be seen in hostile terms and distrustful eyes of political elites up until now. In addition to this, the change in curriculum, and the deteriorated state of academic freedom contributed to decreased involvement of intellectuals in knowledge production (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016; Girma, 2013; Kenaw, 2003). The literature on the then situation of the country is indicative of the fact that this time is probably the worst in terms of academic freedom and knowledge production. According to Girma (2013) the nation witnessed “the withering of intellectual life, an isolated educational system and a soaring brain drain.” (p. 84).

A. Physical expansion

The Ethiopian higher education sector didn’t enjoy noteworthy physical expansion during the socialist regime. It used to have “only two universities for much of the 20th century” (Reisberg & Rumbley, 2015, p. 23). Apart from the Haile Selassie I University College, the country upgraded “one of its public colleges to a university status- and it had maintained only two public universities and a small number of public colleges” in the subsequent years up until 2000 (Akalu, 2014, p. 401). But, some writers argue that Ethiopia had three universities for this period taking Asmara University, an institution founded in now seceded and independent Eritrea's capital city-
Asmara (Alemu, 2014). Moreover, there were no private higher education institutions for this period because of the Marxists-Leninist ideology the country subscribed to, prohibiting private ownership and accumulation of wealth (Akalu, 2014). Thus, the physical expansion of knowledge centres was stale for much of the period with its own implications to and far reaching consequences on enrolment, knowledge production and dissemination. This is also directly related to the poor economic performance of the country in this period, coupled with political instability and natural disaster.

Compared to the monarchical period which witnessed high gross domestic production (GDP) growth and per cent per capita, the economic performance of the military regime declined for the period 1974-91 (Geda & Berhanu, 1960). There were new schools and institutes such as the Institute of Language Studies, School of Information Studies for Africa, and School of Graduate Studies that were launched on the premises of Addis Ababa University (Gemeda, 2008, p. 69). In fact, the regime didn’t totally ignore the relevance of education. This can also be observed in the due emphasis given “to the provision of universal polytechnic education and to a curriculum that would enhance integration into the world of labor” (Negash, 1990 as cited in Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016, p. 7). This clearly shows, on the one hand, the shift in focus from a degree offering education to a system of acquiring technical and vocational skills and, on the other hand, to the economic and “discursive” influences (Molla, 2014) from other countries, especially from those in the Communist Bloc which espoused similar anti-capitalist ideologies.

B. Enrolment of students
For the years between 1970 to 1992, which almost approximately coincides with the socialist regime in Ethiopia, student enrolment increased from 7 million to 30 million in developing countries and from 28 million to 65 million across the world (UNESCO, as cited in Hoffman, 1996, p. 84). Ethiopian students’ enrolment increased from 6,474 in 1973-74 to 17,707 in 1989 (Wagaw, 1990 as cited in Gemeda, 2008). The data cited above shows threefold increase in about fifteen years which is an increase of approximately six thousand in about five years. Although this may be true, the above trend in Ethiopia might have been small or it may have stood in a stark contrast to the parallel rate of increase in other developing countries.

According to Asgedom (2007), enrolment of students had “drastically gone down by nearly 50 percent as a result of dropout, killing, imprisonment and joining the freedom fighters” (p. 159), an argument which may have considered possible projections of the expected enrolment scenario amidst war and political instability. In addition to this, the higher education system of the country was also threatened from intense brain drain and return of expatriate staffs back to their home country due to insecure working atmosphere (Gemeda, 2008). This all had a bearing on the knowledge production and the status of higher education in the country.

C. University governance, academic freedom, and knowledge production

Epistemic governance is an essential aspect of knowledge production in universities. It is “the legislative authority vested in management organs of the university to make decisions about fundamental policies and practices” (Ogachi, 2011, p. 36). Governance of higher education institutions during the socialist regime was characterized by intense external control by the state and university administrators. Academic leaders were appointed based on political loyalty rather than
merit (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016; Gemeda, 2008). Moreover, the professoriate were marginalized from participation in decision-making processes. Some of the moves by the regime were too immobilizing as they involved “security surveillance, repression of dissent, mandated courses on Marxism” in addition to prohibition of academic appointment and promotion (Saint, 2004, p. 84). As a result, the regime created the conditions for “the de-professionalizing of teaching” (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016, p. 11).

Gemeda (2008) states that two models of the university are generally visible across countries: the university in Western industrialized countries which is characterized by institutional autonomy and prevailing market principles and the Soviet Model of robust involvement of political powers in decision making, student allocation, and staff censorship. Ethiopian higher education in this period was thus modeled after the later which had clearly negatively influenced knowledge production (Asgedom, 2007; Gemeda, 2008; Semela, 2014).

The Soviet model which was based upon the “philosophy of dialectical materialism…was characterized by censorship, embracing atheism” (Asgedom, 2007, p. 154). A rather challenging step that hampered the intellectual climate prevailed as soon as a new proclamation 109/69 of 1977 was declared which “brought all the institutions of higher education under central control of a government branch, accountable to the Council of Ministers” (Asgedom, 2007, p. 151). In addition to organizational structural change, the proclamation required academics to conduct their duties in accordance with the principle of “scientific socialism” (Asgedom, 2007, p. 151). Following this, academics were required to design courses that espoused Marxist-Leninist ideology and to publicize the ideologies of the regime. As a result, universities had to work deceptive-
ly by changing the course titles so as to reflect loyalty to the Marxist ideology while leaving the content untouched and being accommodative of diverse views and philosophies (Kenaw, 2003).

All these indicate that the regime was coercive in its approach and treatment of academia and higher education in general (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016; Semela, 2014). This influenced the relevance and scope of knowledge produced during the regime. Asgedom (2007) substantiates this claim by noting the drop in the number of articles contributed to the Ethiopian Journal of Education from over 60 in the monarchical regime to less than ten in the socialist regime. The decline in knowledge production in the Derg regime is attributed not only to the censorship and pressures from Marxist-Leninist ideology but also to the hostile and threatening political atmosphere which included the mass killing of the youth and the educated class (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016; Kissi, 2006; Semela, 2014).

The ‘Politicide’ of the educated class and the intellectuals can be explained as a reaction to the intellectuals’ protest against the regime and its policies of land ownership. Many lives were lost as a result of the “mass extermination of the educated” (Semela, 2014, p. 125). Part of the hostility resulted from intellectuals themselves turning against each other because of lack of agreement and inability to solve differences through discussion. Kissi (2006) argues: “Their killers were possibly their own colleagues with whom they had disagreed on aspects of Marxist ideology” (p. 243).

The deteriorating status of academic freedom, ‘politicide' of the educated class, extreme control and dictatorship, along with the decline in the economic performance of the country, resulted in a record high brain drain (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016; Kissi, 2006; Library of Con-
gress, 2010; Semela, 2014). According to Getahun (2006), visible differences can be seen in the patterns of brain drain between the imperial and socialist regimes. During the imperial regime, with a total number of 1046 students in the USA, Ethiopia stood the third in Africa for sending students abroad with only three non-returnees being reported for the period between 1970 to 1974. After the Red Terror during the 1977-78, however, the country suffered a mass exodus of intellectuals to the United States (Getahun, 2006, pp. 170-172).

The unfavorable political atmosphere significantly influenced knowledge production. It also perpetuated other factors that had long term negative impacts on knowledge production such as the brain drain and the declining educational quality. The survival of the knowledge producers themselves was at stake.

In 1991, the Derg Regime collapsed. Guerrilla fighters won the war due to the global shift in power, specifically the emergence of the West as dominant powers, and the fall of the Soviet empire. Without the military and financial support it used to enjoy from the Eastern Block, and global financial crises which hit Sub-Saharan Africa catalyzed the end of the regime, the Derg could not survive. The political economy of knowledge production appeared to emerge in a different track along with a new political ideology and statehood that appears to grapple with the “Glonacal” pressures and challenges in the new context.

3.2.1.3 The Revolutionary-Democratic Regime (1991 to present)

The Revolutionary-Democratic regime emerged following the collapse of the Socialist regime, the Derg. The Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front, the party ruling the country since the downfall of the Derg, is a coalition of four major parties which claim a wider
peasant base to lead the country. As can be seen in the forthcoming discussion, global political ideologies and economic orientations directly influenced the ideology of the regime which has in turn influenced the political economy of knowledge production in the country. Major trends in the higher education sector of this period are dramatic expansion of higher education both in terms of enrolment and physical infrastructure, repression of academic freedom, state interference in the governance of higher education, and brain drain, with visible influences from global actors, among others.

A. Physical expansion

The higher education system had only two universities during the socialist regime which also served the country for about a decade after the fall of that regime. However, dramatic expansion of the higher education sector is witnessed since 2003 (Akalu, 2014; Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016; World Bank, 2003). Up to 2003, which can be considered as the first phase of higher education expansion in this regime, most of the colleges and teacher training institutes were upgraded to university level. New universities were opened in the following phase of expansion in the subsequent years (World Bank, 2003). It is also essential to note that there were about 37 private higher education institutions up to 2003 (World Bank, 2003) which later grew to 60 (Reisberg & Rumbley, 2015) and now reached 98 (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016). However, only one of these institutions is being approved and recognized by the Ministry of Education as a university. The following figure summarizes the general trend in the expansion of state-owned higher education institutions.
As can be seen in the figure above, the number of universities remain the same for much of the period until the turn of the millennium, slightly increases to six in 2003 and shows a sharp increase in the past decade. There are plans to further build 11 higher learning centres making the total number of higher education institutions to rise up to 44 (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016).

It is clear that the dramatic expansion in the higher education sector has its own bearings on knowledge production. First, the physical expansion was not accompanied by the development of human power needed to run these institutions. Having highly skilled faculties is always the problem. The regime had to recruit Nigerian academics (Jaide, 2006), followed by an influx of Indian academics (Thubauville, 2014). Some academics from Canada and the U.S. also volunteered although not in a constant and sustained manner. North American volunteer academics are not however engaged directly in teaching and research. Most of them serve as trainers and consul-
tants to the Ministry of Education and in some cases as heads of particular units such as Quality Assurance and Enhancement or English Language Improvement Centres in different universities.

The newly established colleges and most of the departments therein are staffed with recent graduates who had neither the qualifications nor experience necessary to equip them with teaching in graduate programs or engaging in research. Studies also show that the expansion of higher education institutions adversely affects the working conditions of academics in some of the institutions in the country (Alemu, 2008). Academics are obliged to work under deteriorating working conditions which are characterized by absence of basic facilities, office spaces, access to educational inputs and funds for research and professional development.

Despite minimum requirements set to serve as a benchmark for the establishment of new higher education institutions, some of the new institutions were launched “without necessarily fulfilling the requirements” set by the Ministry of Education itself (Areaya, 2010, p. 99). This may substantiate Akalu’s (2014) description of the current expansion as “ideologically driven” (pp. 394-395), which describes the deliberate move of the regime to expand the sector and claim the result as one of the major successes of the regime in almost every political campaign and in its planned, deliberate, and sustained public relations activities. The dramatic physical expansion of higher education institutions is also accompanied by geometric rise in enrollment of students as can be seen in the forthcoming paragraphs.

It is obvious that the national interest of a nation determines its policies and the models it follows in its higher education and other public sectors. Due to the interaction of national interests and international influences, Ethiopia had adopted and/or imitated particular university mod-
els at different times. As discussed in section 3.2.1.2 of this chapter, the socialist regime imitated the Soviet model of the university. In contrast to this, the current federal democratic regime advocates the “instrumental development” model of the university which regards the university as “a producer of appropriately skilled professionals and applied knowledge” (Maassen & Cloete, 2009, p. 13). In line with this, the country has currently adopted 70/30 enrolment model which requires universities to admit 70 per cent of their newly joining students in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines and the remaining 30 per cent in the fields of Social Science and the Humanities (Teshome, 2007, as cited in Rainer & Ashcroft, 2011).

B. Enrolment of students

The enrolment of students illustrates the dramatic expansion of Ethiopian higher education. Studies show that higher education enrolment in the country is expanding at the rate of geometric progression of student numbers in the current regime. The number of students who were enrolled in the then Addis Ababa University College, the only higher learning institution in Ethiopia six decades ago, were only 30 (Asgedom, 2007). This number has now risen to a sum total of half a million across all the institutions in the country (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016).

As can be seen in the figure below, the number of students studying in higher education exploded at the turn of the millennium. The total number of students rose up to 147,954 in 2002, almost twice the number in 1992, and increased to a total number of 180, 286 in 2006 (World Bank, 2010, p. 32). The figure also shows that the number of students over the next decade shot up dramatically reaching a total of 600,000 in 2012 (Ayalew, as cited in Teferra, 2014).
Higher education institutions all over the country enrolled a total of 788,033 students in undergraduate programs both in Government and Non-Government institutions in 2016/17 which shows the continuing growth in enrolment (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 135). Out of these, female students comprise 281,429 (35.7%) (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 135). Enrolment of female students is slightly improved compared to 18 per cent of 58,025 total higher education enrolment in 2006/2007 (Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 11). Due to neoliberal ideological positioning and global trends in higher education, the country also encouraged privatization of higher education which has contributed to the dramatic increase in enrolment of students. Twenty-one per cent of the higher education enrolment is covered by 37 private higher education institutions (World Bank, 2003, p. 7). In general, improved equity in enrolment is observed gender wise with...
increased enrolment of girls both in private and public institutions. Even though this is attributed to the affirmative action by the government, the issue of gender equity requires more effort due to increased attrition rate of female students joining universities (Teferra & Altbach, 2004).

The trend saw significant changes in this pattern which coincides with the change in the regime in the country, accompanied by the population expulsion in the country and changes in the global trend of higher education. It is rather challenging to identify a single significant variable to which to attribute the current dramatic rise in enrolment. It might be conceptualized as an outcome of both “an important policy objective” and an “ideologically driven” decision by the political elites of the vanguard party (Akalu, 2014, p. 398).

In the same line of thought, Akalu (2014) also argues: “Official discursive practices in Ethiopia also relate higher education expansion to economic growth, poverty reduction and production of high-level workforce” (pp. 401-402). Increased external aid might have also contributed to the unrestricted growth in student enrolment as well as physical expansion of the institutions in the country. For instance, Ethiopia is one of the only four African countries that received significant amount of external aid (US$11.3 million) in 2001-2006 (World Bank, 2010, p. 96).

Expansion of Ethiopian higher education in the current regime is described and viewed by scholars in the field of higher education in many ways which mostly sound unfavorable. For example, it is described as “ambitious” (Saint, 2004, p. 109), “intoxicating” (Reisberg & Rumbley, 2010, p. 23), “aggressive” (Akalu, 2014, pp. 394-395), and politically “ideologically driven” (Akalu, 2014, p. 411). The rapid rise in enrolment figures in the country may conjure the
image of over-peopled universities and crowded classrooms across the institutions in the country. The figures in the literature may also resonate with untenable enrolment. However, enrolment cannot be a problem in a citrus paribus assumption. For example, four percent of African young adults are enrolled in higher education compared to the six per cent enrolment for all the developing countries, and 60 per cent enrolment for industrialized countries which clearly shows that any country in Africa has way more to go in terms of enrolment (Bollag, 2004). However, the impact of enrolment on the knowledge production of academics is indisputable.

The universities in such contexts tend to leverage their existing resources, including their teaching personnel, to meet the demands of the growing influx of students. They force academics to work in institutional atmospheres that are short of basic facilities (Alemu, 2008) and require academics to be “devoted to the task of teaching and administrative duties” (Tessema, 2009, p. 32). Tessema (2009) also argues that such “massive” universities expose educators to “de-professionalisation, “peripheralization”, and “silencing”, among others. Teferra (2007) advances a similar compelling argument which states: “As enrolments escalated, teaching loads have increased significantly, consequently chipping away the requisite time and commitment available for research” (p. 562).

C. University governance, academic freedom, and knowledge production

University governance and academic freedom are very much interrelated entities. Their (con)vergence on multifarious university affairs greatly impacts knowledge production. Austin and Jones (2016) conceive governance as “relational context between governments and universities” (p.13). Operating in the context of “ideologically driven” expansion (Akalu, 2014, p. 411),
the relation of universities and the government in recent Ethiopia is neither free nor frictionless for academics to inculcate talent and produce knowledges that inform and influence the nation. Higher education is “too much politicized” (Library of Congress, 2010).

The federal government is the major source of funding for the universities in Ethiopia. It has a “dominant role” (Gebremeskel & Feleke, 2016, p. 13) in financing higher education. In spite of this, higher education is grappling with inadequate budget to finance the various needs of a newly burgeoning higher education system (Reisberg & Rumbley, 2010, as cited in Akalu, 2014, p. 404). As a result of this, hardly any significant improvement is observed in the already dwindling research culture. To fill such gaps, the government “instituted ‘graduate tax’” (Bollag, 2004, p. 13) to be paid by students upon employment following the recommendations from the World Bank. Despite the revenue generated from graduate tax, lack of funding remains a major problem universities face to engage their academics in knowledge production in a sustainable manner. Academics are neither able to access reputable journals nor participate in international conferences (Alemu, 2014). As a result, they are hardly able to professionally develop themselves and engage in knowledge production on equal standing with professionals in other corners of the world. These situations appears to be in line with the situation of other universities in the continent (Teferra & Altbach, 2004).

Some academics engage in collaborative research with academics in the Global North. However, such engagements are influenced by two major factors. First of all, the idea comes from those who solicit funding for the research and clearly it is the researchers from the Global North who bring substantial funds to particular research. In most cases, African researchers in
such contexts have no say in “priority setting” (Edejer, 1999, p. 438) as to what ought to be researched. This leaves research partnerships skewed, perpetuating hierarchical epistemic privilege of the North. Secondly, even such engagements in research are not available to all intellectuals in the country. It usually depends on the particular discipline; in most cases global partnerships in research are most common in medical and health sciences with significant financing by pharmaceutical and health companies from the Global North.

The early 1990s was a period of transition following the downfall of the socialist regime. The country had to start from scratch in every organizational aspect including financing, staffing, organizing of major institutions including the universities. The very limited financial resources were accompanied by significant brain drain and declining knowledge production. The brain drain appears to emerge in three patterns. Some academics quit jobs for better salary and incentives in the private sector, and some were unable to resist the allure from high pay in non-governmental organizations. Still others left for economically better-off African countries. For instance, a number of experienced faculties from Addis Ababa University are employed in the University of Botswana (Teferra & Altbach, 2004). Highly talented intellectuals who would have significantly contributed to the knowledge production in the country also left Ethiopia for U.S.A and Europe. “Today there are more Ethiopian professionals, including MDs, working in the United States than in Ethiopia” (Getahun, 2006, p. 257).

Despite the massive influx of students in all the university in the country, individual universities are not empowered to set their own admission requirements. According to Areaya (2010), “It is the Federal Ministry of Education that recruits and determines the number of regu-
lar students to be admitted” (p. 103). Research by Gebremeskel and Feleke (2016) also strengthens this idea and indicates that the government uses top-down approach and institutional self-governance is simply unthinkable.

No institution is entitled to elect its presidents. Moreover, all academic leadership posts above deanship are approved by the respective board members who are known for political affiliation. Moreover, the historic experience of the student movement in the imperial regime, which had fueled a nation-wide protest leading to the dethroning of the king in 1974, is still in the active memory of the current political leaders who were also students in those days. That memory by itself might have contributed towards suspicion of intellectuals and the universities. Thus the possibility of academic epistemic governance that encourage free inquiry and knowledge production is unlikely. Such a relationship filled with suspicion might incite the need to interrogate the status of academic freedom and its contribution to knowledge production.

Ethiopia has a negative score card for academic freedom, freedom of thought and freedom of expression in any context. Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch, 2015a, 2015b, 2008), Scholars at Risk (2018), and Amnesty International (2018) reports are all full of accounts of violations of basic rights by the state (Akker, 2002). The discomfort and suspicious attitudes of politicians have contributed to the declining status of academic freedom in the country. Intellectuals who speak their mind, who publish scientific findings on issues that matter to the themselves or the society, and those who communicate their findings and recommendations to their target publics are exposed to imminent risk from the state. For instance, Professor Berhanu Nega and Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam were imprisoned after addressing students about academic
freedom. They were arrested despite the fact that “they spoke in the same way that any academic would have done about the importance of freedom of expression and the pursuit of knowledge” (Akker, 2002, p. 45).

In 1993, forty-two professors were dismissed from Addis Ababa University, an institution considered the flagship university of the country, for the purported claim that they used the institution as a breeding ground for their own political ideologies (Yimam, 2008, p. 53). The Ethiopian Teachers’ Association was closed and Dr. Taye Woldesemayat, who was a well known critic of the government and the leader of the association, was jailed for alleged conspiracy against the government (Milkias, 2006). Recently, Zone Nine Bloggers, six young writers and three journalists, were jailed for blogging “on events of interest for young Ethiopians” (Human Rights Watch, 2015b). Most of the time, journalists, academics and bloggers who stand at the polar end of the current ideology are often charged with the new “Anti-Terrorism Law” which is the legacy of the country’s partnership with and the political muscle of the West flexed on poor nations. This shows that freedom of thought and freedom of expression, the pre-conditions for knowledge production, are at stake. Academics find themselves unable to freely engage in knowledge production without risking incarceration or worse.

Students often stage protests which are followed by military and police officers’ use of excessive force. For instance, Addis Ababa University students’ protest against Eritrean referendum in 1993 (Yimam, 2008) resulted in security forces firing live ammunition which took the lives of many students. Similarly, students’ protest on issues of ethnic dignity and religious affairs in 2007 (Yimam, 2008) were all accompanied by brutal repressions. The recent nationwide
Oromo students’ protest against political marginalization, dispossession from indigenous ancestral land, and debarment from enjoying language rights (Human Rights Watch, 2015a) were all accompanied by brutal repressions resulting in imprisonment, killing and violations of human rights of students, faculty members and other citizens of the country in general.

The threat to academic freedom doesn’t emanate solely from the relation of universities and the state. For instance, Ayalew (2011) provides a different perspective in her study of the peer review mechanisms at Addis Ababa University and argues that “peer review mechanisms in academic institutions constrain the production of knowledge and hence undermine academic freedom” (p. 91). It is hardly possible to sustain knowledge production and free inquiry in such a climate hostile to intellectuals and their critical inquiries.

3.3 Summary

This section examines the political economy of knowledge production and issues related to higher education as they relate to the often contested, conceptually vague and wider terrains of knowledge, knowledge production and higher education, and their relations to global and local actors who have vested interest in the higher education sector.

In an attempt to describe the contemporary political economy of knowledge production, this chapter highlights the major trends in higher education in Ethiopia by tracking the higher education dynamics along the lines of expansion, academic freedom, governance, and involvement of civil societies and international organizations. It traces the existing patterns and praxis in three regimes beginning from 1950 to the present, taking the role of the state, international and
local organizations and their relations with knowledge production into account. The role of language is also highlighted as a cross-cutting issue to provide readers with some idea of the current linguistic and epistemic landscapes and issues in the country.

The historical trends in the three regimes show that higher education is characterized by coercive isomorphism which is “external pressure, usually from governmental laws and regulations or other social groups, to conform and adapt” (Austin & Jones, 2016, p. 25). All the three regimes were high handed and academic freedom remained tenuous. The university in the Imperial regime was governed by the Emperor as a Chancellor and various ministers making the board. Relative academic freedom and academic autonomy of the early days of the university were later eroded, student publications became more critical of the monarchy, and leaders of the student protest were gunned down (Asgedom, 2007).

The socialist regime was also high-handed, imposing Marxist-Leninist ideology on academics to embrace like religion (Gemeda, 2008; Kenaw, 2003; Library of Congress, 2010). Publications and student enrolments decreased and the epoch was characterized by record-high brain-drain (Asgedom, 2007). Threats to the life and engagement of academics were also emerging from within academia, and intellectuals turned hostile against their colleagues who embraced different political ideologies or agenda (Kissi, 2006). The combined effect of these trends resulted in infinitesimal knowledge production. Despite being primarily the result of protests by students who were later engaged in the guerrilla fight, the Revolutionary Democratic regime didn’t offer higher education with freedom of thought.
Higher education in the Revolutionary Democratic regime is characterized by dramatic expansion and enrolment which might be attributed to demographic pressures, influences from International Organizations such as the World Bank as well as the political-ideological orientations of the ruling party. Improvement in the gender gap in enrolment is observed in this regime despite the increased attrition of female students who joined universities (Teferra & Altbach, 2004). However, both academic freedom and knowledge production in this regime were far below the standard (Assefa, 2008; Yimam, 2008; Gemeda, 2008).

Frequent student protests staged in university premises, brutal measures taken by the police, dismissing professors without legitimate grounds, and threats to tenure are the major challenges to the current knowledge production of the country (Yimam, 2008). Moreover, low salary and benefit, academics working to make ends meet to improve livelihood, increased pressure from teaching loads, “routinization, de-professionalization and sidestepping” of intellectuals, and brain drain significantly contribute to diminishing knowledge production of the country (Asgedom, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2015; Tessema, 2009; World Bank, 2003).

The political economy of knowledge production in the country is influenced by external organizations, particularly the World Bank, and its policy and knowledge sharing rhetorics (Molla, 2014; Teferra, 2004). Visible attempts and positive influences from civil societies show their potential to contribute to knowledge production but this is hampered by state control and bureaucratic bottlenecks (Milkias, 2006). In general, the contemporary political economy of knowledge production in Ethiopian higher education system can be understood as having inherent complexities that emerge from “Glonacal” political and economic institutions, trends emerging from the
inevitable interactions with such institutions, and related praxis within and beyond the historical context and geographic borders of the country. Thus, this writer concludes that the contemporary political economy of knowledge production in the country has left knowledge production and related academic intellectual praxis in a weakened condition.
Chapter 4: Narratology in Educational Research: A Focus on Panfictionality

4.1 Inter-disciplinarity in Narratology and Educational Studies Research

It is not uncommon these days to come across research conducted in the form of fictional narrative. In fact, conducting research in the form of narrative non-fiction is becoming “a global academic movement” (Goodal, 2008, p. 11). Since I began thinking about how best to research the life experiences of academic public intellectuals, I became convinced that using literary textual and analytical tools from the field of narratology would be the most effective method to present the stories of such intellectuals. In line with this, I pondered over questions such as: Other than narrative inquiry, what other types of narrative approaches can be used effectively in educational research, in this case, to presenting the stories of public intellectuals and their experiences? In what ways can such approach(es) be suited to my study? A review of the relevant literature helped me come up with some answers to these questions. To position my work in the broader field of literary studies and the humanities, I scrutinize and discuss narratology in the following section.

The study of fictional narratives and their structures, also referred to as narratology, evolved with a focus on the textual and structural analysis of fictional stories due to influences from the French formalist and structural linguistic schools of thought. Kindt (2009) states that the emergence of the ‘narrative’ or ‘narrativist turn’ followed this development in the humanities and prompted another development to “remodel narrative theory as a foundational discipline for the humanities” (Kindt, 2009, p. 39). Along these lines, the multidisciplinary nature of narrative representation emerged, and more researchers from other social science disciplines such as psy-
chology began using it (Heinen & Sommer, 2009, pp. 1-11). Narratology has, in its broadest sense, evolved and contributed to the development of theories of narratives. However, other interdisciplinary studies and cognitive sciences “displaced the more text oriented classical narratology” (Hatavara, Hydén, & Hyvärinen, 2013, p. 4).

A possible explanation for this “displacement” of classical narratology and its emerging interdisciplinary posture is the growing focus and inclination of other disciplines toward the “features and functions of narrative” (Becker & Quasthaff, 2004, p. 6). It is important to note that narratology and narrative are related in that the latter is the object of study of the former, and hence, narratology can be conceived as “the theory and study of narrative and narrative structure and the ways they affect our perception” (Czarniawska, 2010, p. 58). It bears mentioning that despite the interest of researchers from other disciplines to deploy literary narratological frameworks in various contexts, the use of narratology—its application, conception, and integration in interdisciplinary field—has been limited (Cortazzi, 1993; Heinen & Sommer, 2009).

According to Heinen & Sommer (2009), there are three reasons for the lack of interdisciplinarity in Narratology itself. First, there is variation in “the epistemological status of narratives” (Heinen & Sommer, 2009, p. 3). Whereas narratology is primarily interested in the universal feature of narratives, other disciplines are interested in narratological frameworks more as a means to study narrativity and narrative features than as an end in and of itself. Second, it is assumed that the frameworks developed for the analysis of imaginative stories "cannot be transferred to the analysis of non-fictional story telling without some serious modification” (Heinen & Sommer, 2009, p. 3). Third, most narratologists are closely affiliated with specific disciplines within the realm of the humanities, such as linguistics. By the same token, most researchers from
other social science and humanities disciplines with interest in narratology are minorities within their disciplines.

Despite these limitations, there is some room for applicability of textual narratology to disciplines other than literary ones because “narratology has an excellent knowledge base when it comes to narrative” (Heinen & Sommer, 2009, p. 3). In an attempt to locate the precursors of narrative research in social sciences, Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou (2008) suggest two parallel developments. The first was the “post-war rise of humanist approaches within western sociology and psychology,” and the second is “Russian structuralist and, later French poststructuralist (Barthes, 1977; Culler, 2002; Genette, 1979; Todorov, 1990), postmodern (Foucault, 1972; Lyotard, 1984), psychoanalytic (Lacan, 1977) and deconstructionist (Derrida, 1977) approaches to narrative within the humanities” (as cited in Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou, 2008, p. 1). Clearly, those that are part of the second development are related to significant developments of narrative studies in the humanities (i.e narratology).

Even though the use of narratology in the study of narratives in real-life contexts is not frequently thought about, both narratology and narrative inquiry are interdisciplinary (Heinen, 2009); they can both be used in research across disciplines in social sciences as well as the humanities because they share narratives as their common object of study (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Czarniawska, 2010). Moreover, cross-disciplinary interest in narratives is growing (Cortazzi, 1993; Riessman & Quinney, 2005), which implicates the potential multi-locations of narratology in qualitative research settings. Clandinin and Connelly made considerable progress in developing the idea of narrative inquiry in research into educational contexts, especially drawing on the work of John Dewy (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clan-
dinin, 1990). Their arguments focus on narratives in real-life settings without having much to say about the “fictionality” or the fiction-like nature of the way narratives are organized and told.

Building on these previous works are questions about mapping the contours of real-life narratives and imaginative narratives (or fiction) in educational research settings. In addition, one could also ask whether it is possible to integrate the notion of narratives in educational research with the narratives in literary studies. If so, how can issues of interdisciplinarity and borrowing analytical frameworks from literary analysis and other types of qualitative research that engage with narratives be reconciled? Indeed, scholars have argued that narrative research in education does not readily integrate theories and perspectives from disciplines outside education (Cortazzi, 1993; Kim, 2008).

Cortazzi (1993) states that “it seems unwise, and wasteful, for those engaged in narrative study in education to ignore work done in other disciplines” (p. 2). As such, the evolving concepts of narratology support the notion of using narratology in research other than the study of literary texts. One such concept is the recognition of narratology as “the theory and study of narrative and narrative structure” (Czarniawska, 2010, p. 58) which allows for the integration of two different intellectual exercises, namely, the study of narrative and the study of narrative structure. Similarly, Prince (2008) sees narratology as an “equivalent to narrative studies, that it is more methodologically varied, contextually engaged, hermeneutically oriented than it was, and that it devotes much of its energy to interpretation” (p. 120). Both variations of the term imply the interdisciplinary nature of narratology and its possible use in educational studies.
Mindful of variations in how the term “narratology” is used, another step to validate its application in qualitative research beyond the frontiers of literary-textual analysis begins with a close look at the development and evolution of plural narratologies. Narratology has evolved from the study of literary narratives, also termed classical or structural narratology, to a multi-disciplinary narratology, also termed postclassical narratologies. The use of the plural, narratologies, signals the possibilities for proliferation that occurred in narratological exercises in the past few decades (Biwu, 2015; Gymnich, 2013; Heinen & Sommer, 2009; Prince, 2008).

The rationale for the evolution of narratology into (postclassical) narratologies is the inclusion of context in structural/classical narratology for the analysis of narratives (Dires, 2014; Gymnich, 2013). The latter includes, but is not limited to, terms such as contextual narratology, cognitive narratology, and postcolonial narratology (Gymnich, 2013). In the same line of thought, Herman and Vervaeck, (2005) argue that “post-classical narrative theories “insist that a text always functions in a context” (as cited in Dires, 2014, p. 27). The mobile nature of narratives (Hyvärinen, Hatavara, & Hyden, 2013) adds a different perspective that could illuminate the desire to apply narratological frameworks and analytical tools in the examination of stories in social research contexts in general, and educational studies in particular. Narratives travel. They travel between fiction and non-fiction (Brockmeier, 2013); they travel from text to body (Eakin, 2013), they travel from body to storytelling (Hyden, 2013), and across disciplines (Hyvärinen, 2013). The “traveling concepts of narratives” (Hyvärinen, Hatavara, & Hyden, 2013) may suggest the application of narratology to qualitative research settings on the basis of simple transitivity logic, that if the use of narratological frameworks is viable in analyzing narratives in fiction, it should also be viable in analyzing narratives in educational contexts because narratives travel.
4.2 Panfictionality as the Epicentre

The discussions so far establish the use of narratology in educational studies. They suggest the nexus between narratology and educational research as a practical possibility. A specific aspect in narratology which is the basis for the current work is *panfictionality*. *Panfictionality* (Jahn, 2017, N2.2.2.2) is a notion that contests and crumbles the very existence of a hard and fast dividing line between fiction and non-fiction. It is “the destabilization of the borderline between fiction and nonfiction” (Ryan, 1997, p. 165). Last but not least, the interdisciplinary nature of educational research invites the use and adaptability of narratology, specifically panfictionality, and other frameworks. Bridges (2017) also affirms the openness of educational research and states that “we can apply a wide range of disciplines, methods, and forms of representation … drawn in particular from the humanities and social sciences” (p. 15). I decipher panfictionality as the epicentre between narratology/narrative research and educational studies/research.

4.3 Panfictionality as a Pre-modern Postmodern

The notion of panfictionality flourished as a postmodern exercise of critiques. For instance, Ryan (1977) challenged and subverted the established tradition of the fact-fiction distinction and promoted the notion of *panfictionality*. Other studies entertained similar notions, and asserted that “literary narrative is a construct broadly similar to other forms of narrative” (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 98). This harkens back to the claim that the application of literary models to narratives of personal experience “would offer useful insights” (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 98). In the same line of argument, Shenhav (2015) contends that fiction “can refer to something ‘real’; it’s real in the context of the possible worlds” (p. 54). The claim that “narratology is concerned with all
types of narratives, literary and non-literary, fictional and non-fictional, verbal and non-verbal” (Jahn, 2017, N2.2.2) further strengthens the use of literary textual tools in educational research.

Another perspective that unifies narratives in social and literary studies and promotes the fluid nature of narratives is the conception of narratives as representation, or meaning-making (Ryan, 2007, as cited in Brockmeier, 2013, p. 124). Brockmeier (2013) envisions the notion of narrative as representation, and argues for a “narrative hermeneutics,” which is “conceiving of narratives as forms of action and interaction” (p. 124). In this sense, it is hardly possible to figure out whether a given representation is purely fact or fiction (Brockmeier, 2013; Jahn, 2017). This leads to the possibility that the fact-fiction distinction dwindles in the study of narratives and narratology. Brockmeier (2013) dismantles the binary opposition of fact vs. fiction to reach a compelling argument for “the very same interpretative operations at the core of both literary and everyday processes of narrative meaning construction” (as cited in Hatavara, Hydén & Hyvärinen, 2013, p. 7). This argument sounds like another compelling perspective in this regard because there are not separate ways to understand fictional stories and non-fictional narratives. We understand and interpret fictional stories and narratives using the same linguistic as well as intellectual capability. We identify with characters in fiction as well as individuals in real-life situations by being exposed to their stories.

The similarities in the ways we understand fictional stories and real-life interactions could also justify the use of inputs from narratology into the studies of real-life narratives (Hatavara, Hydén, & Hyvärinen, 2013, p. 4). Czarniawska articulates the absence of any clear
distinction between fact and fiction (as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 11) in response to the “dichotomy of these two concepts” (Ryan, 1997, p. 165). Such distinctions are often “muddled” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 179), and they are “matters of disguise, of fictionalizing” (Blaise, as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 181). These thoughts could be taken as an exercise to amalgamate real-life experiences and imaginative stories in a form of “a unified field theory” (Eakin, 2013, p. 91). Such narratives are not separate from the wider social contexts in which they are generated. Bell (2003) recognizes “story’ in the spoken and written utterances of individual human beings” and discerns narratives “to refer to broader societal patterns of meaning” (p. 97).

It is essential to focus on panfictionality to locate the roots of fiction-based research in educational studies. A number of scholars apply and discuss fiction-based research using a variety of names, such as fiction-based research (Bridges, 2017; Clough, 2002; Dunlop, 1999; Leavy, 2015, 2018), fictional-critical writing (Bolton, 1994), non-fiction novel (Zipfel, 2005), creative non-fiction (Heyne, 2001; Sinner, 2013; Sinner, Hasebe-Ludt, Leggo, 2018). Likewise, the origin of the concept can be located in the wider domain of the “science of narrative,” called narratology (Jahn, 2017).

Panfictionality is certainly traced back to the days of Plato and Aristotle. Locating the roots of panfictionality, as an alternative conceptualization of what is termed as fiction-based research, beyond a specific disciplinary exercise offers double perspectives for researchers interested in the historical origin of the concept. It provides a clear background to the place and contribution of the humanities in educational research and re-creates the interdisciplinarity of narra-
tology, which has already been discussed by scholars in the field. It also affirms the interdisciplinarity of educational research itself because educational research utilizes various tools and concepts from the humanities, among other disciplines. The introduction to this chapter touched upon narratology to reinforce this claim.

Panfictionality had existed in the Greek tradition even though it is also an emerging trend that has existed in educational studies research under such names as fiction-based research or creative non-fiction. The *Aesop Romance*, for example, is an anonymously written fictional biography from the first century CE (Hansen, 1998). Staes (2014) provides us with an interesting argument that “crossings of the border between fiction and nonfiction are the result of both author intention and reader reception” (p. 177). In the light of the traveling concept of narratives (Brockmeier, 2013; Hyvärinen, 2013; Hyvärinen, Hatavara, & Hydén, 2013), narratives may emerge in a new form which mingles the fictional and the real stories. Stories in societies that are primarily reliant on oral traditions are always evolving as they are passed on to the subsequent generations. Therefore, I would reiterate that, even though it is framed as a postmodern exercise, panfictionality existed early on. It is pre-modern. It existed long before the creation and/or appropriation of fiction-based research as a method in educational studies, among others. It is, I would prefer to say, the pre-modern postmodern. Finally, even though a number of scholars argue for panfictionality in view of the blurry line between fiction and non-fiction, it is also essential to keep in mind that there are still scholars like Lehman at the other end of the argument, who assert that “the ‘boundary’ between fiction and nonfiction matters” (Heyne, 2001, p. 324).
4.4 Panfictionality for Parallax

Panfictionality is an essential aspect of narratology which helped me develop the life story research of academic public intellectuals. I use panfictionality as a synonym for fiction-based research. However, I favor the term panfictionality because it carries with it the meaning of being in-between fiction and real. One limitation of narrative inquiry research within the social sciences and educational studies is the specificity of research questions and research traditions in general, which conceals a number of other ‘truths’ and perspectives. A limitation of such research is its focus on a single or specific problem, which results in leaving other sides of a story in the opaque shadow of history. Another challenge in conducting research in this form is its prescriptive nature. Much research poses a particular question and then provides a prescription to resolving the problem. It is not uncommon to come up with a conclusion to a research project that is followed by a set of recommendations. Moreover, research in its ‘traditional’ sense identifies gaps in evidence and interpretations to be explored further by other researchers. In contrast, the convenience of panfictionality is its parallax.

Panfictionality promotes the presentation of the real in the form of the imaginative (i.e. fiction) due to fiction’s rich literary attributes in presenting stories. With its creative touch, fiction-based research allows “the exercise of the imagination…to fill in the gaps in evidence” (Bridges, 2017, p. 255). Clough (2002) summarizes the whole praxis as follows:

“The fictionalisation of educational experience offers researchers the opportunity to import fragments of data from various real events in order to speak to the heart of social consciousness- thus providing the protection of anonymity to the research participants without stripping away the rawness of real happenings” (p. 8).
It also allows the writer to navigate and conjoin the private and personal aspects of life which are beyond conventional evidence-based knowledge (Bridges, 2017). What fiction-based research provides both readers and writers is the opportunity for different perspectives or unique ways of reading a text. I refer to this as parallax. Leavy (2018) states that fiction “lessens the power differential between text and reader” (p. 190). It engages readers actively in its dialogue, it authorizes entry into the otherwise “inaccessible possible worlds” and draws on “genuine human experience” (Leavy, 2018, pp. 190-191).

In addition to addressing a particular research question, panfictionality is the best way to establish parallax in research. When the outcome of research is told as something which is woven into fiction, it provides the reader or the research participants with the elasticity for parallax. Story telling has emancipative power, it has immense potential to give voice to the voiceless, and is “vital for minorities in political discussion” (Hatavara, Hydén, & Hyvärinen, 2013, p. 3). It gives everyone the opportunity to see particular events and perspectives from different points of view (Bolton, 1994; Bridges, 2017; Leavy, 2018). Both at the fictional level and the real-world level, it duly represents the research participants’ perspectives, including the researcher. Panfictionality incorporates the writer’s perspective, or authorial voice, and it assumes implied as well as real target readers (Jahn, 2017). In this sense, it is a rich means of representation, especially in deliberately establishing voice and point-of-view, among other attributes.

Beyond these narratological resources, the fictional representation of stories provides flexibility to explore infinite levels of meaning and perspectives (Leavy, 2018; Bridges, 2017). This is another way of understanding narratology in general, and panfictionality in particular, as
a convenient way of ensuring parallax. In using such approaches in research, the attempt of the
writer should be to provide readers with a holistic view of the stories, with multiplicities of per-
spectives, from which the readers themselves draw their own interpretations. In line with this, if
the representation of the story offers the story a context, the fictional nature of the story leaves
room for multiple interpretations of the text along with context (Bolton, 1994; Bridges, 2017).
Bolton (1994) also states that this mode of research “leaves gaps for the reader to fill in and rais-
es questions through the unresolved plurality of its meanings” (p. 56).

What appeals to me about this approach, however, is its openness to liberate oppressed
voices, silenced narratives, and buried stories, which might be of interest to researchers who seek
to explore the entirety of a situation. The potential to liberate such voices and dig out silenced
narratives is another perspective which confirms to the notion of parallax as a convenient feature
of this approach. It showcases forgotten stories, and it gives voice to unheard individuals from
the margins of the story. In this case, the context refers not only to the historical context of the
story tellers’ past, but also the moment in which the past is recollected. If this is the case, the
writer could discover her own turn in the story, as she relates to it, and do at least some justice to
what the writer feels has been denied or omitted.

It is essential to note, however, that such a work is not purely fictional and thus does not
allow the writer to deny the evidence from the ‘data’. Erben (1980) argues for the need to “fix
the imagination in empirical resources - it cannot be allowed free reign and take unwarranted lib-
erties with the lives of subjects” (as cited in Bridges, 2017, p. 260). Along the same lines of
thought, it is less likely that such academic endeavors to tell stories escape firmly established in-
stitutional expectations and structural arrangements. The absence of such institutional norms would make such work less of a dissertation. Had it not been for such cases, it would have been sufficient to tell only the stories in which the writer is interested. As such, it is essential to reflect on what kind of procedures should be followed while working on these types of stories. Before delving into the procedures that I attend to in the research process, I would like to articulate my views of writing and how I approach writing as an intellectual exercise.

In an interview, Dyson—the famous Hip-Hop public intellectual, argues for the significance of writing in the light of public intellectual engagement (Dobrin, 2006). He states the relational continuum that writing forms between the past and the present where it serves as a "connection between previous cultures and contemporary ones, and a way, of course, of reinventing the very character and texture of experience in the light of one’s own writing” (Dobrin, 2006, p. 113). I envision writing as freedom. Writing becomes freedom when a person is able to write what matters to him/her. Writing becomes freedom when a person is able to listen inward and dig down to what is ingrained within oneself. It becomes freedom when the person is able to have a say; it becomes freedom when writing helps a person empower oneself to move from “invisibility” to meaningful presence. Writing is the materiality of a desire—a desire to liberate oneself or others. Writing is a desideratum to demand justice. It becomes absolute freedom when a person writes fiction because writing fiction entails interminable choices, choices ranging from linguistic combinations of words to the selection of historical facts and claims.

In the current writing, I write with the aforementioned sense of writing as freedom. However, I also recognize the responsibility I should assume which is entailed in such a scholarly
work. I believe that I should respect the interests and self-portrayals of the fictionalized ‘characters’ from whose commitments in participating in this research I have greatly benefited. These obligations propel my pen into reflecting on my subjectivity and positionality to help me figure out how these might shape my writing as a dialogical practice. Even though it is an academic exercise, I acknowledge that I couldn’t escape the practical dilemma that arises from subjectivity as discussed in the first chapter, in sections 1.5 and 1.6.

4.5 Ethical Issues in Collecting Narrative Data

One of the challenges in narrative research emerges from the issue of ethics. Narrative research is relational, dialogic, and collaborative, and requires the researcher “to imagine research ethics in respectful, relational, and transformative ways” (Craig & Huber, 2007, p. 270). Even though researchers seek ethics approval from institutions prior to engaging in the actual inquiry, ethical concerns are not a one-time issue for the narrative inquirer, and these concerns “shift and change as we move through an inquiry” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 170). It is indubitable that the traditional procedures benefit the researcher from a legal perspectives. However, ethical procedures in narrative inquiry require “different agreements” (Craig & Huber, 2007, p. 270) than the established standards of procedures in medical and health sciences. This is because prior submission to an ethics protocol and approval prior to engagement in narrative inquiry goes “against the relational negotiation that is part of narrative inquiry” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 170).

In dealing with personal narratives, it is also essential to give primacy to the human being, the teller of the story, rather than to the story being told (Atkinson, 1998, p. 62). Researchers
should not place “themselves at the epicentre of their research interpretations” (Bishop & Sheph-
herd, 2011, p. 1283). It is the responsibility of the researcher “to consider the interests, rights,
and privacy of the person telling his or her story above anyone else’s” (Atkinson, 1998, p. 37).
The teller of the story ought to have “the right to remain anonymous” (Atkinson, 1998, p. 38) and
at the same time the right to decide whether and when one’s name becomes public.

Ethical issues also include “Everything you do in relation to the interview, from what you
tell the person you are doing and why, to what happens to it and who has access to it” (Jackson,
particular should be a “collaborative effort” (Atkinson, 1998, p. 37; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000,
p. 20) and an entirely voluntary activity to the extent that the teller of the story is empowered to
refuse to respond to any of the questions as well as to end the interview at any point (Atkinson,

To ensure that the current study meets the expected ethical requirements, I submitted the
proposal for this study to the Behavioral Research Ethics Board of the University of British Co-
lumbia (UBC). The proposal passed through a rigorous ethics review by the Board and was ap-
proved and recognized under Ethics Approval Certificate number H16-02350. Participants were
given pseudonyms during the interviews as well as in the fictionalizing process. The names were
given to the participants following their approval. Three of the participants chose Ethiopian
proper names which are totally different from their own names. One of the participants didn’t
want to pick a specific name. As a result, I picked a name randomly to represent the person. All
historical incidents mentioned during the interview were documented and made part of the narra-
tion of the stories. I also referred to books and journal articles by expert authorities to understand historical contexts that were discussed by the research participants. I formulated and chronologically developed the entire story of the participants, where necessary, “by editing and re-shaping what is told, and turning it into a hybrid story, ‘a false document’” (Behar, 1993, as cited in Riessman, 1993, p. 13).

Interest in engaging in narrative research should emerge from the appreciation of subjectivity and the uniqueness of narratives of individuals. Evidently, such an engagement requires interaction with the subject, be it in the form of an interview, the study of biography or other relevant ‘field texts.’ This calls for understanding what ‘data’ (what Clandinin & Connelly’s (2000) refer to as field text) means in narrative inquiry and how such data ought to be gathered and analyzed systematically.

The challenge in conducting qualitative narrative research is the nature of narrative data being “susceptible to endless interpretation” and its inability to offer “automatic starting or finishing points” and “overall rules about suitable materials or modes of investigation” (Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou, 2008, p. 1). In spite of this, the advantage in using narratives in research includes, but not limited to the structure and function of stories. It includes the possibility of locating multiple voices in a work (Jahn, 2017). Leavy (2018) argues for the accessibility of scholarship to the public.

According to Leavy (2018), while traditional knowledge production and circulation in academic journals is full of jargon and accessible to limited audience, fiction is accessible to the vast majority and it can be “crafted to suite those [particular] audiences” (p. 192). Also, qualita-
tive narrative research has significant potential to explore “how narratives are silenced, contested or accepted and what, if any, effects they have” (Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou, 2008, p. 2). Moreover, the unique features of stories being “the most accessible, the most readily understood and the most flexible vernacular method of conducting and circulating research” make them increasingly preferred in educational research settings (Sinner, Hasebe-Ludt, Leggo, 2018, p. 167).

In the earlier discussions in this chapter regarding the potential of narratology in qualitative research settings, it is pointed out that narratives are “elicited through interviews” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012, p. 1). It is these narratives that are to be woven by the researcher into fiction. It thus follows that it is possible to regard personal experience narratives as data (Riessman, 1993) and the interview as a “data collection tool in narrative inquiry” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 5), or “the working method of the life story” (Atkinson, 2007, p. 238) to generate such data. Personal experience narrative, even though its precise definition is contentious, stands for “extended speech acts about substantial or compelling aspects of life” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012, p. 1). It consists of “talk organized around consequential events” (Riessman, 1993, p. 1).

A focus on and inclination towards personal experience narratives, aside from being a means to connect and contest the fact-fiction distinction, is justified based on two rationales. First of all, it is convenient to conduct the current research, which looks into the personal experiences of academic public intellectuals in the Global South. The convenience of personal experience narratives to accommodate subjectivity, human agency, and imagination is another validation of this choice (Atkinson, 1998; Riessman, 1993). For these reasons, the personal experience narrative seems well-suited to collect stories for the intended project. It is important to make ex-
plicit that in engaging in personal experience narratives, the researcher in this study is engaged in a specific form of the personal experience narrative, which is the life-story interview (Atkinson, 1998). Preference to use the life story interview as a “data collection” tool is also necessitated due its suitability for studying “not only one life across time but also how individual life interacts with the whole” (Atkinson, 1998, p. 4). This matches perfectly with the use of the notion of pan-fictionality as an approach to present the stories of the research participants.

I designed the questions for the life story interview based on the sample questions and guidance provided in Atkinson (1998). I chose the open-ended style in order to address the entire life experiences of the study participants and to allow for in-depth narration of their experiences at a given point in time. I interviewed each of the study participants for approximately an hour and a half. I travelled to the places where the study participants live. Two of the study participants preferred to have the interview in their private libraries. As a result, I had to stay a couple of days with the families of these individuals to conduct the interview in their private work space. I used Olympus digital voice recorder WS-852 device to record the interviews in mp3 format.

In regards to language, three of the study participants preferred the interview be conducted in Amharic. One of them expressed interest to be interviewed in English. In the first three cases of the interviews conducted in Amharic, on average I transcribed and translated 30-35 pages of interview data. A similar length of interview with the fourth study participant was transcribed as well. All the translated as well as the transcribed versions of the ‘field text’ were sent back to the study participants by email. The study participants commented on the diction, grammar and
suitability of the translation of some concepts. Some participants removed, edited and changed their responses which they felt sounded strange when it appeared on the transcribed version of the document. All the study participants sent back the edited version of the document and they confirmed that the transcribed version represents their stories as told by themselves during the interview sessions. All the four participants signed and submitted the consent form which was sent to them along with the invitation letter early on.

4.6 Between the Real and the Imaginative- a Fictionalizing Process

Stories of individuals are fictionalized “to make connections between the life worlds depicted in personal narratives and larger social structures” (Riessman, 2008, p. 76). Iser (1977) (as cited in Leavy, 2015, p. 57) and Leavy (2018, pp. 194-205) suggest a three-stages procedure to fictionalize stories. These are: selection, combination, and self-disclosure. Selection is the process of collecting a social reality and turning it into a fictional production. Combination is building the selected items into a narrative. The final stage, self-disclosure, or revealing, is all about presenting the work as fiction. Leavy (2018) states that the self-disclosure stage is a straight forward declaration of a work labeling it as a novel or a short story.

It is possible to regard the outcome of the life story interview as a stand-alone, self-sufficient narrative without any need for analysis, as in the case of fiction. It is also possible to employ theories so as “to acknowledge and highlight some of the shared narrative threads” which could possibly connect this study “with ongoing conversation in the field” (Bell, 2003, p. 107). Atkinson (2007) also confirms that a text produced through the life story interview “can stand on its own, as any other text, or that it can be examined through the lens of any theory or research
question applied to it” (p. 224). By themselves, stories are atheoretical in that there is no storyteller who tells one’s story with reference to particular theories, “yet there can be much meaning expressed in the story, and any theory that fits can be applied to it” (Atkinson, 2007, p. 234). This tendency of approaching narratives through a theoretical lens is common in narrative research that employs thematic analysis of personal life stories. In line with this, Riessman (2008) notes that “prior theory serves as a resource for interpretation” (p. 73).

I engaged in the fictionalization process while using the life story interview documents. The documents profile the lives and experiences of the participants, as well as their identity development as academic public intellectuals. I did not analyze the stories based on any theoretical or conceptual guidelines for fear that such a practice would likely decontextualize the stories from the real-life experiences. Moreover, I do favor the act of “seeking meaning in the stories themselves” (Berger & Quinney, 2005, p. 9), and leaving it open to the readers than providing them with the meaning or interpretation of the stories in a separate chapter. The stories from the interview document are written in chronological order except in some cases where I used flashbacks to relate the stories with significant historical incidents.

I acknowledge that I developed some of the life story interview questions following in-depth readings about such topics as public intellectualism and symmetric-criticality framework as discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation which deals with public intellectualism. Instead of adhering to particular theories, I opted to develop a conceptual framework to form a clear thought of what I mean by public intellectuals and on what basis I would rationally, and fairly, select individuals and invite them to engage in life storytelling. It is essential to iterate that
the participants in this study were selected because they were academics with experience being a faculty member in Ethiopia, currently working in a tenured position in the universities in United States or Canada, and are known for addressing the general public beyond their disciplinary frontiers. After identifying one of the study participants through my professional contacts, all the other participants were identified following the recommendation by the study participant who was interviewed before them.

4.7 Summary

Research in the form of narrative non-fiction is flourishing as “a global academic movement” (Goodal, 2008, p. 11). A possible approach in using narrative non-fiction in educational studies research is through the application of narratology. Narratology can be used as an interdisciplinary tool due to a growing focus in other disciplines toward the “features and functions of narrative” (Becker & Quasthoff, 2004, p. 6). It bears mentioning that the use of narratology in educational studies has been limited (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 84; Heinen & Sommer, 2009).

Applications of narratology in qualitative research relates with the development and evolution of plural narratologies. Narratology has evolved from the study of literary narratives to a multidisciplinary narratologies. This shows the possibilities for proliferation that has occurred and will continue to occur in narratological exercises (Biwu, 2015; Gymnich, 2013; Heinen & Sommer, 2009; Prince, 2008). Narratives travel “between fiction and non-fiction” (Brockmeier, 2013), “from text to body” (Eakin, 2013), “from body to story,” and across disciplines (Brockmeier, 2013; Ritivoi, 2013; Ritivoi as cited in Hyavarna, Hattavara, & Hyden, 2013, pp. 2-9). This mobile nature of narratives also justifies the use of narratological frameworks from literary
narratology as viable in analyzing narratives in educational contexts (Brockmeier, 2013; Ritivoi, 2013).

A specific aspect of narratology, termed as panfictionality, makes the nexus between narratology and educational research a practical possibility. *Panfictionality* (Jahn, 2017, N2.2.2.2) is a claim that challenges the existence of any distinction between fiction and non-fiction. It is “the destabilization of the borderline between fiction and nonfiction” (Ryan, 1997, p. 165). I decipher panfictionality as the epicentre between narratology/narrative research and educational studies/research. This is because panfictionality, when integrated with other elements of narratology such as story development strategies, is adoptable to study real-life narratives in educational studies research.

Some critiques claim that the notion of panfictionality is a postmodern exercise. *For example*, some writers and critics challenge the established tradition of the fact-fiction distinction (Czarniawska as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ryan, 1977). and promoted the notion of *panfictionality*. In the same line of argument, Shenhav (2015) contends that fiction “can refer to something ‘real’; it’s real in the context of the possible worlds” (p. 54). It is essential to focus on panfictionality to locate the roots of fiction-based research in educational studies. The practice of fictionalizing real-life stories and events is exercised under different names such as fiction-based research (Borton, 1994; Bridges, 2017; Clough, 2002; Dunlop, 1999; Leavy, 2015, 2018; ), fictional-critical writing (Bolton, 1994), non-fiction novel (Zipfel, 2005), creative non-fiction (Heyne, 2001; Sinner, 2013; Sinner, Hasebe-Ludt, Leggo, 2018). In spite of these, the actual ori-
gin of the concept is deeply rooted in the wider domain of the “science of narrative,” called narratology (Jahn, 2017).

Panfictionality, a concept which is currently practiced by the name fiction-based research, affirms the interdisciplinary nature of educational research itself as the latter utilizes concepts from the humanities. Panfictionality, as a concept of being in-between fiction and real, is a useful tool to tell the life stories and experiences of real-life individuals. Panfictionality promotes the presentation of the real in the form of the imaginative (i.e. fiction) because of fiction’s rich literary attributes in presenting stories. With its creative touch, fiction-based research allows “the exercise of the imagination…..to fill in the gaps in evidence” (Bridges, 2017, p. 255).

What fiction-based research provides both readers and writers is the opportunity for different perspectives or unique ways of reading a text. I refer to this as parallax. Fiction based research engages readers actively in its dialogue, it authorizes entry into the otherwise “inaccessible possible worlds” and draws on “genuine human experience” (Leavy, 2018, pp. 190-191). Panfictionality is the best way to establish parallax in research. When the outcome of research is told as something which is woven into fiction, it provides the reader or the research participants with the elasticity for parallax. It gives everyone the opportunity to see particular events and perspectives from multiple points of view (Bolton, 1994; Bridges, 2017; Leavy, 2018). Panfictionality incorporates the writer’s perspective, or authorial voice, and it assumes implied as well as real target readers (Jahn, 2017). In this sense, it is a rich means of representation, especially in deliberately establishing voice and point-of-view, among other attributes.
To collect the stories of the study participants, I used the personal experience narrative, specifically the life-story interview (Atkinson, 1998; Holstein & Gubrium, 2012). In the fiction-alization process, the stories of individuals are used “to make connections between the life worlds depicted in personal narratives and larger social structures” (Riessman, 2008, p. 76). Iser (1977) and Leavy (2015, pp. 57-58; 2018, p. 194-205) suggest a three-stage procedure to fiction-alize stories. These are: selection, combination, and self-disclosure. Selection is the process of collecting a social reality and turning it into a fictional production. Combination is building the selected items into a narrative. The final stage, self-disclosure, or revealing, is all about presenting the work as fiction. However, recognizing that the stories in this work are not purely fictional, the following section presents the entire narration as intersecting stories than a novel because the later sounds more like a label for a creative work of art.
We are awash in stories. We live stories all the time. We attend to the stories of others. We linger in the stories of dreams, imagination, fantasy, and memory. We read stories in school and at home; we hear stories from friends and strangers; we view stories on television and the Internet and movie screens; we understand the past in terms of stories, just as we seek to understand the future in stories.

(Leggo, 2012, p. xiii)
Introduction

The story in the following section is written based on the real-life experiences of Ethiopian academics in North America. The real-life stories of four academics in tenure track employment in the United States and Canada were collected in a form of the life story interview. The narration presents the real lives and encounters of Ethiopian intellectuals and how they negotiated the social and the political spaces in their personal and professional development. It presents their life journeys both in Ethiopia and in the North America. The concept of panfictionality is employed in developing the story for it allows writers to integrate real life events as well as imaginative stories. In relation to this, there are a number of fictional characters that are created to give life to the stories and to offer logical coherence and progression to the narration.

Most of the specific places mentioned in the story are not related to the interview participants. The conferences discussed in the story are also fictional. The individuals in this story are given pseudonyms, and they are created as fictional characters. To locate the story in the larger field of educational research, issues pertinent to academic freedom, speech and silence are blended with the notion of public-intellectual praxis. As the intellectuals in this story are renowned academics in exile, most of their reflections revolve around historical events of the past and issues and experiences related to political developments in Ethiopia, specially from the 1960s onwards, and their emergence as Ethiopian public intellectuals among the diaspora in North America.

The participants in this study mentioned the names of some individuals who are known to them in real life. The following names refer to real individuals and thus, they are not fictional characters. Prof. Rindleshort, Dr. Hamlin, Professor Merera Gudina, Professor Berhanu Nega,
Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam, Dr. Lucien Matte were professors at Addis Ababa University. Marathoner Abebe Bikila is mentioned by a character in the story. Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, Emperor Haile Selassie, President John F. Kennedy, and President Richard Nixon were also mentioned by the characters as these characters were reflecting on the political developments during their time in Ethiopia.

James Baldwin (1984) states “One writes out of one thing only—one’s own experience” (p. 7). It is essential to note that beyond the stories of the intellectuals, my view of the academy and my own personal experience while working as one of the administrative as well as teaching personnel in Ethiopia has also left its own imprints in weaving the stories in this form. As a result, this work incorporates the worldview of the researcher. This is addressed in the introduction section of the dissertation where conceptual issues about a researcher’s subjectivity and positionality are discussed. For the sake of clarity, I present brief explanations of some claims, unusual expressions, quotes, and assertions and provide readers with the sources for such items in the endnote.

I iterate that there is no conclusion and/or epilogue in this work. Understanding the text of a story as a self-sufficient and stand-alone entity, it is essential to recognize the exclusion of a concluding section as a necessary norm of a text. There is variation in the narration and interpretation of particular perspectives and view points from which the stories are told, be it at the level of the participating characters or the narrators (Jahn, 2017). With the understanding that people “live stories all the time” (Leggo, 2012, p. xiii), it also seems unfair to infer conclusions about the lives and experience of others. I believe that anyone who endeavors to provide readers with conclusions about particular stories ventures on the risk of dismissing the feelings and emotional
attachments as articulated by the story tellers. Conclusions and interpretations should, therefore
be left to the readers who will have their own response to the work.
A random trip

A long time ago, a man was born in an affluent community, a community full of stories and histories. The man was born on a land endowed with stories and histories. Some of those stories and histories were married, others divorced, some intimate and others distant, some vicarious and others vacuous. He used to learn histories and used to listen to stories at his mother’s feet, a mother who always aspires to bestow her son with the gift of telling stories and listening to them as well. On his travels in North America a winter ago, this man decided to keep a diary to share with his mother the histories he learned and the stories he heard. He had started documenting his travels and encounters in North America on a tiny diary gilded with gold to keep track of events and tell the stories to her accurately. It was very unfortunate; however, that the man lost that diary on a short trip.

The diary and those stories tattooed in the diary were lost somewhere on his journey. The man witnessed that he had lost the diary a day after his first trip was concluded. The first measure the man took was to call the airline. The person on the other side of the phone told the man
to go to the reception desk and speak with someone at an American Airlines office in person. His assumption was somebody might have found the diary and had generously turned it in. He did as he was told to do. He went to the office and requested for the missing item. But, it is not turned in to the lost and found section of the airline. The man waited for a day more, with some hope and eagerness that he will get the diary back. The man was certain that he will find the diary because he believed that nobody will be interested in the strange stories and the crabbed writings. The man felt that people do not listen to stories these days. Stories are progressively marginalized. They are denied of their educational significance. They are considered as only echoing the past and those who do stories are perceived to be either the old or the less equipped with technologies. In fact, even if stories are regards as pedagogically significant, it is not an easy deal to sift through stories, to tell stories that matter, to take narrative risk and to attend to counter-narratives.

The gentleman’s diary consisted of misplaced stories, and displaced narratives. However, it was so precious for a man like him who is addicted to stories and who learned knowing from his mother by way of storytelling than any other thing. After exhausting all alternatives to locate this diary, the last option the man could resort to would be but to dream about it. The man had to rehearse and retrieve at least some portion of the contents from his memory. He had to take note of whatever pops-up in his mind. The man should see if he could be able to brainstorm the major issues he had tattooed on the white pages of that lovely diary. It was a struggle to find those stories, to locate the lost but not found stories, and to possess the lost stories. Here is the thing- No two words will be exactly alike if somebody utters them at different times. No two stories will be exactly alike if somebody tells them at different times, too. The man decided to stay in silence and ruminate over each of the events and rewrite them afresh, regardless.

Of all the days he lived in North America, of all the events he tattooed on his diary, of all the weeks he walked on the land of the Coast Salish People, the First Nations, Inuit and Métis, of all the conversations he had with people on the lands of Ioway, Kickapoo, Mascouten, Piankashaw, Potawatomi, Sauk, Shawnee, Wea, and Winnebago, of all shines of the sun on the
lands of the Shawnee natives, the Chippewa natives, the Ojibwa natives, the Delaware natives, the Wyandot natives, the Eel River natives, the Kaskaskia natives, and the Iroquois natives, of all the butterflies he watched on the lands of the Saanich Nation of Coast Salish peoples, the Songhees, Esquimalt, Tsartlip, Tseycum, Pauquachin, Scia'new, Tsawout and T'Sou-ke Nations, those stories in the crabbed writings were unforgettable.

The stories endure because he came across unforgettable people from his motherland who were willing to tell their stories on a father land. He came across people whose stories he could hardly forget, specially the stories of the people he spoke with in those five days of a week-long trip. He thus decided to remember, retell and re-make those stories he lost with his diary in an effort to share some of the events in his beautiful days. The man had a clear scene of the incidents, his travels and some of his conversations in his mind. 

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It all started on the first day of the first month of the Year of the Rooster- 2017. Rooster is a Chinese symbol of honesty, fortune, luck and protection. The man felt that it’s a great fortune to listen to stories. He also felt that some miraculous spirit stood to protect him as he walked on those lands of the silent people, the hospitable people. He felt fortune and luck and protection as he was preparing to cross the border to the south. On that day, the man was preparing to go to the Airport. He was so depressed on that day. He turned on his CD player in his bedroom to grab the wheels of his random thoughts. He had already known that a CD containing Ahmed’s album was already inside the player. The famous Tizita- which means Songs of Recollection- by the Ethiopian singer Mahmoud Ahmed, a slow genre about the past, memory, departure and death, was filling the air in the room. This slow vocal which is basically a reflection on departure metaphorically equates departure with the largest and longest river ever known to Africans and the Middle Eastern people. The chorus of the lyric rhythmically rehash the same theme:

Is there Nile after we crossed Nile?!
Aren’t Death and Departure just One?!
How come Death and Departure are One?
But that Death is finer, and even better
For it is known surer!
That in it, there is no return!

It is true! In a departure, one knows where one begins, it is known for certain. But, anyone cannot be certain about their return. I knew where I started my departure. I flew, but I had never known for certain where I would end, and even when. I was like the homeless wanderer, the risk-taking adventurer.

Suddenly, the man had to quit deliberating on these issues and going down those lines of Ahmed. He called a cab which would drive him to the nearest Skytrain station. Mornings are not as busy as nights for cab drivers in this town. At daytime, they grab any opportunity coming their way. In a few minutes, the cab was parked outside. The man noticed the yellow nose of the vehicle as he looked through the window. The man left home right away. As he entered into the cab, it started to rain. The man was hearing the thrumming on the roof of the cab. It took the cab driver only about five minutes to drop the man to the nearest Skytrain station. The man paid the fare from a credit card. The amount the man paid matches the figures that appear on the indicator meter just above the rear-view mirror. The driver asked, “Have you ever used a yellow cab before?” The message was clear to the passenger. The fuel keeps the tires moving, the tips keep the driver smiling. The man saluted the driver with a smile. “Oh, yes. Thank you very much. Have a wonderful day and wish me a nice trip!”

The man closed the door behind him. He run towards the escalator and in minutes he found himself in a sky train. As soon as he got onto the Skytrain, he saw many people with huge luggage. Most of them speak a different tongue than the man had ever heard of. He could guess they were speaking some languages from Europe.

On average, a stop took a minute and in about eight or so minutes, the man arrived at his destination and he got off the skytrain. The man had no luggage to grapple with. Only his back-
pack and a tiny laptop. It was such an easy trip. The sliding doors by the entrance of the Airport were very welcoming. They swung open opposite sides to let him in. They neither smiled nor twisted their face. They reflected back his own image, an adventurer’s face. To the gentleman he saw in the glass, he said “Have a nice trip!” Then, a generous escalator carried him down the floor without asking him where he was heading to. As he was rushing, a very young man stopped in front of him to let the man walk past him. Polite gesture! The man moved his neck and made a gesture like Mr. Bean to say Thank you! He then reached at the machines where he had to check his documentations.

These machines are not usually welcoming. They are not as welcoming as the sliding glass doors. They are too demanding. They asked him his passport, his name, his ticket number, his destination. But, that was not the problem. After someone answers all these questions, these machines usually flash the unfavorable statement, “We cannot process your information. Please talk to the clerk on the nearest counter!” The man walked past a couple of travelers and a polite woman asked him, “How may I help you?”

He showed his passport and his ticket. The woman generously printed out another similar ticket. Once the man grabbed the ticket, he had to rush to a gate labelled Gate C - ALL INTERNATIONAL DEPARTURES. “C is a bad score. Why should I go through this?” The man was murmuring to himself. He remembered his college days, his friends, and their discussions about grades. The man couldn’t forget one of his friends who was always certain that he will score “C” even if he is not working as hard as the man. This friend of him used to say, “Why do you worry? Do you always need to spend your time in the library? Don’t you know that C is your right? It is your citizenship right. “C” as in “Citizen.”

He saw more crowds lining up at Gate C than the main entrance. He did line up as well. There were young security officers dressed in black, with black steel-toed shoes, and black radios on their waist. One of the security officers standing by the entrance looked at the man from head to toe. The man said to himself, “Maybe this is how to wish someone a nice trip when you
are an officer." Before the man got the chance to utter a sentence to himself, one of the security officers approached him. The officer said, “Hi, would you please follow me?”

“Ok, but …er….why?”

“I am sorry, we are going to do a body search, pat-down procedures, you know!”

“Ok. But, why do you pick only me? As far as I can see, you are not asking others to follow you, right?”

“Oh, Sorry. But, we have to do a random search”

“Excuse me, what does RANDOM mean?”

“Sorry for this but it is just a Random Check. You know security concerns and er…..”

“Aha, Random means a security threat”

“Oh, no. Please don’t take me like that”

“So, tell me what random means because I don’t know the meaning in the context you are using it.”

The officer kept quiet.

“Oh, that might mean some bodies like me?!”

Before the officer gave the man any answer, another gentleman led the person to a corner where two officers were waiting for him to do pat-down procedures. But, one of the officers looked at the face of the man and asked the man to show his travel documents. The officer checked the Identification Card which shows the actual status of the man. The officer felt uncomfortable to further upsetting the man. He said, “Sorry for the inconvenience but you are good to go.” For the first time, the man came to know how just some identification cards mitigate risk in some circumstances like this one. The man went down the hall to the main gate where he had to board the plane. He was singing “Death is better than Departure!”

A hostess, with the looks and smiles of a nice woman, greeted the man at the entrance to the plane. The man affirmed to himself that she is indeed nice. He wished she were as good as nice. Who knows, maybe she is! Who knows! Good and nice are different things. Maybe, they are inversely proportional in some places. He smiled. He walked past some seats and he reached
half way through the airplane. He ended up right at the waist of the plane. He then followed a gentleman in front of him while locating the specific number of his seat from the ticket on his hand. The man walked a bit and he realized the person in front of him was also going to sit either with him or very close.

The old man took a while to put his carry-on into the slot above. As soon as the old man sat by the aisle, the man located his seat which is next to the old man. The man had to bother the old man to let him walk past the old man who sat by the aisle. The man was talking to himself, “I don’t usually like sitting by the aisles. These seats by the windows are my favorite spots. But, the windows were probably built by a greedy person who does not want travelers to see the whole world out there. Maybe! Some of them are the size of a well-built gentleman’s palm. Why don’t they build these windows huge? Why don’t they allow people to see the world out there?

The man was thinking about these issues. The man remembered he had put his earphone in his shirt’s pocket. Before he plugged in his earphone, the old white man sitting by his right side sent a radiant smile. The man smiled back. The man felt life for the first time since he left his home this morning. This seems like a real smile. His face was blooming like the popcorns Ethiopian mother’s make for coffee times. Genuine smiles wishing everybody a nice flight. The old man turned his face to the man and said, “Hey, welcome”

“Thank you.”

“Single flight or connections?”

“No, just one stretch.”

“Aha! Mine is a single trip, too.”

“Oh, cool. We go together then.”

“Yeah.”

“Where are you from?”
The man had been tired of this question. He was not interested to answer this question. *Is it really an easy question? Where are you from? What would be the best answer to this? Where can a man be from? From mother’s womb? From mother earth? From motherland? Or, maybe from mother country? Is this a rhetorical question that seeks no answer or that has the answer in it? Or, maybe it has a different semantic significance to tell someone about somebody else?* The man didn’t respond immediately. He breathed a sigh. He responded after a while.

“Did you ask where I am going?”

“I can guess you are tired of this question. Sometimes people ask where you are from and you may get offended. I know. People don’t know how to handle difference. As a young man, it might be upsetting for you to answer that question on many occasions.”

The man barely wanted to talk.

The old man understood the man.

“You know…er… when you get older, you want to socialize more, and you regret all the times you spent alone and in silence.”

“I see”, replied the man. He then remembered an interesting story. It’s written in a book entitled “….because, they said, I was lazy. *What they meant by lazy was that I used too many contractions: for instance, I would not write out in full the words cannot and will not, but instead contracted them to can’t and won’t*” by Lydia Davis. The man remembered that the story in the mentioned book happened in an airport lounge where a woman asks another, “*Is that a new sweater?*” and the conversation ended with a brief answer, “It is not.” The man was smiling and decided to extend the conversation whatever the outcome might be. Suddenly, the old man smiled and turned his face again to speak with the man. The old man asked a reverse question, this time with a sparkling smile

“Where am I going?”

At this time, the question asked by the old man confused the man. *Was he asking I or himself?* The man hesitated. After a brief silence, the man decided to answer. It is clear that the man wanted to talk to somebody.

“I don’t know. Maybe you are on some business trip? Or visiting your families somewhere in the States?”
“Well. I am going to attend a conference and meet my colleagues from many years back. What about you?”

“Same here.” While answering, the man noticed that the person is easy-going and there are a thousand little smiles everywhere on his face.

“I am curious. What is your conference about?” the old man asked the man by his side.

“It is about higher education”, replied the man.

“Highly likely, we are going to the same conference.”

“Is that? The Higher Education Stakeholders’ Conference?”

“Yes, right!” confirmed the old man.

“What a coincidence! I am so glad I met someone from the start of my trip.”

“I will introduce you with my friends. I can tell that you had lived somewhere in Africa?!” added the old man.

“Yes, my skin tells. Well, actually, as the saying goes, a leopard cannot hide its spots!”

“I lived in East Africa for over two decades, but that was long ago! Maybe you were not born at that time!”

The gentleman smiled. He then introduced himself. “I am Professor William. “W” as in Whiskey!”

The man in turn told Professor William his name. But, it was an unusual name and the man felt it might be difficult to pronounce for individuals from a different culture. The old man was able to catch only the first two sounds of the name. They both became even more excited as soon as they got to know each other! At this time, all passengers were in and seated, the hostess started speaking. Everyone interrupted their conversations for a second. The nice old man kept quiet for a while, too. The plane started rushing on the ground in preparation for take-off. Soon followed the in-flight passenger announcement.

*Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Tantoo Cardinal and I’m your chief flight attendant for today. On behalf of Captain George Vancouver and the entire crew, welcome aboard. This is Air Canada AC 665, direct flight from Vancouver. Our flight will be non-stop and it will last 7:00 hours*
and 59 minutes. We will be flying at an altitude of 4500 ft. and a ground speed of 28 miles an hour south of the border.

It was a nice quick introduction. The man, however, felt that something might be missing from the usual introductions and welcome addresses he came to know. The current announcement didn’t have any acknowledgement of the land. He smiled as he spoke with himself. It was a silent smile. As the plane took off, everyone started to feel as if the elevation were snatching their hearts from them. The announcement was over and the plane was floating on the flat air at the mentioned altitude. The man resumed the conversation with the gentleman who introduced himself as Professor William. The man then turned his face to the window at his left-hand side. After a while, the man noticed that Professor William was also staring through the window. The man was paying attention to how the white, shiny, soft clouds and the dark, heavy, rain clouds mingle, and divorce, spontaneously. And then, they mingle, and divorce, and divorce, and divorce.

The man was speaking to himself, *The clouds mingle and disperse as frequent as the rate of divorce in the town.*

“Are you enjoying the view?” Professor William asked.

“Oh, yes! We were in the middle of a conversation and you said you will introduce me to some people, right?” the man asked.

“eh… I have some colleagues coming from all over the world, and the other end of the continent. Some of them might even be from your place. My former colleague is a professor and she will also be there. If we meet her, she will inspire you, you will educate yourself from listening to her stories”, said Professor William.

“Can you tell me more about her?” The man was eager. This woman might be the one about whom the person heard of repeatedly.

“Actually, it should be far better if she tells her story but she is not that kind of person. I mean she is modest. I also believe that I am not good at telling stories but I can tell some of her stories. In fact, her stories are my stories. They are our stories. We are all interrelated like the roots of the trees underneath. Our stories have that visceral nature. But it is not visible for us at all times. If
you hear her stories, they will remain in you. They will also be part of your story because you spent part of your life listening to them. This is what I learned from my former colleagues in Ethiopia. Hold on, if you have time I will tell you a lot more. Or, maybe you will tell me a lot more?”

“Oh, no. I want to listen. I have nothing to tell as such. I might be a good listener. In fact, I have some passion for stories. I mean listening to stories.”

“Why are you so enthusiastic about stories?” Professor William asked.

“I don’t really know the answer. Maybe that is because I belong to a traditional story telling community. But, it is certainly because I believe that, to use Margaret Atwood’s words, ‘In the end, we will all become stories.’”

“That is it. We are on the same page. You see. Let me continue. It was a long time ago. I am sure that is before you came to visit this world [smile]. Approximately 45 years ago, I went to the Eastern part of Africa. The purpose of my trip was to research the dead languages of the Afro-Asiatic family. In North America, the average youth think that the whole world speaks either English, Mandarin or one of the popular European languages. It was fascinating to discover that almost every country in Africa has no less than 25 languages. For example, Ethiopia has 90 languages, Sudan has 75 languages, and Kenya has 68 languages. While I was conducting a basic survey of Afro-Asiatic languages in the Horn of Africa, I met a woman from the States. That happened by the time I travelled to a rural community to collect linguistic data. She used to work for a non-profit in the rural areas of Ethiopia. The place was not far from the capital city, not even an hour drive but it looks like a very remote area, even today. The last time I visited the place was six years ago. Despite significant economic developments in the country in general, this place didn't change markedly. The people were economically marginalized. So, in this place, there was a small health post and my wife used to supervise volunteers and mobilize resources donated by non-profit organizations. In this health centre, a woman, a local school teacher, give birth to two daughters. One of these two daughters is now a scientist and she resides here in the United States. Her name is Professor Mulu. The other daughter is an engineer and she
leads a huge firm in Cape Town. My partner befriended the mother of the two daughters and we used to visit the mother quite often for as long as we lived in Ethiopia. The mother was a generous woman, determined and strong, creative and kind. You will find one in a million who is as strong and passionate as her. I am surprised how fast the time goes. It goes like anything. It is about four decades since her birth now."

“I see”, the man confirmed.

Professor William continued, “So, the scholar I mentioned to you, I knew her since her birth. I never expected this to happen but time goes like anything and she is now a mother and, I would say, she is my colleague. So, she is one of those daughters I mentioned. She is also a public figure and I bet you know her, or have heard a lot about her either from your own friends or from the media.”

“Her name is familiar. I didn’t know much about her. But, I sent her an email and requested a brief meeting, if possible. I am not sure whether it will happen, though.”

“We will see.”

“Maybe this trip is a good opportunity to connect with people like her”, the man replied.

“Where are you going to stay for the conference?” Professor William asked.

“I booked a place through AirBnB.”

“You must be very smart. At your age, I didn’t even know the internet.”

“Was it not discovered by then?”

“I mean things are changing so fast and people are also learning these gadgets so fast. Now, you carry the whole library, your family photo album, and your favorite songs in one of those ‘little toys’? Technology is good; it makes your life easy, but it also has its own limitations. I have a son. And he spends all his day sitting in front of the computer or watching television. He had lost interest in going to school and I don’t know what to do. I wanted to give him some time and see what will happen. Technology spoiled him. Don’t rely much on it, anyway. I mean if you do not allow it to control you, it is fair enough.”

The man nodded in silent agreement.
“I told you early on that I was a linguist. I lived in three different countries and I met people from all over the world, all kinds of people. That experience made me to value communication. I am always eager to learn about cultures and ideas of people. I am always fascinated to learn about the worldview of people from other cultures. I research language dynamics and culturally displaced or dislocated people. That is actually the main reason why I am invited to attend this conference and speak at a session. The organizers invited me to deliver a speech about diaspora and linguistic identity. It might be a bit related to people like you who are not born here. The issue revolves around narratives of international migrants and their experiences.”

The man was pleased about the conversation. He said “I am pleased to talk to someone on such a long trip”, trying to encourage the old man to educate him more.

It took approximately half an hour to see the hostess bring some cookies and water for everyone. She then started inviting everyone to order food and drinks or to buy earphones. The man thanked her for the water and cookies. The man then swung his head to confirm that he is not in need of buying anything now. The screen in front of him was blank. After a few minutes, the man turned on the screen and started watching a movie. In the middle of watching the movie, the man felt he was exhausted and took a short nap.

He noticed that the plane was descending in preparation for landing at the heart of the city. The man looked through the window again. He noticed that the lights from the streets, the headlights from cars moving smoothly on the wide roads, the lights that struggle to escape from inside of the buildings through glass windows, and the lights from the houses and their surrounding fences made the city glare like a piece of metal in a furnace. It was a nice view. The man felt that it took a shorter time than he expected to cross the border and be in another city or in another country. Sometimes crossing borders is that easy!, the man told himself.

As the plane started descending, he felt that little pain again. His heart was aching as if something were trying to snatch it out of his ribs. The same feeling he had by the time the plane
took off for this trip about eight hours ago. The same feeling he had experienced by the time he knew that his separation from his mother was certain. It was the same feeling that he felt when he knew he will not see her every day for many more years to come. That same feeling came again, with its little pain, and more aching memory.

Everyone stretched their body and started collecting their backpacks and mini-luggage. The man had already activated the international roaming system on his phone. He was certain that it could enable to stay connected with friends and families. He gave his phone number to the old man he met on the trip. He wanted to be out of this flying metallic cylinder immediately. He felt the urge to walk on mother earth who will never say “I am tired of carrying you.” The man looked at his brief notes at a glance: Leave the airport, take a cab, call the number you found from AirBnB, get at your room, take shower, sleep well, wake up early, be at the Convention Centre at 07:00 AM.

The man said to himself, “I certainly will!!”

As soon as he started walking out of the airport, he noticed two military personnel with automatic guns. They had advanced military gear all around their duty belt. The man looked down at his shoes as if the personnel were not looking at him if he were not looking at them. The man told himself, “eh, I don’t like to have a look at these things!”

One of the personnel approached the man with a smile.

“Where are you going, sir!”

“Visiting my families.”

“Do you have a piece of photo ID?”

“Yes, I have my passport!”

“Awesome.”

While one of the officers was flipping through the pages of the passport, the man asked the other officer a question with a scared tone of voice that gets interrupted after every utterance.

“Sir, is …there…any problem?”

“No, it is just a random check.”
“Thank you, sir!”

A *random* check, a *random* trip, a *random* search... uhh. The man collected his passport and then, he walked out of the airport to a pickup location for a cab ride to a *random* house that he had picked from AirBnB.
The next morning, the man woke up early. He smiled as he looked at the rays of sun entering into his room through the window blind. He grabbed a shower, quickly changed his cloth, and left his room immediately. It was conference day one! The man reached at the Convention Centre exactly on the dot. It was impossible to miss the conference venue due to the bright and well-decorated conference entrance gates with a visible *Welcome* sign. Each letter of the sign were printed with one of the colors in a rainbow, and different from the color of the next letter. Very visible arrows at the right and at the left of the welcome sign were directing people to the registration desk, conference venues, and restrooms. The man followed the arrow to the registration desk and in few meters he noticed the volunteers welcoming every conference attendant with a smile and peaceful look.

At the registration desk, the bags filled with books, gifts, free lunch tickets, and beautiful and bright name tags, made everyone feel like very important persons. As soon as the man approached the entrance to the main ballroom, he spotted Professor William. Behind him, a dark-
skinned Abyssinian man was standing relaxed in his black suits and was conversing with somebody standing with him. The pace with which the man identified the person was amazing. The saying “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” is absolutely true. The man only had the chance to look at his miniature photo, a thumbnail attached to an email address; he now identified the person from a reasonable distance. That is Dr. Cherinet. He walked closer to Dr. Cherinet and started speaking with him.

“Hello! You must be Dr. Cherinet, right? I am the man who requested to speak to you at this conference.”

“Oh, yes. I recognized you. How are you?”

“Very good. Thank you!”

“In-de-min naw?” Cherinet repeated the greeting in Amharic. It was like the professor is reminding the man that he is welcome to speak an Ethiopian Language. The man smiled and he felt so excited.

“Do you know each other?” the man asked while looking at Professor William.

Professor William was also standing right by the side of Professor Cherinet.

“What a coincidence! We met on the plane yesterday and we had a nice trip together. I was telling him I am going to introduce him to you and your friends. Here you go! What was that saying again?” asked Professor William.

The man kept quiet.

Professor Cherinet interjected, “‘Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?’ Well, this is a mere saying for us but it is also documented. I have to think a lot about it, or what it means. That saying could refer to the diversity of the people. As it has biblical allusion, I don’t think it is only about the physical appearance of the people. But, it gives a somewhat similar sense. Maybe we are one of the oldest most diverse nation in the continent, and of course, you can easily spot our dark skin.”

They briefly discussed how long the man planned to stay in the city
“Well, tomorrow afternoon, I will have some time left aside for you. We can have some time to chat at the patio of my room. The view is also enjoyable. Professor Mulu knows about your arrival and she will talk to you soon” said Dr. Cherinet.

“I don’t know Professor Mulu before. Are you colleagues?” the man asked with excitement.

“No, not really. I came here to attend this conference. For Mulu, this is her home institution, I mean this is her place and she can help you a lot more. We can arrange any other meetings if you have plans to visit my hometown.”

The man nodded in agreement.

Professor William interrupted the conversations and added, “She is a bit busy but she will come sometime today and she will meet you. Ask her to visit her office or to arrange some time to speak with you.” The man agreed. Dr. Cherinet had informed Mulu about an Ethiopian coming to attend the conference. That strengthened the request the man sent to Mulu herself by email.

After such brief conversations, everybody walked into the ballroom to attend the opening session.
Some memories are good, some memories are bad, and others are inevitable. That was the most ferocious of all times. That was also the most sailent of times. Elders call it the time of Red Terror. The Ethiopian Red Terror, also known locally as Key Shibir, was the brutal killing of innocent civilians and politically active young people all over the country. It was the time when the earth turned deaf to the cries of women. That was the time when the blessed land of the Cush was inundated with the blood of its youth. That was the time everyone had heard guns blown al-
most every minute. That was the time when the sky turned blood red, and the earth smelt of hu-
man carcasses. This is a real incident, permanently tattooed in the hearts of our mothers.
It happened in the driest February. Its frost was piercing the legs of the barefooted farmers walk-
ing on the grass. It’s a month full of stories of bloodshed. Those killings and the related stories
left red scars in the hearts of millions of Ethiopian mothers until today. It sometimes feels that
the people still have intergenerational trauma. Due to this, many people discourage their family
members from engagement in politics and other activism. The incident that left millions in the
streets is still in the active memory of the people. In rural areas, people adopted a proverb remi-
niscent of the issue. They say, “Don’t go first, you will end up all blood.” The number of people
who lost their lives during this incident is no less than 500,000\textsuperscript{10}. The incident resulted in the mi-
gregation of highly skilled intellectuals and entrepreneurs. It was indeed a bloody February, Feb-
ruary 1976! Since then, fear pervaded Ethiopia, and repression created a culture of resistance\textsuperscript{11}.

In 1974, Emperor Haile Selassie was dethroned in a military coup. His successor, Colonel
Mengistu Haile Mariam came to power. Colonel Haile Mariam was a person in charge of the mil-
itary. He was the chair of the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police, and Territor-
ial Army. This committee was a Provisional Military Council (locally known as the Derg- mean-
ing committee). It was established to pave the way for a peaceful transition to a democratic gov-
ernment. Haile Mariam snatched the revolution and denied the people of their hopes. The coun-
try fell under his gattling guns and crushing grips. But, political leadership was not a bed of roses
for him. Haile Mariam faced resistance from many citizens and political organizations. He faced
strong resistance from the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party. He also faced another equally
strong opposition from the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (AESM). The Ethiopian People
Revolutionary Party (EPRP) was the first modern political party in the country. The All Ethiopi-
an Socialist Movement (AESM) was a similar Marxist-Leninist ideologue which also advocated
for the dethroning of the king.

Due to their rivalry position, Mengistu declared the EPRP as counterrevolutionaries and
reactionaries. He declared war against EPRP in his speech and motto "Death to Counterrevolu-
tionaries! Death to EPRP!” He designed a strategy to arm civilians who will be in charge of tracking “reactionaries”. Yet, the EPRP managed to infiltrate these defense squads. This enabled them to emerge as a strong opposition with arms in big cities including Addis Ababa. Moreover, the remaining military team bought the agenda of the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement than the Military Council. The Derg was against any political movement. The indisposed rivalry between the two parties fueled the mass killings all over the country. These situations resulted in everyone killing everybody else. Sudden disappearances were common. Random killings of men, conscienceless kidnappings of women, and gunshot happened every day. There was no one to hold the cold-blooded soldiers accountable for torturing citizens to death.

Historians had said a lot about this. Every historian claimed their own arguments to describe the suffering of Ethiopians. Elders and religious people of Ethiopia still believe that the religious Emperor Haile Selassie might have cursed the people. Even today, some of the elderly argue that Ethiopians are suffering because of the curse. The King, who was once worshipped as a saint beyond the borders of the country, might have dropped black tears before his death. Elders say, “Black tears, tears of innocence, tears of suffering, had flown as far as the thrones of the Abrahamic God.” The elders knew that no Abyssinian ruler showed a grace closer to that of the Emperor. No successor earned a dignity as towering as Haile Selassie’s all over the world. They also preserve His majesty’s curse in their orator as:

O’ thou land,
Had I done evil to you-- let it be,
But, had I wished to you the heavenly Grace,
Had I prayed day and night,
And served your people and your church,
Let the Angels and Saints,
In whose names I fed the poor,
Judge you!
You are my Queen,
You my land,
Let you see the evil, the worst of times,
And judge my character hence.

Rachel, the widow of a decent administrative clerk, could do nothing but migrate to her relatives in Addis Ababa in the aftermath of the Red Terror. Rachel had cried a lot and she didn't even hold a funeral ceremony for her husband. Under the military regime, it was unthinkable to have a proper funeral for one's relatives. One thing that clearly manifested the barbarity of the Derg was its violation of a sacred culture of the people: prohibiting families to bury their dead. Insult added to injury, the Derg used to force people pay for the bullets their loved once were killed with.

Mulu always remembers an article by a political scientist who stated it well. “In Ethiopia, there are three cultural meanings of burial and public mourning: (1) burying the dead, and knowing their grave, brings closure to the living; (2) a grave is the site of the home of the deceased; and (3), a grave is the site of the memory of the deceased.”12 People in old age wish to die in the land of their birth. Even some people in diaspora send the bodies of their deceased back home if most of the families are not living with them. It has a special value. It is a relief. Mulu still feels the pains every time she remembered that she was denied of her right to bury her dad. She feels her heart ache when she remembers that she has no place to go to and put the flowers in the graveyard. They deprived her of her rights to think of her dad in silent prayers. They deprived her of that silent spiritual connection. That was not the closure she wished to have. It had always kept her in grief.

Mulu had known that running away was the only option for her mom. Rachel, her mom, took nothing, not even her purse, by the time she left home. She only carried her daughters, the oldest on her back and the youngest on her arms, to avoid losing them in the darkness. In the dense of the darkness that protected them from the bullets, she walked out barefoot. The next day she was in the capital, Addis Ababa. Mulu, her first daughter, didn't remember the details of what
actually happened. But, she had a faint memory of the darkness and the night when her mom carried her and run away in the night.

It was a very scary scene. People were killing their own brothers on a blurred ideological fault line. The saddest part was that it had nothing to do with most of the lost lives. It had nothing to do with them. Truth be told, there is no evil than this. The nation still couldn’t settle the problem of brothers at war. Many intellectuals, merchants, and expatriate academics had also left the country as the environment was not safe for them.

Rachel moved to Addis. It had been a somehow difficult transition. Rachel was a well-trained teacher. In spite of this, she could not manage to join the public schools in Addis Ababa because of the bureaucracy. At that time, her daughter Mulu was a small girl, and her younger sister was four years younger than Mulu. Later, Rachel managed to send Mulu to a boarding school because of security concerns. The best alternative to hide her daughter from ‘evil eyes’ and gunshots was only to send her to the boarding school. But, Rachel couldn’t afford to send the younger daughter to school until she settled well in Addis. The military had shot Rachel’s husband dead during this massive bloodshed in the country. It was a painful part of the history of the nation and the wounds from it has not yet dried. Mulu grew up with her mother. Rachel played the greatest role in helping her daughter achieve her dreams. Mulu had never hesitated to mention the mentorship she earned from her mother. In fact, the religious education and sense of morality both her mom and her dad inculcated in her greatly contributed to who she is today. Mulu often attests, “My parents helped me to come to really know God.”

Of all the school teachers, Rachel was a very strong person. She was diligent, faithful and an optimist. She was so diligent that she used to believe the work as an end in itself. She also valued education. She had encouraged her daughters to pursue their studies and reach at better levels. She raised her kids decently. She raised them in such a way that they would be respectful persons to anyone they come across in life. Now a public figure in the States, Mulu was once interviewed on a local radio program and she attested to this.
“I earned my personalities, ethics, and attributes, my relationship and respect to others, and all those things from my families. These are precious gifts from my mother.”

Her families wanted her to accomplish the highest possible in everything. They didn’t influence her to be an academic or otherwise. By the time she went to college, they wanted her to perform like one of the best students. She also attested to this in every of her conversations with everyone by saying:

“When I was in high school, they used to encourage me to be the top student at my school. By the time I had to choose a college, they wanted me to go to the best college. They never influenced me to pick a specific discipline. Never did they advise me to be a doctor or an engineer; they had never influenced me to pursue a specific career. They believed in me, they trusted that my choices and my own decisions work for me.”

Telling about these things, Mulu usually gets immersed in her past. She usually enters into an indescribable state of recollection. Her mind departs her physical presence. It carries her into unforgettable past. She has a faint but lingering memory of unforgivable past. She remembers how her mother saved her life. She could never forget how her mother ran like a fugitive, carrying her and her sister. She struggles with tears and continues telling her stories. In such situations, she doesn't speak from the position of answering a question. She leaps into the past, she speaks from a re-lived past in recollection. It is hardly possible to find an Ethiopian who haven’t heard similar stories of a mother. While watching news from Ethiopia, which she used to do regularly for sometime at her early career, she remembers those mothers. She remembers those mothers and their grief when the media presents the news of killing, violence, student protests or the police officers use of excessive force to disperse a crowd. Such was a story of those mothers, and it still is in some ways a story of Ethiopian mothers today. Sometimes, Mulu feels inspired by the strength of these mothers, but what they endured also turns to be frustrating her.
A couple of days ago, Mulu just noticed a reminder from her computer’s icalendar. She had an email some months ago from an Ethiopian man who will be visiting her home institution and attending a conference hosted by her institution. The person would be attending the conference hosted by her home institution tomorrow. She knew that the man expressed his excitement to speak with her. She felt that this might be somebody who is passionate about the stories of individuals like her. In fact, she is a mother, a successful academic, a public intellectual, an optimist soul and a black woman. She succeeded after experiencing multifarious challenges. None of those identity descriptors captures the challenges she endured. If it is not exciting to speak with a scholar like her, what else will be?

The request to speak to her had also left her dumbfounded. A man, listening to a woman, while she is telling her stories? She felt that these things are loosely connected and she couldn’t get any sense of it.
The Game of the Strong

That morning, the leader of the institution delivered the opening speech for the conference. The ballroom was crowded with people from all corners of the world. This was then followed by a panel discussion by promising young scholars from some major institutions in the States. It was an interesting discussion about knowledge production across the Globe which turned at the end to a sort of argument whether knowledge liberates people or not. Then, a short health break followed before participants dispersed into the rooms prepared for the parallel sessions. The man walked to grab a cup of coffee by the corner of the lobby. He disappeared into the crowd and reached at what he needed. While he was stirring his coffee, a person behind called out his name. It was Dr. Cherinet.

The man turned back and said, “Oh, you are here”
“Aha…It is coffee”, smiled the man.
“I know”, assured Dr. Cherinet.
“By the way, I heard about you a year ago, that was six months before I received your email.”
“Really?” the man asked in surprise.
“Yes. And I learned that you are interested in stories, right?”
“Yes, I am.”
“Well, I am an educator. I like stories but I don’t like snippets- those minuscules of stories, and I would like to introduce myself fully.”
“You are not from the elevator speech era?” the man smiled.
Dr. Cherinet smiled back. “Of course I am not. I am much older than I look. Texting is for the new generation. I think this generation is a ‘victim’ of texting than typing, short jargons than long sentences, shortcuts than efforts, full of information than more of knowledge, abundance of opinions than depth of investigative journalism, learning the postmodern way than the past in the modern way,”
Dr. Cherinet continued. “By the way, I don’t like asking people incessant questions to make conversations feel like harder talk. Don’t worry, I will not ask you who you are and all that. After all, we belong to different countries. By now, you know that I am an American and you are… er…maybe a Canadian?” Dr. Cherinet smiled.
“No, I am not.”
“You have to learn to say it. Come on!”
“No, honestly, I am not an American. Nor am I a Canadian. Would you like to check my ID card?”
“No, no, no! No way. Take it easy! Actually, there is a huge controversy and significant research related to this issue. The diaspora is usually troubled to claim their citizenship even when they are citizens. There is a feeling of place-less-ness among many people. We will talk about it later.” The man agreed. He added, “Ok. Actually these things are nominal. Aren’t we all human beings? Aren’t we one and the same only by the virtue of being human?”
“Totally!” Dr. Cherinet confirmed. They kept on sipping their coffee while talking. Dr. Cherinet started telling his stories to the man.
“I AM what I tell people I AM. I am happy to tell all about my stories” Dr. Cherinet started. “That is great!” The man replied in excitement. Dr. Cherinet continued telling his stories.
“My parents departed this life a decade ago. However, they were born, had lived, worked and led all their life in Ethiopia until their final days when they rested in peace. For most of their time, including the time I was born and grew up, my parents lived in Ethiopia, surrounded by my aunties, my siblings and other relatives. My family didn’t pursue their education further, especially, my mother. My mother was the elder in her family of four men and six women and she never attended school. Even though she didn’t go to school, she was smart and served the neighbors as their trusted self-made accountant at a time when the neighborhood knew very little about banking.

“She was a kind of mother who used to encourage her kids to go to school despite her own illiteracy. A few of her siblings, the boys in particular, were able to go to school because she stayed at home to help her mom in most household chores. She sacrificed her opportunity to go to school to free her siblings to go to school. We, her kids, achieved this level of education because of her constant encouragement while we were young. Our uncle, who was an employed professional, was also able to go to school because mom took care of the house chores and other issues. Our uncle was also keen and supportive of us in our elementary school days. We very often heard his encouraging words, at times demanding that we attend and stay in school. Both of them were worthy of special praise for the successful efforts they made to make us who we are now.

“You know there was no such commonly established tradition especially within families who are not well educated. They sure want the best for their child but they used to think that it would suffice if their kids attend school and be able to join the educated circle. Most of the time, in our country, when kids are sent to school, the expectation is that the kids will grow up, accomplish their studies, get a job and lead a decent life. I recall some differences from our neighborhood though. Even though some of the kids from our nearest neighborhood had started school early, it was not a significant number of them who were able to make it through. A good number dropped out of school, a few struggled, and some remained behind. Looking at it that way, I
think those families who had not themselves had that opportunity but pushed their children to
stay in and finish their schooling, including mine, must be admired.

“Well, my parents did not live together past my seven or eight years of age. My mother
had to bear the brunt of caring and supporting me and my younger brother through high school.
It was not easy for her had it not been for our uncle who helped her throughout. At that time, one
of the handful of high schools was opened near our house. Most of the high schools were state-
owned boarding schools. So, when I joined the boarding high school, matters became less stress-
ful and the focus was more on education. Those are incidents that are stick to my memory amid
adversities- fortunately without leaving lasting consequences.

“Was it only you who was sent to school?” the man asked Dr. Cherinet.
“One of my siblings chose not to go to school. Girls were less encouraged to go to school at that
time. Most of them were not educated. Things might have changed these days. Well, all of us
lived together when we were kids. After the separation of our family, we grew up with our mom,
supervised and supported by our uncle as well. He treated us like his own children; he played the
role of a dad. By the time we joined high school, we had to leave families. I and my friends
joined a boarding school. We used to visit our relatives occasionally, and especially during sum-
mertime. The influence we got in high school was mostly from our peers and school teachers

“My school is called Medhanealem Secondary School (Holy Savior Secondary School).
It was comparable to those best schools like Teferi Mekonnen and General Wingate Schools.
Medhanealem was one of the earliest high school in the country. I used to take part in the
school’s volleyball team. I used to have special interest in soccer, and Holy Savior had the
strongest participation in soccer. There was also a College in the city and it was one of our strong
competitors.”

He continued, “I can’t tell you in words the emotional attachment and feeling there was
among us and it was a special kind of memory.”
As he spoke, he was moved by the memories of the day. His voice increased slowly, his eyes widened in excitement. He felt as if it were the moment his team won a trophy.

“We were all so eager that our team and school had good scores and became the leading in soccer. It never faded from memory.

“Don’t think I had an active role in soccer though”, Dr. Cherinet looked at the man. The man smiled.

“Because I don’t like running, I used to be a goalkeeper. Just standing at a spot was easier for me”, the man smiled while remembering his own high school days, too.

“I was neither midfielder, nor goalkeeper or defender. I was just a great fan, expressing feelings in soccer. But, I was an active player in the Volleyball team. Volleyball was not well known all over the place like soccer. However, I had a more emotional attachment to VolleyBall than any other game. We used to beat the College team quite often. But, we lost a few times. One of our student poets, Kiyya, a well recognized poet in the school, used to help us ease the stress of a loss in the game by reading a poem in the dining hall such as the following:

Volleyball, Volleyball
What is this Volleyball,
The game of the strong
Is after all …. football

“I was slim and fit since the beginning and interest in athletics has helped me maintain that stature. I was actually proportionally slim and fit, I still make the effort to keep up that. My family-- my wife, and my daughters, all try but they have to fight additional burden of their genes”, Dr. Cherinet smiled. At this time, the man showed a somewhat confused look. Dr. Cherinet said, “I mean they try to shape up. They try to be physically fit. But, I think mine is mostly genetic, we make the same efforts, but I think that nature’s dominance is strong on them.
“In terms of disposition, I was mostly reserved. For example, I used to take part in any event after I thought about it for a while, and even now at my old age, I do not rush to a decision unless there is urgency. At my workplace, when I call staff for a meeting, I always endeavor to capture their thoughts, feelings, and viewpoints, and weigh it in terms of its positive and negative outcome or in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. I then make efforts to coordinate this with my own thoughts, feelings and beliefs for harmonized and stronger outcome or viable decision.”

“Were you an administrator?” the man asked.
“Well, we may talk more about it later but briefly touching on it now. I worked as a faculty member in the United States for many years, with mentoring and supervision of students alongside. It was like becoming a spiritual father for the students.”

The man interrupted. “Usually people who go through college became somewhat indifferent to such values. But, that is my observation. Am I right?”
Dr. Cherinet said, “That is true, but not always true. Well, since the day we moved to the United States, I and my family joined other Ethiopians in the community to establish a parish church.

“During my early career back home, I was focused on my studies. I grew up with the sense that I could get to some point and then upgrade even further. I was given an opportunity to work as a junior health professional in my college for three years and then I went to a newly established Health Centre in a remote area. Even though the centre I served at was in a small town, I was not disappointed because of the opportunity. I had to be practicing and translating the knowledge I garnered at the college. After my practice and service in the rural area, I was given the opportunity to study abroad, following which I returned back home and served in academic as well as administrative positions.

“While in high school, I was interested to join the Agricultural College. Later on, my interest in the Health Sciences grew, and I liked the opportunity to train people and to help people who are in need of medical attention. That is how I started my professional career and it hap-
pened at the College of Public Health. The college just started operation in the same year I joined upper secondary.”

“Oh, Really?” the man was excited to hear how old the college was.
“Yes. You see I am telling you how old I am.”, Dr. Cherinet laughed.

Dr. Cherinet interrupted telling his stories. And, suddenly, they both noticed that the crowd was thinning and people were going back to the parallel sessions. The man enjoyed listening to the stories Dr. Cherinet kept telling him. For someone looking at them from a reasonable distance, both individuals looked like close relatives consulting each other on some serious matters. Both didn’t feel that fifteen minutes were past while they were standing at the same spot. They noticed that they were almost the last ones except some people coming from the washroom. They both had their coffee mugs in their hands. They were immersed in the conversation and both didn’t notice that the coffee in their mugs already got colder. They left their half-full mugs on the nearest table and rushed to different rooms to attend sessions of their preference.

While rushing, Dr. Cherinet said, “We will continue later!”
The man smiled and said, “In the afternoon break!”
Morning sessions ended successfully. At noon, lunch was served for all participants. The man lined up at the table to grab his meal. He didn’t have specific diet preference. He noticed that some conference participants were so worried as to what to eat, some were looking for gluten free meals, others were locating pure vegan dishes. He picked a traditional Caesar salad sauce for an appetizer, and a Chicken Supreme stuffed with Westphalian Ham, and Gruyere Cheese accompanied by a White Wine Apricot Cheese. At the end of the buffet, desserts of all kinds were left for everyone to enjoy. The man skipped the desserts and stretched his hand to grab a glass of water.

As soon as he exited the line, he noticed Dr. Cherinet right in front of him with some small pieces of fried red salmon and green vegetables. Both of them had decided to continue their conversations during health breaks between parallel sessions. Both wanted to make the most out of this opportunity. The man smiled and Dr. Cherinet asked whether the man was alone. Then, they agreed to sit at the patio and have brief conversations.

“Don’t you have to join your colleagues?” the man asked with respect.

“Don’t worry! Everyone is a colleague.” Dr. Cherinet made a great point.
The man was excited and thanked Dr. Cherinet for the opportunity. Most of the participants returned back to the ballroom with their meals. Only a couple were by the huge fancy patio and they look like tourists.

This flat roof patio at the west side of the building was a comfortable space to taste the silence of the exterior. Black-eyed Susan flowers climbing the right side of the wall appeared like a child’s ear that were alert to listen to what the people by the patio were talking about. Tiny black speakers at the corners of the flat roof released soft music that paints memories of every listener on the silence by the patio.

The gentlemen took a corner by the patio and started conversations while having their lunch. The soft wind coming from south and the gray color of the water they faced made the scene special. Every time the soft whisper of the wind swirled on their forehead and made its way through their ears and nostrils, they felt they couldn’t tell the difference as to whether the moisture they felt was actually the air or the water. The whisper of the wind and the moisture were mingled in one to caress their face softly and delight everyone by the patio. And like a spice on a soup was the background music.

While listening to Dr. Cherinet, the man was taken slowly by the soft background music. Yanni’s Live at the Acropolis was playing. Suddenly, the music was switched from Live at the Acropolis to Nostalgia, another song in the same album. And again, there was another shorter interruption and Yanni started speaking with soft rhythm.

The man remembered his college life where he used to listen to Yanni. He used to listen to Live at the Acropolis while they worked on assignments, or when they read A Concise Introduction to the Questions that Matter. Now again, he is listening to Live at the Acropolis while asking Dr. Cherinet about his views on questions that matter.
Yanni’s speech was as soft and melodic as *Nostalgia* itself. In the speech, he mentioned about an astronaut. He said,

A little while back I was watching an interview with one of the astronauts from the Space Shuttle and in this interview he was describing his experiences while he was orbiting the planet and he was saying ‘*How beautiful Earth looks from above!*’ and he said that, much to his surprise, when he was going over Europe, he found that he was having a hard time telling the countries apart from each other. He said, *the reason for that was, that the lines in the maps are not in the ground, it makes a great point: these lines really don’t exist. They’re made up completely and we perpetuate in the illusion that somehow we’re all different from each other* and I think the world would be a much better place if someday we stop pretending that these lines exist and we concentrate in our similarities rather than in our differences. And I just want to remember one more thing that everything great that has ever happened to humanity since the beginning, has begun as a single thought in someone’s mind and if anyone of us is capable of such a great thought then all of us have the same capacity, capability, because we are all the same.

Because the man used to listen to Yanni time and again, he was able to rehearse the speech at the same pace, without missing a word. The man was taken back to his special days. He remembered everything and suddenly quit his conversation with Dr. Cherinet. He gazed at the dish and started rehearsing with Yanni again, the same words, the same pace, the sameness.

The man told himself, *“How wonderful it is to hear those words again!”* The man felt that the world would feel more like a prison full of inmates if it had not been for artists, singers and philosophers who entertain thoughts like this.

Suddenly, Dr. Cherinet struck a conversation.

“We can talk while eating, right?”

“Of course. That is why I wanted to have this time with you. I am enjoying listening to your stories”, the man confirmed.

“The song you heard last is the one which is called *Nostalgia*, right?” Dr. Cherinet asked.
The man anticipated that Dr. Cherinet might have noticed the emotional attachment the man demonstrated with the composition.

The man answered, “Well, yes, but it is not only for the song that I like it. Yanni plays keyboard, piano and classical and world music and he blends them all. I like that sound which comes as one from all those different sounds. And in all the sounds from different instruments, I challenge myself with some attempt to listen to the silences in between. I also challenge myself to understand the oneness of the sounds that come from different instruments. How they are composed to make one whole music is impressive. Chaos comes to order, randomness becomes one-ness and this delights the soul. That might be what he meant by ‘It makes a great point!’” the man told Dr. Cherinet.

“You are wise.” Dr. Cherinet complemented the man.

“Maybe. Actually, I am more interested to learn from experience, to know the paths you took, the things you experienced in life.”

“And I am more interested in narrating, I am homo narran\(^{14}\). In my college, we were the third batch of students since the establishment of the college. The college was established in partnership with the Ethiopian government, American government, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO). These four organs established the college in partnership. It was a college that used to train Health Officers, Nurses, Sanitarians and Laboratory Technicians. There were two cohorts before my batch. I joined a four-year program. The different categories of students were trained as a team with a plan that they will be working together in health centers. This was one of the reasons I liked life in the college. Secondly, the feeling that I will be able to graduate from this program and earn a livelihood to help myself and others was strong in me and I believe many of those students who had joined the program had similar mindsets.

“We were in the boarding school as high school students. So, we were used to living in groups and we liked it by then. Living in dormitories on campus had its own advantages. The campus was not far from our parents. It used to provide students with meals as well as monthly stipend. We also had several diverse entertainment programs such as drama and movies and de-
bates and soccer games in which the college team was outshining three of city wide teams. The staff in the college were very helpful and tried to make us feel comfortable besides educating and training us. That's because they thought we were far away from our homes, and homesickness was a problem for many of us. So, we had a very vibrant group of students performing drama on campus.”

“Drama in a Health College?” the man burst in surprise.

“Oh, yeah! Why are you surprised? Didn’t you watch the news about Ethiopian performers yester-
day?” Dr. Cherinet interrupted eating his meal.

“No, I didn’t watch any news yesterday. I was quite a bit tired.”, the man replied.

“Ok. Check it out later. Your artists are in Greece to perform.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. Art belongs to us!” After saying this, Dr. Cherinet resumed cutting the salmon into pieces.

“Let me ask you, Dr. Cherinet. Greece, drama, Ethiopians…. is it a good combination?”

“Why not? You know even the name of your country is originally from Greek.”

“I heard that but I don’t know the details.”, the man tilted his head.

“Well, it is originally a Greek word, aithiopia, from aitho, “I burn”, and ops, “face”. It would hence mean the land of black people. Ethiopia is recognized as the land of the Cush, maybe because of this.”, Dr. Cherinet explained.

The man remembered the Greek Mythology, and the story of Andromeda in his high school classes.

“So, you know that the Greeks seek er…”, Dr. Cherinet was checking on the man.

“Art!” the man interjected immediately,

“No….Wisdom!”

“You are quoting the Bible, right?” asked the man.

Dr. Cherinet confirmed.

“So, it says the Greeks seek after Art.”

“But the English bible I used to read says the Greeks seek after wisdom. Perhaps, it is an issue of translation.”, Dr. Cherinet resolved the issue in an attempt to continue the conversation.
“I see.”, the man acknowledged.

“Your artists are in Greece to perform ‘the last years of the philosopher Socrates, his trial and final days’”

“Very interesting!” replied the man, suddenly cautious.

“Back to my point, we took turns to prepare and stage entertaining as well as educational dramas. Nursing students participated actively in shows, talent contests and performances.”

“But, it is not like this nowadays. How do you see the inclusion of drama and art in general in health education?” asked the man as it sounded strange for him to learn this fact.

“I think, when conjoined with other studies, it enriches educational experience”, said Dr. Cherinet soothingly, as he was speaking from experience.

“Otherwise?” the man asked in a way that feels as if he were opposing the claim.

“Otherwise, the experience will be shallow. So, we used to borrow movies from our expatriate instructors and the entertainment committee organized to run it for all students. Some students were good at taking the lead in organizing these programs including soccer games.”

“But, how come you were able to stage drama in college? At that time? How about the politics?” the man couldn’t believe what he was hearing. These are impossible in the colleges in Ethiopia at present. If they are organized, they will certainly be politicized right away and it is risky.

“This was during the time of the Emperor. The drama didn't have any political content. In the Medical School in Addis, we took creative writing class for one semester. There was an American English language instructor. I used to like his class very much. This instructor impressed me very much. One day, he asked us to write a story and it was around the time President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Most of the students in the class wrote about John F. Kennedy. Only very few students wrote stories on other topics. A few essays were read in class, and the instructor was impressed that so many students wrote essays in favor of the late president while that same day outside the campus on Arat Kilo Street, many students were protesting against the Ethiopian government, and their own King.”
“Wasn’t the protest before the troubled month? I mean February?” the man asked to have a clear understanding about the past.

“Yes! That was before the Bloody February, a troubled month in Ethiopian history. Student protest started around 1962, it became a nation-wide protest later on. There were more frequent student protests against the imperial regime in 1963. It was really a paradox. I mean, we were all discussing Kennedy as being a very good president and his being nice and all that but out of the university premises, just in few meters difference, was a protest against a friend of Kennedy”, Dr. Cherinet smiled. He could hardly forget those days.

“At that time, there was an American mission not too far from the college and they let us borrow their movie collections. Some of the expatriate staff had some collections as well. Do you know those old Western movies? I still watch those movies every now and then. The movies were not necessarily spiritual. They also had educational themes, historical and entertaining as well.”

“What other things were interesting and unforgettable from your college life?” asked the man

“We had a very vibrant college life. We used to get training on how to travel on horseback, and mules, and how to fix and drive cars, too. The training was provided anticipating in advance the possibility that we may serve in rural areas. No training was more helpful than the one that conjoined context and phenomena. And the impact even went beyond the services we were expected to provide. We didn’t count years in schools only focusing on reading.” While listening to Dr. Cherinet and looking deep into his sparkling eyes, the man noticed the grace and the satisfaction on his face.

Dr. Cherinet continued telling his stories with delight. The man felt that Dr. Cherinet was right to identify himself as a homo narran.
“Our college was blessed, I would say, with international faculty who not only gave us
good education but also made life in our youth enjoyable. Some of our professors were also
renowned public intellectuals.”

“Like you are now?” the man remarked bravely.
“Err…I don’t mean that. Am I?” Dr. Cherinet was modest.

“Well, it is obvious”, the man persisted.

Dr. Cherinet didn’t answer immediately. He gazed at the last slice of the fried salmon on his
plate. He then looked at the man and said, “To be a public intellectual, is it an open vacancy or a
life calling? Or, putting it the other way, is every academic a public intellectual by default? I am
aware that people refer to me as a public intellectual. However, I think my contribution and en-
gagement in public issues, issues that matter to the vast majority of our community, I mean be-
yond knowledge production that attends to academic procedures, is minimal. Professor Kidus
probably makes the best or ideal candidate of such a being. I mean err…he is the one I mention
as such a being from the diaspora community.”

The man grabbed the glass of water in front of him and struggled to recall the appearance
of Professor Kidus. Dr. Cherinet was thinking about an interview Professor Kidus had with a
journalist some years back.

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This is Professor Kidus. Thank you very much for joining us Kidus. I really appreciate for
speaking to us and coming all the way to our studio.

Alright!

Hello listeners, this is a quick introduction, Professor Kidus was born and grew up in Addis
Ababa. He belongs to a well-known business family. His father was a renowned businessman whom
Queen Elizabeth met during her visit to Ethiopia. Kidus is an all time media guru, a high profile aca-
demic public intellectual, and the listener of the BBC since the age of thirteen. Thank you gain.
Professor Kidus. Please tell us about your parents, to begin our discussion. Tell us about your mother
and your father, and their life?!
Thank you again for your invitation. My mother studied up to eighth grade but you know women used to get married early and she was married to my father by the time she was seventeen.

The journalist interrupted. She stressed, “Seventeen?” Her tone of voice was raised as if she were listening to some horrible news. Kidus had to repeat.

“Yes, seventeen, and she had to quit school right after that. My dad studied up to grade eight. He was seven or eight years of age by the time Italians occupied the country. It is not far. It is a recent history. He used to tutor me about history every day, so during those five years when Italians were preparing to occupy the country, the kids of those landlords, I mean the elites, were forced to study Italian in the schools and he too studied Italian. I like my parents, they were very humble and decent. They were unique because individuals in other places, I mean within the country, were corrupt and they were looting the property of the country but my parents lived with their integrity intact. We were not poor; we had a huge area of land to till or rent until the Derg arrived and expropriated it because of its socialist/communist ideology. Using the resources we had, my mother was in charge of helping over a dozen of individuals, including poorest neighbors and families of my great grandparents. This was her voluntary, I would say public, service. My mom was known all over the place for her kindness, for her sense of equality, justice, and generosity.

During the Derg era, when there was a wide search of the houses of every individual for weapon and political publications, our house was not searched. The people used to call my mother Mother Teresa. All my life, and later, it became part of my duty to voice to my people and my country. This happened primarily due to the influences from my mother. I have indescribable love to my country. I feel the need to speak for my country, defend the poor, and be voice to the voiceless- otherwise I have no other self-interest.

My dad had a vested interest in education. He always used to encourage us, myself and my siblings, to go to school and educate ourselves. He used to follow-up on us. He sent us to the best school in town. His was a very positive influence towards our education. Our life was intertwined with our neighbors. Our poorest relatives used to come and visit us often and they always felt at home and comfortable to stay at our home. When there were holidays, we were encouraged to visit our poorest relatives; we didn’t go to the rich relatives. My parents were encouraging us to know the other side of life as lived by the majority and to respect and socialize with poor relatives despite our social status and elevated living standard. Both my mom and my dad believe that there is no differ-
ence between human beings and that we are all the same creatures despite our social conditions. We stood with the poor and we were known for that.

What was your condition during the 1974 revolution? What do you remember?

At my very tender age, during 1974, we were sent to a campaign by the government. It was the time for me to join Addis Ababa University but I was not able to join. It was closed. I remember that soldiers were chasing the youth and we, as young students, used to watch over the fence what was going on out there. Some of my friends lost their lives in that incident. I was not a member of any of the political parties, I was not mature enough for that, but some of my young friends were killed and they departed this life too early. But, you could do nothing because it was something that happened all over the nation and err…. It is the saddest part really and it is one of the major reasons why the country is still in such a turmoil.

How do you end up as a renowned academic-public intellectual?

I was very much interested in education, and in my life, I changed my mind as to what I should study about three or so times. I was interested to be a Medical Doctor until the age of 13 or 14 and then from grade 9 to 11, I became interested in farming and agriculture. This was my interest until the Derg expropriated our land. By the time I reached grade 11, all of a sudden I changed my mind and something that I didn’t recognize happened. I was a good reader since my childhood and I had never missed current affairs and you know, at that time, there was this shortwave radio and I used to listen to the BBC radio. My dad used to bring Italian and French Newspapers home. We were not good at these languages. However, we used to understand the content just by looking at the pictures.

So, I noticed that I was more inclined towards administrative and foreign policy issues. I was in fact deserving to join Black Lions, the best Medical School in the country, because at that time the requirement was having very good matriculation score in the Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE). But, I chose to study one of the fields in the social sciences. I joined College of Social Science at Addis Ababa University on my own, no one forced me to pursue my studies in this field. So, this is how I started to pursue my studies at the level of Bachelor of Arts.

You told me already that you used to spend your time playing. How was your appearance like at that time? Were you athletic, well-built or how do you describe yourself?
I used to play soccer. At school, I was an outfield player. I was sweeper. *This position is rather more fluid than that of other defenders who man-mark their designated opponents*. When you are a sweeper, you have to ‘sweep up’ the ball if an opponent manages to breach the defensive line. You also need to defend your team. I was very good in defending the team and I never let a ball roll past me.

*This is fabulous. Probably you would be named after Eric Bailly if you were playing these days, right?*

I think so, but now I am not much into it.

*Got it. So, by the time there was the political turmoil, during the socialist regime, what happened to you? Where did you go?*

By then, everybody was prohibited from going to the university and colleges. By that time, we went to Addis Ababa University, and they sent us back home before we even visited what the campus looked like. Then there was the national campaign. The government sent students to rural areas to teach reading and computing to the farmers in remote areas. That incident created the opportunity for me to know my country. They sent us to Tigray, the northern part of Ethiopia, and we had even heard guns blowing when the fighters formed the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) party, now the leading political party in the country for over twenty-five years. We had no idea, we had never left home, we were very decent, with no experience at all. It was like separating a newly born and a mother, and you know they were thinking like they were punishing us, city boys, and those from the elite family, so they assigned as to the remote borders, I was able to learn all about my country very well since then.

*So, you knew what was going on around?*

Of course. When the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) was fighting with the socialist Derg, I was in Tigray. That was also the time when the war between Derg and the Ethiopian Democratic Union [EDU] broke out.

*What were you doing there....?*
It was somewhat strange. We were expected to teach people literacy, expropriate houses, huts, and other properties. The rent at that time was like 75 cents per month for a hut and it dropped to 35 cents. I was one of the youngest students in the campaign. It was a bit of early age to be a high school graduate at that time. University students and instructors were used to be assigned to different posts as supervisors and we used to patrol together, register properties and expropriate them. We used to post “These properties are nationalized!” on the houses and other properties. They used to say that it is Marxism. You “nationalize” private properties and pass it over to the poor. The regime used students as instruments to implement this policy.

All these happened during the Derg era, right?

I can tell you the year, it was 1974. We were ordered to gather at Jan Meda- you know this is the vast sports ground near the palace. Major national and religious celebrations and sports competitions are held at this place. As we gathered there, they told us that it is a month of campaign and they provided us with khaki uniforms, and mottos. Following this, they threw us as far away as possible, Tigray. So, I was assigned to a remote district past Adwa town. At an average distance of 70 kilometres South of this area, we had witnessed different factions fighting conventional wars, Eritrea was a walking distance from this place.

I think it is a border between Eritrea and Ethiopia?!

It is. But, Eritrea was just a region in Ethiopia. I was able to witness the love and kindness of Tigrayan mothers just like the Amhara mothers. I had traveled to Wallo, I knew Gondar to some extent, poverty is the same regardless of location and I am surprised how much faithful people were.

So, what was the difference? Or, what was difficult and what did you notice at that time?

Leave the politics aside, I am telling you. People are just people, all poor, they treated us like one of their kids and they made coffee for us, prepared food for us and the mothers used to say, “These are innocent kids from Addis, they are innocent.”

They dropped their tears when they saw us depart, they cooked for us in the mornings, they fed us. So, I have a lot of memories from these old days, good memories, of course. In the late 1970s, I joined the College of Social Sciences and the Humanities. The political tension was unyielding, Derg was establishing itself firmly, there was no academic freedom, there was more pressure, and in
this situation, I received my Bachelor of Arts degree. Everybody knew that there was no freedom. As soon as the Red Terror was over, Derg won the battle in the major cities, and as time went by, some of those in prison were released and even individuals who were much older than my age group started attending college with us. Many cadres were released despite a number of those from All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (AESM) and Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party (EPRP) lost their lives.

And what were your worst memories in college?

I remember lack of resources specially books. While we were students, we had to register and wait for our turn to read a book. At that time, a single book was assigned for 30-40 students. Until the pages of the book become dog-eared and torn into pieces, we had to line up to get it and read it. Resource was meagre. But, the new generation has no clue about this. A lot of improvements are there now. For the younger generation, the story, the problem, and the context are all different.

I see. Tell me how you advanced in your professional career.

There was economic recession during the Derg regime. My mom was the most generous person on earth. She used to feed all our relatives and neighbors. I had seen my parents suffering from lack of resources and income to sustain this practice. I saw it with my naked eyes when everything was meagre, money was inadequate. By the time I was a second-year student, I started working to help my parents. I searched for a summer job and finally, I was able to secure one in a humanitarian organization. Before my employment as a graduate assistant, I was already offered a full-time employment by the organization. I kept the consult of my dad. I asked him which one would be better for my future. He told me that if I get employment at the university, the institution could help to pursue my studies further in Masters and Ph.D. Programs. Moreover, he told me that there will be no hassle as I will be spending my time with books and I will have more freedom. I was very much interested to teach and I agreed. I accepted the job offer as a graduate assistant.

How comfortable was academia in challenging some issues? I mean in Ethiopian context?

You would be surprised that the university had been like an island. Even though it had no gun, it was always speaking to power. For example, during the Derg regime, academics challenged the proposal to collaborate with USSR, and what socialism meant as an ideology. Academia raised issues that were not discussed beyond the campus premises. Academics were criticizing the government but without going to the extreme, otherwise it will have consequences.
What is most difficult for an academic turned public intellectual?

In general, academics are not good people to dissemble. Dissembling, pretending .There is something that you believe is right, and there is the policy of the government, you strive to implement policies. There are times you go against some ideologues and “policies”. And then, there is this issue of academic freedom. I collaborated with a number of international scholars who came to Ethiopia to conduct research. As a result, I think I somehow developed a unique view of academic freedom which is the ability to exercise what you believe in, to express your feelings and thoughts freely, without any fear or intimidation, of course in a disciplined way. What people often neglect, as I see it, is that academic freedom also means the willingness to listen and respect the other side with good intentions; you don’t necessarily have to accept but you should be able to listen, respect, not underestimate, and make the other idea respected to the extent that you need your ideas be respected.

I live in the United States now and there is certainly a tremendous degree of freedom in this country. In a way, it is limited here, too. What is beneficial here is that once you are established, you will have a permanent salary, especially if you are tenured. But, hold on, there is no more tenure these days. Farewell to tenure! The American system cannot be taken as a model to advocate for academic freedom in a sense that if you are not in the tenure track employment, you will certainly have to deal with a lot of stuff, like too much workload. The system is simply made to garner profit. So, it is increasingly tormenting the life of the mind and progressively silencing intellectuals. Who will speak to challenge the status quo before tenure? In contrast, in countries like Ethiopia, poverty is an issue, faculty do not even have decent housing. Of course, the respect we earn if somebody mentioned teaching as their profession was tremendous, at least until I left the country. That is missing here.

So, in general what factor contributed for building your identity as an academic public intellectual?

Well, it is hardly possible to pick a single factor. There are intricacies of factors that are attributed to this. It is more personal and less political. In my case, it started from being a defender in the soccer field. It developed by looking at my mother helping the poor, speaking for them, and empowering them. But, my field of study also contributed a part.

Thank you so much, Professor Kidus, and I hope you will join us for another interview soon.
Thank you!

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Dr. Cherinet remembered the interview Dr. Kidus had with the media. At the end of the interview, Dr. Cherinet had felt that Dr. Kidus is indeed a real public intellectual and his stories and even his parents’ stories augment the issue. Dr. Cherinet looked the man into his eyes and continued the conversation.

“I don’t remember but I heard this man speak his life stories somewhere and I was so impressed. I think it was on TedTalk?! Oh no!

Memory is failing me. I think it was on BBC Outlook. Yes, I am sure it is. Because the reason he was interviewed was he was recommended as the life-time listener of the BBC radio in addition to being their frequent interviewee. I heard it while I was doing my second postdoctoral research in Singapore”, Dr. Cherinet affirmed.

“Was Professor Kidus famous all over the place even at that time?” the man asked in disbelief.

Dr. Cherinet reassured. “Yes, indeed. That is why it sounds quite logical to call such a person a public intellectual, and he is always on the media. Coming back to my professors, some were well recognized. We had very international staff. Our dean was from China, assigned to the position by the World Health Organization (WHO). A few other instructors were also assigned by the WHO to the college. There were a few Ethiopians and American nurses. There were no Ethiopian professors. Doctors were mainly German citizens. Ethiopian professors emerged right after I graduated and started working there as a faculty because the programs were expanding.”

The man queried why there were no Ethiopian professors at that time. Dr. Cherinet mentioned that higher education was a relatively new phenomena in the country some 60-70 years ago. Moreover, he also told the man that the revolution and anti-intellectual climate also contributed to the significant loss of the country’s brainpower.
Dr. Cherinet mentioned, “Some of my professors are still alive and active as academic public intellectuals in the country. The university turned out to be a political stronghold for protesters.”

In fact, Dr. Cherinet was critical of the situation. Looking back at it, he feels where the loose end lied. He said, “Well, many people bought the ideals of socialism and communism without challenging the ideas sufficiently well. It was almost that way, we started to hear about it here and there and later on, it had overflown and exploded.”

“Why was Ethiopian socialism or our revolution rather different and too destructive?” the man was wondering. “You see we always imitate; we fall prone to our own imitation of foreign politics and many other aspects of life. We just ignore what we have in our hands. We don’t value what we have. My grandmother always have this proverb that she rehearses, ‘A gold in a palm feels like a copper!’ You don’t value it when you own it.” Dr. Cherinet was opening his palm while saying the proverb as if he were going to perform some magic to show a gold turn into copper in his palms.

Dr. Cherinet continued, “I think a scholar named Clapham researched about this feature of emulation as our weak part. You can search more about it, if you are interested”

“Sure, I will”, the man confirmed.

“By the way, I had worked as a faculty member for so long. I very well knew the feelings of the students. There were some student leaders who were organizing and pushing those ideas forward. Well, as it gained momentum, I myself was inclined to it and was interested in some way. But this is a secret, you don’t have to tell to anyone,” smiled Dr. Cherinet.

The man smiled back.

“Some of our colleagues were selected from each college in the country. They were invited to visit China in 1973 for experience sharing visit. By the way, Nixon was the American President

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and he also visited China a few months before this trip. They say he was the first sitting American President to visit China.”

“Faculty members who returned from this visit were not excited about what they saw in China. They mentioned that the efforts made to empower the ordinary Chinese were very limited. Upon their return, some faculty members delivered a positive and supportive speech about their visit. It was expected of them to allure students, get more fans of this ideology. China is still ruled by the Communist Party of China and it owns the system until today. I said nothing about these issues. I didn’t discuss as to how the ideology didn’t work in Ethiopian context. I told you before that I am not a public intellectual. You see now? I lack the courage to confront life head-on.” Then, Dr. Cherinet breathed deeply. The man nodded in agreement. Dr. Cherinet continued.

“We imitated socialism, and we failed! We imitated communism, and failed. Now, we are trying to imitate American democracy, and the election system, and we always end up killing each other. Sometimes, I end up in surprise as to how things play out and how things change with time. Even though the Socialist government of Ethiopia is long gone, I think Ethiopia is still in the same route. We pretend we have multi-party system, but deep inside, the government models the Chinese system. We had strong men, they jailed all the socialist witches, they promised the people that democracy and human rights will flourish. In the past two decades, nothing is changed. Well, that is not the issue to talk about now but that is somehow related with my story.”

The man felt a twist in the gut. Rarely do Ethiopian diaspora in the United States comment on current issues in Ethiopian politics in such a straightforward manner, specially in issues related to internal political affairs.

Both of them finished their meals. Dr. Cherinet wanted to use the bathroom and told the man he will see him at the lobby area.

“Afternoon sessions are challenging”, Dr. Cherinet smiled.
“I ate too much while speaking with you, I am feeling the weight of the food and that is triggering my sleep-mode button”, the man smiled. After a while, both Dr. Cherinet and the man met by the lobby area. They decided to grab hot beverages before they go back to the afternoon session.

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Close to an hour and a half were spent in parallel sessions. As soon as the first half of the afternoon session was over, almost all participants gathered at the lobby area for a coffee break. The man also walked to the lobby area. The area was crowded with the voices and conversations of conference participants. The clatters of mugs and glasses and spoons along with the sounds of people talking to each other makes the lobby area feel like an open Christmas market. Professor William was probably the tallest of all the conference participants. The man spotted Professor William from afar and walked closer to him.

“Hey you! How is it going?” Professor William asked with his shiny smiles.

“It is good!”

“Are you meeting new people? Did you talk to them?” Professor William asked.

“Somehow!”

“Don’t be silent! Everybody is a colleague here. And you are in a conference. Conference is all about conference-ing: Coming together, consulting each other, isn’t it? “

The man nodded in agreement!

“So, you have to meet people and consult with others.”

The man agreed. Before he spoke a word in his turn, the man noticed a woman getting out of the elevator at the right corner of the hall. She walked towards their direction with grace and smile. It was Professor Mulu.

Mulu is a medium woman with a young-looking chubby face. Her spotless dark skin and her very white teeth radiate rays of hope all around the place. She walks upright, with confidence and clear vision, in a very respectful way. She walked towards the people gathering around the coffee table. She walked slowly as if she were careful to avoid the noise from her steps. Professor William smiled and greeted her with respect.
“Professor Mulu!” He called her name out as if stage leaders call young students’ names during an annual high school students’ award ceremony, asking everyone to be ready to clasp their hands. He referred to the man as a *gentleman*. He then informed Mulu that this *gentleman* flew with him last night. And that he came to be a friend of Professor William’s friends. Mulu had spotted the man right away. Thanks to the internet, everybody’s face is on the intangible book—facebook, no more hidden from anyone anymore.

The man and Mulu greeted each other and had a brief conversation. She called the man by his name. They were conversing with each other as if they had known each other before. So now, Professor William concluded that Dr. Cherinet had already introduced the *gentleman* to Mulu. Mulu confirmed same. Mulu had her office on the seventh floor. It was unfortunately the busiest day for her. She appeared at the lobby for a brief introduction with the man. They both agreed to set at 05:00 PM at the same place.

The rest of that afternoon passed like a blink of an eye. Usually, the first day of a conference passes like a fleeting moment. Around 05:00 pm, everybody gathered for conversations and snacks at the same place in the lobby.

The man kept looking for Mulu as per their appointment.

Mulu returned back to the lobby area on the dot. This time, she carried her notebook and keysets on the one hand and her golden quilted bag on the other.

As she approached the man, they slipped into a conversation immediately.

“I am back again. I hope you enjoyed the conversations. How long will you stay in this city?”

“May be for four days but I may extend my stay, if necessary.”

“Where do you stay?”
“I am currently staying at somebody’s house.”

“Do you know them before?”

“No, I found about their place on AirBnB and we had some email exchanges. I booked it and I arrived yesterday”

“I see…hmmm. Why don’t you stay at my place?”

“I prefer to stay at my room”

“I know you have already paid for it but there is a single guest room which we usually keep for friends visiting us. Also, my eldest daughter may not even be at home today, she has her friend’s birthday party. My family would love to have guests and if you do not mind, we can do most of the conversations while riding home as well.” Mulu offered this opportunity to the man in an overly polite way, as she usually is. She was almost imploring the man.

“Ok, but I have already dropped my luggage there and…."

“I guess it wouldn’t be more than ten minutes drive from here to collect your luggage. I know you will not say ‘yes’ right away. I am well aware of our culture.”

They both smiled. It was a brief conversation, it was also sort of argument. Maybe the man shouldn’t have insisted. He should have said “yes” right away. Mulu smiled. Her eyes became brighter as he confirmed to stay at her place. She emphasized the “yessss” while she was walking to the parking lot behind the conference venue. For anyone listening to her murmur, it sounded as if Mulu were rehearsing a line from e.e.cumming’s poem to herself “yes is a pleasant country”17. Yes, indeed yes is pleasant!
How come?

Mulu and the man walked out of the convention centre. As they were walking to her car, she told the man that the building was primarily built for the purpose of a hotel. The hotel was not profiting much because of its location and the university bought the building and relocated some departments and administrative offices. Only the convention centre belongs to the first owners of the building now and the university sometimes hosts small conferences and faculty gatherings in this convention centre.

As they approached her car, Mulu remembered the email request she received from the man a long time ago. She didn’t know why the man wanted to speak to her even though he mentioned that he wanted to speak with her and listen to her stories. She was however certain that the
questions the man is going to ask will not be as technical as derivatives, calculus, or incidence proportion. It will not be as difficult as measuring death rates and its causes in a community. Mulu has never thought of telling her stories to anyone.

She was wondering whether her stories are worth telling and who should tell her stories, too. Mulu came from a rural family, religious in tradition, and very humble. She is well-mannered and decent. Since her childhood, her parents advised her that her work should tell about her, and about who she is. They used to tell her that telling one's own stories is self-aggrandizement. Mulu believes that others can tell who she is and her story is not only what she tells. Rather, her story is the sum total of what she tells herself, what she tells others, and what others tell her. For Mulu, what others tell her about her stories is the least reliable. This is because others are as humble as she is and they always care about her emotions and feelings. Maybe, they are cautious not to be like the emperor-has-no-clothes kid. She also feels that what she tells others about herself is less acceptable. This is so because her stories are at odds with what most people characterize of a woman in this society.

How come a woman tells her story to others? How come? She has never heard of that. She asked the man if he has ever heard of a woman telling her own story in his society or on the national television. She meant that is rarely the case. It is a wonder that a man wanted to learn about a woman’s stories, her stories. It is another wonder that he crossed the border to do this. For her, it sounds strange, though it is true. Well, it is not only in Ethiopian society, but even here in the States, she rarely hears of such a thing. In fact, there are some vocal women who speak about difficult knowledge. Some women took those disturbing knowledges and truth to stages. Among such knowledges are race relations, indigenous issues, and the Black Lives movement. They do rarely get attention, she meant they are minorities, they are invisible. She told the man about these thoughts.

“What do you mean by invisible?” the man interrupted and asked her.
“So, I am not visible, I mean er….you never care. I mean you see but you do not notice. This is something some people have internalized. It is an entrenched culture. You do not pay attention…..but it may not be intentional…. At least, I don't have to judge.”

“I see”, the man replied. He also remembered his own observation of some issues in relation to this. Some years back, the man was attending a conference for educators. Back then, a professor who chairs the association was leading a panel discussion. As a chair, the professor stood in the middle of the audience, and four other professors were on a stage, all of them were females. While facilitating the discussion, the chair forgot to invite the fourth panelist. This fourth professor, who was a black professor, had to raise her hand, and remind the chair that she was not given a chance. It was shocking for a handful of the participants. The majority were not able to see what happened. They were not able to see how some participants, if not the forgotten panelist, felt about the issue.

“So, you come all the way here primarily to learn about my stories?” Mulu asked for confirmation.

“Of course!” the man confirmed.

Mulu then said, “I have to figure out two things”

“Yes, indeed, I came to speak with you. I am just curious…what do you need to figure out?”

“First, I have to figure out how relevant my story is going to be; and second, I have to figure out what I can tell about myself. Is it helpful to tell anything about myself? I prefer to act than to tell. Unfortunately, the world tells a lot and acts little. So many stories told are not conjoined with action when they should have been used as a starting point to improve the betterment of a society.”

“I see. But, what if I throw some questions to begin with and leave it open-ended so that you can tell whatever you want?”
She suggested, “Ok, but the good thing that might be convincing, and beneficial for you is to ask others about me. And it should be without asking me about it, whatever it is.” She could sense the man is going to ask her dozens of questions. Mulu and the man reached at her car. They sat in the car for a while before they start their journey. They got into heated debate about the relevance of her stories.

The man said, “Well, what others tell me about you matters as well. But now, I want you to tell me your own story. I want it to hear from you. If I ask others to tell me about you, it is no different from listening to them while they are riding the metro, and I sit behind them and listen to what they say. It will only become their impression of your story.”

“I see. Well, then who speaks doesn't matter. It doesn't change who I am. It will never stop me from laboring the whole day. It will never ease my burden. I am used to spending the whole day in labor.”

“It matters, and, that is one of the reasons why I am here- to speak with individuals like you!” the man stressed.

It seems that Mulu is finally convinced. “Well, I agree. Like I said before, I usually prefer to act, than to tell. I can keep quiet and do my work. I earn enough to live and it is very comfortable for my flesh and blood. But, sometimes I don’t want to be like the mule in the tales told by our grandparents, as you know.

"When I was a kid, my grandmother used to tell me tales. One day, she introduced me with the famous proverb about the mule. A mule was grazing in the farm land, and it was a green pasture. The mule grazed as much as it can and then when its stomach was full, it sat on the grass. It was unable to move with the stomach full and bloating. Then, the mule prayed “Let no grass grow if I die!” That is too egoist and egotist! I couldn’t be any more satisfied in that kind of life. I have to think of others. If I speak, it is to speak and act for the good of others. I am be-
cause We are¹⁹. You see, that is the meaning of genuine life for us, and the successful life as defined by our culture, not by our colleagues.

“Culturally speaking, we are not invested in individual life style. We feel it doesn’t work in our context. It does never hold our attention if we succeed or accumulate wealth while our loved ones as well as our people are suffering. That is why I sometimes speak out loud. Otherwise, my profession has less to do with other issues, like for example politics. In fact, that happens very rarely. I usually prefer to be silent, as I told you before. Maybe it is my silence that makes what I speak exaggerated when I speak or when I “break” the silence. I mean I am not always speaking, I am not the regular critique, though.”

It was quarter past five when both Mulu and the man leave the site and the man didn't really know where they were heading.

“I was planning to call a cab or book a Uber to return to my den after my conversations with you”, said the man.

“I know but why? I mean if there are people to stay with, you don’t have to spend your money, and it is not good to stay alone, you never know”

“Of course, you are right and it is true”, the man confirmed.

There was silence for a moment. They left the parking lot and in a blink of an eye they joined the huge traffic on the main street.

“I know the area but to be precise, can you tell me the exact address?” Mulu asked.

The man agreed. He pulled out his phone and read the postal code for her. She fed it in the navigating machine. The screen posed up the direction and the best route to the destination. As the navigation machine started to speak the directions, Mulu smiled and appreciated “her friend” Siri.

Siri, the GPS Girl, is very good at Geography, always telling people where their destination is, and when to make left or right turns. These days, it is getting harder to differentiate real
and artificial intelligence. They reached at the destination. The man collected his travel packs immediately. They turned back east on the highway again. Mulu hoped that the man had enjoyed the view. She told the man to fasten his seatbelt, and not to worry if she kept quiet in the middle of the ride as she might need more concentration some times. They drove such a long distance from the centre. But, as they took the highway, it did not take much longer.

It was an interesting ride. All vehicles were super fast, running like a bullet, heading east. Only some trucks were coming to the city, everybody was leaving. Some drove fast. Others sped medium. Most vehicles were running in the left and middle lanes, and sometimes some of them changed lanes with earlier signals through their tail lights. Some sports cars roared by their side, changed lanes, and disappeared into the invisible distance. All the vehicles flew down the street like a silent stream. All maintained distance. Some rode past them, others followed. They all had their own speed.

Mulu started the conversation again.

“So this is my life, I did this for over two decades. Maybe your seat is not comfortable. Sorry, today I took my daughter’s car.”

“It is good. I am comfortable with it”, the man replied. At this time, while Mulu was changing the gear, the man heard a sound like a dry rusty metal cracking beneath his seats. This made the man remember his dad, and the old white Peugeot 404 car his dad used to own and drop the man everyday to school and even to college. It was an old car, used over 25 years, driven over 200,000 kms. But, his dad was a rich businessman and the only person who owned that private car. Only very few people succeed to own that kind of car as a fruit of their labor, and they used to be considered as rich for owning that. The man remembered that Mulu had mentioned this car belonged to her daughter. He then asked, “Did you say you have a daughter?!”

“Yes, I do. I am a mother of three children. You will see two of them tonight. The oldest may not be at home. She goes to college, and sometimes she comes to visit me, sometimes she visits her friends, and you know…”
In approximately 40 minutes, they arrived at her place. Mulu had let him get off the car until she got it parked properly at the rear of the house because she shouldn’t block her husband in the morning. They entered the house from a dark basement which looked like an abandoned grave. The basement was full of equipment, tools to fix vehicles, winter tires, mountain bikes and small bikes for kids. They walked up the stair and reached at a spacious clean state-of-the-art living room filled with expensive furniture and big frames on the walls with pictures in bright colors. There was nobody in the living room. Mulu told the man to have a sit on the couch facing the television. She then went up stairs. The man could see part of the room upstairs. He was able to see a leather couch and a huge LCD screen, among others. He heard the sound of a baby girl.

“Mamy!” the baby called out.

“Sweetie, did you eat something?”

“Yep!”

“Where is your dad?”

“Dad is taking some nap. And Robel is also sleeping by his side.”

“I see. What about you?”

“I am waiting for you!”

Mulu came down stairs with her kid in her arms.

“Honey, come let me introduce you to my guest”, she was kissing Angela on her cheek while walking down stairs. Angela is a very beautiful kid, with her glowing eyes and her red cheek like a delicate rose.

“He is my cousin and he came from Ethiopia.”

“Mamy, I didn see’im in the photo abum. You’ve a new cousin?!?”

*What a brilliant kid!,* the man said to himself. He interrupted their conversation and waived at the kid.

“Hi, baby, your mom is my professor, ok!”

Angela stretched her hand with a little shrug as if she were saying no to an invitation.

“I am Angela!” Angela wanted the man call her by her name.

“Ok. Hereafter, I will call you Angela!” replied the man.

Mulu went back upstairs to check on the other kid and her husband.
Angela followed her upstairs. After a while, Mulu returned back to the living room. She opened her laptop while talking to the man sitting parallel.

Angela returned. She rushed down the stairs.

“Mamy, you alwaysh open your laptop. You don play wish me? Should I sleep before you come?” Mulu smiled. She could do nothing now than answer the call. Mulu remembered her packed to-do lists and her busy life both at home and at school. She then turned to the man and said, “it is not easy to be a mother as well as an educator.” She had been silent for a moment thinking what to do first. She remembered Maya Angelou’s Work which coincides with her moment very well.
Woman Work

by Maya Angelou

I've got the children to tend
The clothes to mend
The floor to mop
The food to shop
Then the chicken to fry
The baby to dry
I got company to feed
The garden to weed
I've got shirts to press
The tots to dress
The can to be cut
I gotta clean up this hut
Then see about the sick
And the cotton to pick.
Shine on me, sunshine
Rain on me, rain  
Fall softly, dewdrops  
And cool my brow again.  
Storm, blow me from here  
With your fiercest wind  
Let me float across the sky  
'Til I can rest again.  
Fall gently, snowflakes  
Cover me with white  
Cold icy kisses and  
Let me rest tonight.  
Sun, rain, curving sky  
Mountain, oceans, leaf and stone  
Star shine, moon glow  
You're all that I can call my own.

Mulu is a successful woman. However, she often says that her success is not hard work but it is hard labor. The man asked her what the difference between hard work and hard labor are. She mentioned that work is the way one defines oneself, one's identity ties and one's dreams. Work is a contemporary identity which defines who one is, who one is not and who one wants to be. It is what one does to earn money. It relates with the institutions formed by fallible human beings. In most cases, work is parochial. It is si’ra (Amharic- paid work), usually profession. Mulu is totally influenced by the concept of work from her origin’s culture. Thus, she is against work. For her, work is the product of modernity. It is something that belongs to the carnal world. It lacks spirit.

When her colleagues talk about work, she tells them that it is that concept of work which spoiled the world. It is work that created the wall between gender, and also race. It is a way that
helps divisive institutions continue to exist with all their bias and stereotypes. Some works are
done by some people; others are not allowed to engage in such activities. For example, she men-
tioned that she is working as a professor but it must be a miracle that a only black woman is there
as a professor. Something women of her likes from this place were not able to be. She said that
she was the only black female professor who, by some miracle, joined this group and it feels as if
other people were not able to do intellectual work. She didn’t say intellectual labor.

Mulu believes that work organizes society into some form of social class. It opens access
for some and it marginalizes others. At this time, the man remembered what the famous father of
peace once mentioned about work. Nelson Mandela, in his book A Long Walk to Freedom, stated
he has to silence himself to submit the moment he saw a black pilot on his way from Sudan to
Ethiopia. “How could a black man fly an airplane? But a moment later I caught myself: I had fallen
into the apartheid mind-set” says Mandela. In fact, Mulu is correct. Work perpetuates the
apartheid mind-set. It affirms coloniality, it inculcates annihilative warrant to colonial arrange-
ments of social hierarchy. For her, Labor is given. It is given for humans to be like Adam. You
labor all your life time until you lose all your energy. You have to eat the fruits of your labor. So,
one's labor is enough to feed oneself. As a result, there is no greed in labor. There is neither con-
scienceless competition nor greed. In labor, there is only minimal concept of work where one
does something. And, one should not necessarily be employed. Some spiritual educators tell sto-
ries of the first man who ate the fruits of his labor. In fact, not only the first man but the first
woman was also eating the fruits of her labor. At least, we cannot justify that the first woman was
a burden on the first man.

Mulu mentioned that she had to do something everyday-- be it at home or at office. Be-
cause of this, people identify her as a hard worker. It is not the work or the type of work that mat-
ter most to her. She has to see herself in labor. In labor, there is work, hard work, but not greed.
When she goes back home with no energy left in her, with no space to ruminate over depressing
thoughts, she feels satisfied. Then, a silence for a moment is like a statement that concludes her
chapter of the day. She does so many things at a time. She is in charge of the labor work. She al-
ways does the intellectual labor. She volunteers with poor people. She visits poor fellows as if each day were her last day on earth. When she returns back home, she still has to do something; these keep her moving forward and delighted.

Mulu believes that it is not fair for an academic to stay in her office and just write journal articles. That is sometimes too technical. It is like when someone sitting in the Pre-Medicine class listens to the nomenclature of organs, all of them only in Greek or Latin. Or, it is like sitting in one of the traditional learning centres in rural Gondar, she could hardly hear anything except very young students rehearse the holy books in Geez- a dead language used only for liturgy where the parishioner have no access to the content, the same text repeated everyday until they learn all of it in their words. And all that has nothing to do with what is going on out there. She thinks that the intellectual needs to look at her environment. She should look at her place, the people in the place, those far removed from the place, those who live in the place but are made invisible in the place. She says that this place has a lot to tell. She wants to do something at least in the place she is, in the academia. That begins in silence. Just to give the opportunity for the surrounding to be listened and for her to stay silent.

She often says, “I see how my young colleagues struggle to meet the requirements of tenure. I am an obstacle for them as I keep implementing very demanding structures, rules, and procedures. Those rules in no way prove the intelligence or kindness of my humane colleagues. That is it. Working against these ‘traditions’ will continue to be part of my activism. Dismantling those tight rules and rigid institutional practices should be our responsibility. They deprive young academics from growth and professional development. Charity begins at home. Justice begins from the place where you are.”

She worked on her laptop for no less than half an hour. Then, she interrupted her work to prepare light dinner for all. Her husband came to the main floor, everybody shared the meal and watched news, followed by brief conversations in-between, before going to bed. “I can brew tea if anyone wants to have one!” Mulu looked at everyone around her.
She was not tired but she felt that everybody wanted to sleep. None of them wanted anything any more. The man felt fatigued, maybe from the long trip to Mulu’s house plus his flight yesterday. His eyes looked smaller. He had reduced attention to the surrounding. Mulu showed the man his bedroom, and the bathroom adjacent to it. Then, everybody went to their bedrooms. The night passed with peace and delight.
Friday morning, the man woke up early. As he went to the living room, he noticed that Mulu was working on her laptop. She asked, “Did you get a good sleep?” The man confirmed and he said he liked the silence of the place. She told the man they will be leaving in half an hour and they will grab light breakfast on their way. She went upstairs to just say goodbye to her family and they left home.

The cruise faced west towards the centre of the city. The man hadn't had the chance to see the surrounding last night as it was getting darker. Now, here is a clear sky. The sun is shining...
hope on the green pasture, the dark soil seems content with the energy the sun provides with. They had to drive such a long distance. They drove approximately fifteen kilometers. At the exit of the town, they reached at a vibrant village with coffee shops and mini markets all around. They drove past a farmers’ market and Mulu backed up in a spot to park the car.

They got out of the car to get their breakfast from a modest cafe. Both grabbed coffee to keep them awake. They both know that they were sons and daughters of farmers, or some of their relatives were farmers, if not their parents. And coffee was a major source of foreign currency, specially by the time Mulu was in her high school. Things might have changed now. They ordered light breakfast and in a while they were back to their Tin Lizzie with the coffee half-full in their mugs.

Mulu resumed the conversation while driving. The first sip of the coffee had sharpened her sight. It seems her body is stimulated with more energy. “Well, in this part of the world, there is no cooking in early mornings. The passionate Ethiopian mother waking up everyone in a family to feed them what she cooked early in the morning is no more existent in North America.” They both smiled. For as long as they lived back home, they both had their mothers cooked for them every morning before they leave home. They rode in silence for a few moments as she was changing gears and speeding.

The man mentioned, “Well, actually I like cooking, it is a healthy way of eating what you want to. I can also see that you cannot afford the time. Your home is here and you work in the next town.”

A bit of silence reigned supreme as soon as they moved into the highway. Their cruise sprinted like a jet into the asphalt, many vehicles passed by them. Some were very threatening with their roars. They were passing close by Mulu's car with their engines releasing out a puff. It were as if the vehicles attempted to pull Mulu's cruise out of the lane. “So, this is your routine?!”
“Oh, yeah.”

“Everyday one hundred kilometers? Wow, I have never been in this kind of situation, except in the cross-country buses. It is somehow frustrating or unbearable for someone like me.” The man felt that she is rather amazing, and strong in a strange way.

“Maybe”, Mulu hesitated momentarily. She had to focus more on her driving.

She said, “The fuel keeps the vehicle running and it is not really challenging as such. Machines are machines. Of course, I also come up with road rage sometimes, ranging from er...you know there are some drivers who worry about other people’s driving skills but I just smile and move on, eh…”, Mulu cracked a small smile and then slipped into her silence.

Then followed the roars of SUVs, Chevs, Minivans, and Enclaves followed. After almost every five kilometres, there were officers stopping some drivers. On one of the instances, they watched an officer standing by his white SUV. A SHERIFF printed in blue on the side makes the car unique. The traffic slowed a bit because of the heavy jam ahead. The delay offered the man the opportunity to see a white man in his uniform. The man was all muscles and was huge. He stopped a black woman, an African American. She was sitting in her vehicle and remained looking through the wing mirror as if she were evaluating the officer.

Then, Mulu’s vehicle sprinted for approximately four to five kilometres. A similar scene, another SHERIFF, another black woman, a similar looking huge man. The only difference they noticed this time was that the woman was a bit older and overweight.

“Well, if you had stayed for that many years across the Coast, you must have become familiar with these issues. I mean you might have heard a lot.”

“Somewhat. But, I am still learning how things work and I usually prefer to be silent”

“Silence is Gold! My mom used to say.”

“Why were all the persons stopped African American women?”

“Do you mean stopped by the SHERIFFS?”
“Oh, you call them SHERIFF?! Ah, English! I learned the word police. A colleague from UK taught me the word Police officer long before I moved to Canada. My Canadian colleagues prefer just the word Officer. Now, I am learning SHERIFF!”

“Place not only makes people, it also makes language, you know!”

“I see. Then, what do you think is the reason why they are being stopped?”

“Maybe for excess speed, or maybe they were picked for a ….er….a random check. But, well, it is a long story.”

A random check! That word conjured the pictures of those two women at the airport checkpoints in the man’s earlier trip. Those women picked him and told him it was a random check. He kept silent with thoughts about meaning-making roaming in his head.

A racer roared at their vehicle as if it were ready for a bout with Mulu’s small vehicle. The wind from the other car passing by them blew as if it were threatening the auto to get off the asphalt road. The man woke up from the silence, his mind returned to an active state, but Mulu still kept quiet and focused on the road. She stared at the front, in the lane, into the distance as if she were watching the stars on the black sky as she used to do in her college Pre Medicine class years.

There was a thick silence again. She was speeding up, injecting more gas, while looking through the windshield as if she were diving into the future. It was somehow strange and uncomfortable for the man to witness all sorts of driving--excessive driving, competitive driving, unsafe driving, risky driving, erratic driving, furious driving, defensive driving, negligent driving, reckless driving, all happening simultaneously. They noticed it was all done by men, black, white, Mexican, African, American, young, mature, working class, middle class and the like. For an external eye, it might appear like the officers might have had mistaken those women when they stopped them.
Mulu and the man watched them all. The women were doing urban driving, pleasant driving, skillful driving, extra-careful driving and normal driving. Driving is freedom. It is one manifestation of freedom of movement. In this part of the world, it is a means of earning one’s livelihood. It is how one gets to a place to labor the whole day, and come back home with smile. It is a means to visit one’s families and friends, lovers and suitors. One can guess what it means when a SHERIFF stops a person for an hour from such trips, let alone the tickets, warnings, annoyance and even risks to one's life at such particular moments. Anyway, Mulu never had that experience except once in a summer. She thinks she is invisible to the SHERIFFs. Mulu was focused on her driving, her acceleration, and how long it took her to make it to office the day before. She suddenly transited from the world of thought to the world of real.

She looked over her shoulder to the man on the passenger’s seat. “I should drive five times faster than Abebe Bikila, you know”22.

The man smiled, “What does that mean?”

Mulu turned her neck back to the front facing the black asphalt. After a brief silence, she said, “It usually takes me an hour to reach at my office.”

“The same every day?” the man asked.

“Almost the same but sometimes even shorter if I leave early before all people leave their home at the same time, we call it rush hours. Well, if I drive with the speed of our marathoner Abebe Bikila, it will take us the whole morning to reach at our destination,” she smiled.

They joined a more populated traffic. They entered into the city. In a quarter of an hour, they reached at the university endowment land where there is free parking for employees. A stream of thought run through the head of the man. Universities own land. Where do they get it from? Whose land is it? Who gave them this land?

Mulu entered the basement of the building with the man. They then exited at the first floor where they met two security officers. The security officers greeted them with a smile of innocence.
Mulu told the man that he should sign off on the guest book and the security officers will give him a visitor’s badge.

“Prof., is he your brother?” one of the peace officers asked.

“No, he is one of my relatives visiting me for a couple of days and he wants to see what my office looks like.”

“Oh, cool. Welcome!”

“Well-stay! Thank you!”

“Would you please fill in your information here, sir?” the officer asked the man.

While the man was filling his name on the log book, Mulu interrupted him and said, “Ok, I am a bit in a hurry, finish from here and as soon as you are done, come to the 7th floor. As you exit the elevator, right in front of you, you will find my office and you will see the administrative assistant in front of you. She will let you know what to do, ok?”

The man nodded in agreement. He heard the words of encouragement she threw before she got into the elevator. She then disappeared from the area in a blink of an eye. Mulu is multilingual. She speaks a number of Ethiopian and European languages. In the diaspora, nobody knows her identity. She belongs to everyone’s circle but she never identifies herself with any group. She is a friend of everyone but she has no single best friend to spend much of her time with. She never identifies herself as belonging to a particular ethnic group or religion unlike some members of the Ethiopian diaspora who seek comfort to stay with people who belong to a religious or an ethnic group.

The officers provided the man with a visitor’s badge. Before he proceed to the elevator, the man felt the urge to tell the security officers what his name means and how they should pronounce it. *Names come from the mouth of Angels*, his ancestors’ proverb tells. All Ethiopian proper names have meanings. They must have meanings. Name is very important, how you say it matters. You name something if it belongs to you. You name it, you claim it, it belongs to you. Suddenly, these streams of thought took the man back to some of his experiences somewhere.
A long time ago, in one of his good old days, one of his professors invited the man for a lunch in a restaurant downtown. The man was lining up to order his meal. He approached the waiter at the cash register. The waiter took his order. The waiter then asked his name. The man told his name to the waiter. The waiter had difficulty to pronounce the name of this man. It is a new name from a different culture. It is normal to have difficulties to pronounce new names, regardless. But, the waiter told the man that he should find another name. The man repeated the same name. Then, the waiter shouted at the man and asked him to tell the man an English name. The waiter repeated, “Don’t you have an English name?”

The man was rather offended. The man told the waiter, “You are not as welcoming as the city. If you can’t say my name, I will tell you a number to represent my name. That is my favorite number, but I don’t have to change my name for a lunch, remember I am paying for it. The name you want to hear might be more difficult if you see it from my perspective.”

The waiter wanted to reply, he started his speech saying, “Look, ….” The man interrupted him, and as it was Christmas season, he said, “Is this very Christmassy?”

The waiter took the number and turned his face right away. The man was the only person to be served like that. That was an experience he encountered back then when he was new to the city he lived in for a decade.

As time goes by, the man noticed that many immigrants are forced to change their names willy-nilly. Some have double or triple-hyphenated names. Dominant cultures give people new identities. They impose new hyphenated names. Migrants in such cultures struggle to fit in. They struggle to show their strife in a concrete way. They should win the trust and the confidence of the host culture by showing their strife to fit in by changing their names, among others. For some people, however, their names bear their culture. It carries with it memories of parents, and mothers who sacrifices their lives to raise their kids. The name bears the memory of the
mothers who uttered the names to call their kid for the rest of their life. It represents what they wished for their kids. It represents the mothers' struggles to protect, and to keep these lives alive. Its meaning is by itself the marriage of a story and a memory, a seal on a child bearer's experience which is a confrontation of life and death, hope and despair all at once.

For the man, to change his name means to conspire to erase those stories of a caring mother. It is agreeing to a conspiracy to neglect mothers who bear and rear their sons in pain, not in privilege. It feels like a conspiracy not to acknowledge those mothers who escaped rains of bullets with their kids in their arms. When their men carried guns on their shoulders, the mothers carried souls to save from the bullets, and the named these souls in such terrible times. The man should take refuge in subterfuge only in dreams. It is impossible to engage in self-deception.

The elevator took the man to the seventh floor. As soon as he exited the elevator, he noticed the secretary. She sat on a white rotating chair, her hands on a white keyboard, and her eye staring on a white watch on the wall. A white printer with some printed out white sheet was put by her left side. Across from her seat, her white wool-blend peacoat hang on the plastic hanger fixed on the wall. The man greeted the secretary with a perfectly polite and respectful tone. The lady was expecting a guest to arrive. She’s already informed. Pointing at an armchair in front of her, she said, “Please have a sit! Mulu is having a guest and she will be free in about fifteen minutes. Do you like something to drink?”

The man replied with a smile, “Thank you so much, I already had coffee after breakfast!” He sat by the nearest chair waiting for the person speaking with Mulu to leave. The guest left Mulu's office after about half an hour.

Mulu appeared, and she walked the guest out of the office. She apologised because the man had to wait for so long to speak with her. Now, it is his turn. He has as long as he could stay plus a twenty minutes tip for waiting the other guest to leave her office. Mulu asked the man if he would like to drink something so that she will request her assistant to grab one for him. Yet,
the man didn’t want to take any. Mulu then mentioned that the man might be silent or shy. But in United States, silence may not be encouraged. People interpret silence in contrast to what is known in Mulu's home culture. It might even turn out to be embarrassing for some people. They slipped into serious conversations from there.

“I needed some silent space to handle your request. I have no clue about telling stories. I don’t know where to start telling my stories. I only know that I am a woman. I sit in this office. It is very clean, fabulous, fancy whimsy office. The wall, the white board, the projector, the sits, the floor, the elevator, my papers, my iOS, my iPad, my keyboard, my notebook, my cellphone, my wallets-- everything in this room looks nice-- isn’t it? And I am a tiny (in)visible woman, surrounded by all these expensive glittering stuff. This is not to blame. Yet, it is an illustration of how I feel about being here, about my identity and my (dis)-location. It is about what my surrounding tells”, she interrupted playing with the mouse on her right hand side and looked at the man.

The man nodded, he then remarked, “Maybe, these things are reminiscent of the permanence of privilege or its depth?”

Mulu agreed. “There is such an enormous privilege that some own in plenty. Some internalized it in-depth. Women like I are (in)visible. I am lucky but I cannot say I am privileged.”

The man nodded listening to her expressions. Mulu said, “I am telling you this is the truth, my everyday truth, my lifetime truth, and it cannot be otherwise.”

“By the way, how do you recognize……. me? Before asking a…. woman to tell her stories, you …..must recognize her, you must…..you must recognize something about her. Isn’t it? How come a man seeks to know a story….the story of such a woman? Does it make sense?” Mulu opined.
The man didn’t reply. He felt uncomfortable to say anything. Rather, he encouraged himself to stay silent.

“The first time I read the email about your visit, I was stunned. I felt this must be a mistake because this has never happened in years.”

“May I ask why? Is that because it came from someone you have never known or connected to in anyway?” the man asked in disbelief.

“I mean nobody asked me to tell them my stories. I have lived here for such a long time. Many people come to interview me, but it is about Science. It is about what I produced with my colleagues.”

“Perhaps, they wanted primarily to hear your opinion about some issues and learn from you and to learn from your wisdom. Also, some people want to mention public figures like you as their evidence or professional authority, isn’t it?” the man added.

“Maybe it is. But, that doesn’t matter to me. My main goal is to help my kids become who they want to be. I hope you don’t misunderstand me.”

“Not at all, please”, the man assured her. Mulu continued the conversation. “My mother spent all her life, she invested all her wealth to nurture what is deep in me. That was the desire to become a medical doctor and save lives in an emergency room. I was able to do that, that was the greatest success. Now, I need nothing more. My daughters; they are my resemblance, they are my portraits, they are just my photos, they are my second souls. They are my halves and they are my grace. To be honest, at this level, they are what I worry about-- my kids. I don't care about my story as much.”
The man was listening to her in surprise. His ears were upright like the big ears of an excited jenny on a green pasture in a summer day. Mulu continued telling her stories.

“If you are asking me to speak about myself, you must also be ready and prepared to listen to what I say. Some of it might not be interesting. Please interrupt my ramblings if it is not useful in anyway or if it doesn’t fit what you think.” Suddenly, she showed a confused look. She hesitated for a while. She was not certain where to start telling her stories. Where would you start if someone ask you to tell your stories? It is a sweet challenge.

“I am still thinking about what I am going to tell and to share with you. After all, who speaks? I have seen in this part of the world time and again that a woman is good for walking with her man. Some of the men might feel that it adds a grace for them. Or, it might be the case that the women subconsciously internalized this. Many might have internalized that it is her duty to follow him, and to accompany him, while he is walking on the red carpet. Black or white, it is the same. Anyway, I am not certain as to what you intend to do with my stories. But, within an hour, I willingly breathe out what I lived, I observed and I accumulated for years. I don’t think I am going to tell you any different story than the ones you lived and experienced every day, alright?” Mulu commented.

The man smiled as an assurance to her. She then continued.

“The places I lived at influenced my sense of myself. They shaped my preferences and my position at home and at my workplace. The stories I heard since my childhood, while growing under the feet of my beloved mother, had influences in me. My mother was a school teacher. She used to have two months off when schools are closed in July and August, the season of heavy rain and clouds that leave all our village in flood.

“At such seasons, my mother used to take us, myself and my sister, to a rural area a bit far from our place. There, we used to see our uncle farming in the land. And his wife cooking his
lunch and taking it to the farm for him and her only son. Then, she will never come back until it is dusk. They had to work on the farm inherited from her parents. My uncle had to plough by hand. That is, he had to command and ‘push’ a pair of oxen yoked together and being worked on a field which is the size of trice a football field. That takes at least two months to make it all done. He must turn all the soil upside down and the inner wet part must be exposed before dispersing the seeds in parallel like those writings of a kid in a lined exercise books. Farmers life down there is really hard.

“As a kid, it was very exciting for me to see that those seeds he threw into the mud get rotten. They disappear from sight. For weeks, they would be hit by heavy rain, and sometimes snow. Then comes September, when the rain stops. The sky becomes clearer. And all the area turns green. Those seeds regenerate, they reproduce life. They re-produce faith, and hope grows in plenty. It is not only my uncle who did that. It is also his wife who did collect and burn the weeds and clear the farmland with him manually.

“She had helped her husband by cleaning grain, spreading vegetables, and pounding grain. She had also helped him winnowing, which is very hard to do. I grew up seeing such women working as hard as their men. On top of this, the house chores, cooking and caring for children rests upon the shoulder of women in our society. I know farmers’ life's hard and women’s life in that context is the hardest.”

“Very true”, the man admitted.

Mulu grew up in a religious tradition. Because she was sent to a boarding school, she had led an independent life, and she used to decide most of the things by herself especially from the age of 14 onwards. All decisions were made by herself, she was by her own. Achieving high school was the most interesting part she remembers. But, she didn't have such a thing to remember as a worst part. The political turmoil and the later Red Terror had started right before she joined high school. Her mother wouldn’t have sent her to the boarding school if it had been a
normal situation because it is just unaffordable. In those bad old days, she was goal-oriented, sociable, assertive and used to like playing in the field as well. She had played soccer, but she was not athletic, she was rather slim. Mulu was one of the top scorers by the time she joined the university.

Mulu remembered her transition from high school to college life. It remained one of the most memorable parts of her life. She remembered her outstanding performance at college, compared to her girl friends. She thought that it was so because of her accumulated experience at the boarding school. She knew what to expect in college because she had learned the art of living with people. She already knew what it feels like sharing bedrooms and bathrooms in dormitories. It was a new experience for many students. Because of this, Mulu had a little more advantage and confidence compared to other students.

College life left her with a lot of memories. There were sometimes when she ended up smiling as she remembered some part of it. Her college library was far from the dormitories. The main road that gets into the heart of the city separates the campus into two like a septum. The dormitories with dining halls and cafeterias were located south of the road. The library was in the main campus by the north side of the road where there were classrooms and laboratories. In the utter darkness, there was nothing one could see. Mulu hardly forgets the darkness of the nights. They were completely dark every night, and she could count all the stars that were glittering because of the darkness of the sky. There was electricity, but the streets had no sufficient lights, not like the towns in North America. She used to stay up late studying in the libraries, and it was typical of many Pre-Medicine students to do so.

During her time, most of her professors were German citizens. They were very good personalities. There were also some Ethiopian professors. Mulu was not happy about her Ethiopian professors. All of them were males and, especially when she considers it in the light of the situation in the States, she feels that it was not encouraging. When she remembers them, she always says, “Usually you know they focus on your faults. They point out more of the mistakes you made
than the good things you did. Whether it is on assignment, or when you practice, in most cases harsh words are easier for them to utter.” In spite of this, Mulu also remembers that some of her Ethiopian professors were renowned public figures.

Academic freedom was a luxury to think about by the time she was at college. Mulu remembers that her professors didn't enjoy such freedom. They had to think twice before they say anything, there was no freedom, they were fearful. Talking about issues out of professional boundaries was impossible. Questioning policy was unthinkable because of the dictatorship of the socialist regime. Mulu knew that only certain individuals had the privilege to speak. That was even possible as far as they remained appreciative of the political system. She said, “If you are a member of the Derg party, you enjoy the freedom to speak. You are a ‘policy maker’ in favor of the system, and you do not question the party line.” There was not even a single female professor by the time she studied her Bachelor of Medicine.

During her postgraduate studies, there were two female Canadian Professors. An Ethiopian female professor joined the faculty later. Mulu remembered how challenging it was for a female student in the colleges in Ethiopia. She said, “There were many layers of challenges. First, there is cultural pressure. People believe that women are unable to perform like their male counterparts. When you speak something, people would never take you serious. And there could also be sexuality issues. Every time you succeed, people interpret it as if you were able to achieve it only because you corrupt your male professors. And still others attempt sexual advance. Female students might experience sexual harassment and threats from their [male] professors.”

She had overcome considerable challenges. She overcame many layers of challenges which she encountered as a female student. Later, she graduated from the College of Medical and Health Sciences. But, she didn’t become a faculty member right away. She had to go through all academic ranks in her profession. She also worked as a medical doctor for some time. Eventually, she had to return back to Medical School for her graduate studies.
The graduate studies opened the opportunities for her to become a faculty member. Mulu said, “Teaching is my passion, and it is enjoyable. It makes me feel happy. Mentoring others, and seeing them grow is satisfying. As a medical doctor, my most important duties were bedside teaching, and patient follow-ups. Most of my patients had preventable diseases. I felt that it was important to focus on the prevention part. My duty other than teaching was the most difficult. The hierarchy, lack of resources, and lack of training made my work-place experience nerve-racking. In the academy, these were not an issue at all.”

Most of the Ethiopian diaspora know Mulu. Every Ethiopian across the States know her as one of the very few influential and successful intellectuals. She is always the first-choice of the media to talk about issues related to women, health issues, and higher education dynamics and sometimes Ethiopian politics, among others. Everyone is interested to know her stories and how she carved a niche and developed an identity as an academic public intellectual. Her life tells how these crucial issues interact at the intersection of her identity, gender, and academic achievement. Yet, Mulu is also a silent person. Some months back, the man was talking about Mulu to an Ethiopian diaspora community member. Back then, the person told the man that that it must be a weird idea to want to speak to Mulu to listen to her stories. The man asked why and he was told that Mulu is crazy busy, she is as busy as bees and as silent as the Pacific Ocean. The man was not surprised as he was aware of her personality to some extent.

Mulu believes that silence is the interstice between power and dissent. And it always speaks a lot more than speech. For her, speech entails action, hence, the notion speech-act. The moment one is vested in speech; there are limits to action as well. Power can stifle and reverse speech or the action empowered by the speech. In contrast, silence is universal and unpredictable. Silence is an infinite and powerful option and it has depth. But, speech is definitive. For her, silence is not an option; it is the universal set that includes all the options. Silence does never lead to dissent and it is as such tricky. Because power is violence at its other end, the fuzzy line between power and dissent is silence.
Mulu often says, “The line that separates power and its extreme form--violence--is also silence. That is, maybe, why we have that proverb ‘silence is gold’. Silence is the whole lot of liminal space between utterances or between sentences in print. You know, when you read a text, you see the sentences in black. People never notice the vacant spaces between the lines or out of the lines. Or, it is like the time between beats and pitches in music. It is the interlude between pressing a key and releasing your fingers before you proceed to the next key when you play a piano. That combination makes the music that you love and you entertain yourself.

“It is not the sound of the music that matters. Actually, it is the proportion of the silence between the sounds that has pansophic quality. Silence is a resort to peace. It is surrender. It is the good will of the pacific to concede or to allow things to take their course. It is the courage to "speak" by denying a response to the irresponsible. It is a divine way of responding by rejecting response-ability; the later triggered by ir-responsible others. It might be good to speak-up and challenge dominant narratives in political lives”, she asserted.

Mulu did never have the desire to challenge anyone. She had less interest to engage in the politics that victimized her. She had far less interest to speak in response to the system that continued to perpetrate violence. The socio-political system gave everyone wounds which time could never heal for the rest of one’s life. She would prefer to remain silent. She would prefer being “devoid of meaning and sense, than diminish the lives and values of those ‘trapped in a cycle of violence’25.”

Mulu compares the nature of silence with that of freedom. For her, silence and speech are parallels to freedom and choice. Freedom is the infinite possibility to be whatever you want to. It is limitlessness, but once a person makes a choice, that limitlessness comes to its limit. The coming to the limit materializes because of the infinite possibilities and limitlessness. The infinite possibilities enable the subject to pick something. The later action in turn limits the earlier limitlessness. Seeing silence as the infinite potential, it is better to live with the potential to choose from infinite possibilities. It is not better to pick a possibility and limit the limitlessness.
The man and Mulu had interesting conversations. They shared in her stories. Her articulateness struck the man. He was awe-inspired by her perspectives. That feeling was followed by sort of guilt. The feeling of guilt came from his suspicion that he may not be able to tell her story as she had done it.

She was telling her stories from within, from the heart, from deep inside. She was near crying. She was feeling the pains of the past. She was showing what it feels like to re-live that life, attesting to what it means to embrace all those ugly truth throughout her life. She believes that telling stories give one relief. Stories are told for younger people who seek to educate themselves. It makes her feel the satisfaction from seeing the youth emerging as a knower, showing the interest to know, the willingness to commit some time to listen to stories, to be silent. For her, to know is to recognize and to educate oneself by listening to people like her. In two of her languages, both Amharic and Afan Oromo, to know (trans. mawek, beekumsaa, respectively) has many meanings which are not limited to knowledge acquired from schools and books. It means to notice, to recognize, and to acknowledge.

There are yet very few individuals who obtained this wealth. It is like wealth and most people do not possess it. This sometimes makes her feel frustrated. The problem of Western education is its lack of wholeness. It is not holistic. In a sense, it only focuses on schooling. Whereas the subject, the knowing being, is very important, Western education and culture rarely enables those in school to recognize others. It might be one reason why, according to her views, she is invisible, and so are so many colored people and all others who fall in the ‘Other’ category. Mulu shared these ideas with the man.

As soon as she brought these thoughts to the fore, the man formed a perfectly clear idea about the issue. He immediately remembered the incident he noticed at a conference in which a black professor was neglected on a stage by her own colleagues. His idea of holistic knowledge resonated with her idea of knowledge as well. Suddenly, a roller-coaster of emotions took them
into a deafening silence. The man thought about the equilateral sense of knowledge as schooling, recognition, and acknowledgement. He felt there is indeed too much schooling which couldn’t result in the fruition of acknowledgement and recognition. “We fail to recognize”, the man whispered to himself.

Suddenly, the man dropped his pen and the room was felt with the echo as it hit the floor. Mulu’s eyes left the papers from in front of her and started to look at what the man might have dropped. Both of them shared interesting stories and perspectives. Close to an hour was gone. Then, both of them had something else to do. Mulu had an appointment with a student. She needed the time to prepare some outlines for her discussion with her students who will be visiting her in few minutes. The man also remembered a session in the conference which he highlighted on the print out of the schedule. He had already decided to attend the session. He left the room with mixed feelings. Right before the man left her office, Mulu promised to have lunch with him. She also hoped that Professor William and Dr. Cherinet would be able to join them as well. Mulu mentioned that Professor William also likes Ethiopian food!

The man took the elevator to the ground floor. He rushed towards a conference room to join his highlighted session. Participants were attending the second session before morning breaks. It turned out to be the busiest Friday. After a while, people left parallel sessions for a health break. The man felt energetic and alert. He didn’t show any sign of fatigue on his face like those attendants who stayed in the conference rooms attending two sessions. However, he needed to have something in his mouth. He went for a dark roast coffee and a small wedge of pie.

As he walked towards the coffee corner, the man noticed Cherinet from afar. He wanted to continue the conversations they started yesterday. Dr. Cherinet also saw the man from afar and sent a silent smile which, the man felt, was a confirmation to continue the conversations.

“Hi!”

“Good morning, Dr. Cherinet!”

“Good morning to you! Are you enjoying the Conf.?”
“Absolutely! By the way, I was so excited hearing your stories. I learned a lot yesterday.”
“Let us do like yesterday, talk over coffee but this time we should finish the coffee before it gets cold, ha ha. We talked a lot yesterday and you made me feel as if I were thirty years young.”
“You still are!”
“I was talking to you about my colleagues trip to China. That was where we stopped?” asked Dr. Cherinet.
“Yeah! Exactly!” the man answered in surprise.
“I do not believe in socialism. It might have worked for the Chinese. In fact, the situation in China at that time was known. I mean, even though socialism is credited to raise the living standard of all the people in that country, the poor remained poor, and in poor health, while those in high positions led a life of luxury. Honestly, I used to have this feeling that it is an ideology that is in favor of the poor and the lower class people. I was still thinking that this is a positive spirit and a god motivation to help and empower the poor.

“Returnees reported that they observed the leaders were leading a life of luxury. Officials were wearing wool and silk and they ate varieties of high-quality food and drinks, the poor wore clothes similarly tailored. I remember the critiques by Professor Mesfin.”

“What was unique about him?” the man asked.

“I had known him since he was an early career academic. He was one of the very few critics of the government, and he still is. He has lived all his life criticising our governments from the religious to the traditional, from the Imperial to the Marxist and the so-called ‘Revolutionary Democratic’. He has always been speaking against authority”, replied Dr. Cherinet.

“It always surprises me. How can a person consistently do that?”
“I know it is not easy. I mean it is not as easy as some people conceive it”, Dr. Cherinet commented.
“I can guess that it is not easy. But, what do you mean when you say ‘not as easy as some people conceive it’?” asked the man.

“It is obvious. It has risks in it. For example, he was always sent to jail, and released and sent back to jail. He was imprisoned for speaking at the university and he was also imprisoned for speaking in the prison, too. It feels like he is a lifetime prisoner by his own will. I sometimes feel like the college and the prison are no different for him.”

Dr. Cherinet cleared his throat and continued, “At both places, he has no freedom, at both places he protests against power and hierarchy, at both places he is cheered, and at both places he is hated. At both places he is educating people, too.”

The man thought for a moment and commented. “Well, he is one of the well-known Public Intellectuals. He recently received recognition from the Queen in U.K for something like a lifetime contribution?!”

“What recognition is this? I mean he is already recognized by the people, his people!” commented Dr. Cherinet.

The man smiled. He then continued, “What about the less talked about Dr. Merera Gudina?”

“Both are faces of the academy, both are faces of the prison, both are symbols of the silenced. Both of them are known for advocating indigenous ways of knowing. For example, Professor Mesfin favors and claims the Orthodox Christian tradition as native to the land. Likewise, Professor Merera is usually inclined to local forms of governance, administration and social relations which is usually based on the indigenous Oromo democratic forms of governance like the Geda system. Rarely did I hear about these scholars working on research projects funded by Western Universities or organizations. This makes them appear very similar in some way. Doesn’t it?” Dr. Cherinet fixed the man with a look. He then hesitated for a moment and commented, “Well, actually we are afraid to talk about some issues here, even after we became Americans. I think some haunting fear is following us everywhere and it might be due to the influence of the Red Terror. We carry the stories with us. We travel with the memory of it. And the
new generation do the same. They carry the same memories, unpleasant memories of marginal-
ization, and oppression. These things persist even today”

The man was immersed in the story being told by Dr. Cherinet. He was not interested to interrupt
Dr. Cherinet from telling the stories that travel with him. He kept nodding to indicate that he’s
actually listening to Dr. Cherinet attentively.

Dr. Cherinet continued. “On top of that, our culture conceals some people and some events in
silence. Anyway, I don’t forget the extent to which the intellectuals exercised their freedom and
challenged the status quo during my time.”

“How was it like at that time? I mean how did they voice?” the man was just curious.

Dr. Cherinet smiled. He said, “Let me give you one specific living example. Professor Mesfin
was invited to offer a course at our college and was giving a talk on the geo-political and social
history of the region to students, with the faculty attending as well. At that time, he said, ‘Our
peasants, while living in a dilapidated hut, suffering from the cold weather, with the wind gust
through the cracks of their wattle and daub, lie down to sleep on a cow hide, on the bare floor,
and in the night, with no light in their huts, they say in their prayers, as they always faithfully do,
Thanks God, Don’t make it any worse!...’ as if there were any life worse than this’. You might
have heard of such satirical criticism from Prof. Mesfin in the past. Isn’t it politics, then?!” Dr.
Cherinet flashed a smile at the man.

Then, the man laughed and asked Dr. Cherinet, “What does that mean?”

Dr. Cherinet continued the story.

“It means they [the ruling class] had done nothing to improve the lives of the people. That
speech was delivered for the students who love to listen to him. As one of the faculty members at
that time, I had introduced him while he was there to deliver his speech to the students. Well,
there was no such open trend during the imperial regime. Most of the people at that time,
whether they were aware of the system of government or not, had just accepted it.”
“But, many people like the Emperor. Even my grandmother is poor but she always worship the Emperor. Could it be out of ignorance? I mean she was not educated, really”, asked the man.

“I think it is not about schooling. I believe the Emperor had tried their best to improve the human condition at that time. Yet the level of education was quite low and progressive changes were remarkably slow. Later on, as the Emperor advanced in age, university students who were backed up by a few of their professors started criticising the system and the lack of progress. Professor Mesfin was among the few professors who believed that the country could have developed much faster than the system allowed.”

The man was curious to learn what happened next in the socio-political arena of the country. Dr. Cherinet mentioned, “During the later years of the Derg regime, I settled here in the United States with my family and did not have a firsthand experience. We were, however, getting sufficient information all the time. We heard that no one was allowed to criticize the government and any attempt would cost one's life. Students and young men and women who showed dissent were taken to jail. They might even be killed and thousands have lost their lives. We heard that the whole country was possessed by an intense climate of fear. We knew the military government followed a ruthless dictatorial administration all along for 17 years that is all the time they stayed in power until 1990.

“By the time I was there, the conditions were good but not that exciting. For example, it was a miracle to have a female professor in your program! There were almost none by the time I was a student”, Dr. Cherinet smiled.

The man flashed a smile and stated, “Maybe everyone was too immersed in other business, and you didn’t look around?!”

“Oh, no! Don’t be surprised if I tell you that there were only two female professors, both foreigners and only at Addis Ababa University. One of them, Prof. Rindleshort, was the head of
the division of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Another female professor, err…. yes, it was Dr. Hamlin. Dr. Hamlin, her full name is Elinor Catherine Nicholson, is the founder of the Fistula Hospital. Many Ethiopians know her for her work but most have no clue that she was indeed a faculty member. She is getting older now but she is still in Ethiopia. The world knows her. Both Dr. Hamlin and her husband, compassionate humane souls, used to teach in the Medical School. By the way, my daughter, Andromeda just joined Medical School in Cuba, and she is inspired by the works of Dr. Hamlin.”

“Wow. Exciting!”

“Indeed!”

“What is her name again?”

"Andromeda. Don’t you know this name?”

“I do in history classes but I don’t know the meaning. You know all our names have meanings.”

“I do!” confirmed Dr. Cherinet.

“This is a foreign name, maybe Greek. Right?”

“No, it is Ethiopian name. It means ruler of men.”

“I thought people in diaspora like to name their kids by a European name I was expecting names like Hilary, Olivia, Kate, and so on and so forth.”

“I didn’t. First of all, the whole idea of diaspora is messy. I don’t know why people, even intellectuals, generalize about diaspora. We are different like our faces. Anyway, the name is Ethiopian.”

“Why do my history educators keep telling me that it is a Greek name? I studied Andromeda as a white woman in a school in Ethiopia”, said the man.

“Not only historians, sometimes artists and painters do distort the reality. I know and I acknowledge the problem. The schools teach everything in English and everything as portrayed through the eyes of a European textbook writers. But, all the original antique texts in Geez and Amharic, and the transcriptions of rural folk literatures in other local languages are stored in European Museums. Many of Ethiopian cultural heritages and local knowledge productions were taken during the British Expeditions and Italian Occupations of the Northern Territory. I even witnessed Ethiopic Biblical Manuscripts during my visits of the Royal Library of Paris.”
“I see. But, I still feel that it is a European name. I mean when I hear it, it doesn’t seem to me like one of the names I know.”

“No, I told you it is an Ethiopian name retained in Greek. You reminded me of a lesson about Greek Mythology. A long time ago, I did a course about paintings in antiquity. I just wanted to know about the antique paintings I used to see in an ancient monastery in rural Ethiopia. Then, I ended up in Greek Mythology. The ancient Greeks and Romans called all black Africans Aethiopes, or Ethiopians. The Greek poet Homer (c. 800 – c. 750 BC) represented Ethiopians with an elevated status, as fabulous, supernatural beings. He even acknowledged that Ethiopians were part of the Trojan war as they fought under their king Memnon on the side of the Trojans. But it is surprising that almost certainly Homer did not know the exact location of Ethiopia. And, Ethiopia was a term used to refer to all black Africa. The beautiful woman in Greek mythology, Andromeda, for example, nearly always portrayed as white in recent paintings, is actually Ethiopian.”

“So, you are saying that Andromeda is not a white woman, right?”

“Well, she is portrayed as a white woman in modern paintings. To re-present her representation should be the duty of the intellectuals.”

“It is amazing. The marginalization and misrepresentation of women in our politics is not surprising as the muscular and masculine keep our politics in their grip since time immemorial. But, culture, religion, and even mythology, if they fail to do justice to our women…….”, the man paused in hesitation. Suddenly, Dr. Cherinet noticed that his cell phone was vibrating. It was actually an incoming call. He had to leave the place to answer the call. He might want to speak private. As soon as Cherinet returned, they noticed that the time had gone. They had to return back to the conference room.

“We shall talk more”, Dr. Cherinet remarked. The man asked if Dr. Cherinet would like to meet at the same time, there.

Dr. Cherinet confirmed as they rushed to their preferred sessions.
At lunch break, the man joined Professors William and Mulu at the lobby. Cherinet joined them, too. Professor William suggested going to the nearest Ethiopian Restaurant. Mulu’s prediction was correct. Mulu offered to give everyone a ride to the nearest Ethiopian restaurant called Enat Ultimate Kitchen. There are many Ethiopian restaurants in the United States. Some of
them have similar names. These include "Enat Kitchen", "Enat Breakfast", "Enatye Cafe and Restaurant", "Enat Fikir Breakfast.” Enat is an Amharic equivalent for mother. The conjugates enatye- my mother; enat fikir- mother love, and all those tell the place of mother in the hearts of Ethiopians. They may also tell mothers’ closeness to the art of cooking, among others. They arrived at the restaurant after approximately ten minutes drive.

Ethiopian cuisine is unique in many ways. It is the most colorful meal that one could ever have. The brown spongy pancake comes with a variety of colorful sauce atop. A brick-red hot sauce made of pepper is in the centre. Yellow lentils cooked in red pepper are also included by the side. Green cabbage turned dark from intense cooking goes with the minced red meat cooked with natural butter on top. This is usually served with home-made white cheese by the side. Chicken stew with eggs and onion in red pepper is usually associated with holiday celebrations. One can also add scrambled gray injera, the soft spongy pancake, soaked in meat sauce to make a beige addition to the centre of the tray. In addition to all these colorful varieties, who wouldn't miss a dark roast coffee after a meal? And for people with wisdom, a yellow home-brewed traditional beer from honey called Tej gives colorful possibilities on the tray.

In Ethiopian cultures, eating alone is discouraged; everyone shares food together, usually on a big round tray. The circular shape of the pancake as well as the tray signals inclusion, unity and hospitality. All food is served on a big soft round pancake called injera. Everybody shares the plate and they eat all the food by hand. It is not Ethiopian culture to use utensils. It doesn’t help to have one due to the unique nature of the food. The only option is to cut the spongy pancake into small pieces and use it to grab some food. Everybody enjoyed the meal.

Before they left the restaurant, everybody asked for the bill but somebody had already taken care of and they didn’t know who paid for the meals. It is customary in Ethiopian culture to pay for the meals of others, especially in the first visit. A guest is never made to pay whatever the guest orders or not. All in all, the lunch made everyone feel at home. Professor William remembered the times he lived in Northern as well as Southern Ethiopia. He used to spend the same
time chatting with friends. He used to visit a restaurant with his Ethiopian colleagues quite frequently, especially for coffee.

As soon as they returned back, Mulu went directly to her office and all the rest of her guests dispersed into separate meeting rooms. The man joined a panel discussion session.

The largest ballroom in the convention centre was filled with educators and participants from every corner of the world. The panelists in the room started their talk with a video clip that run for about fifteen minutes. Everybody was listening to the video. There was literally no voice except the images from the projector moving on the white wall in perfect alignment with the sounds from the speakers at the corners of the room. Everybody was silent. Everyone was trying to capture the gist.

Then, the speaker talked about social justice in relation to place and place-less-ness in a language full of jargon. Being in- and out- of place, and naming a place were discussed. Following this, an argumentative, extended and vibrant deliberation took more time than was expected. At the end of the discussion, people started reflecting on what they felt and what they thought should be the way forward in the light of social justice. The man took note of two things that stood out from that panel discussion. First, the (de-colonial) exegesis of coloniality as exerted not only from colonizers but also from local leadership. This issue was mentioned following the idea of colonization and its contested and sometimes latent nature. The second revolved around the possibilities and challenges of “making a commitment to wrestle with the complexities and difficulties of learning from past mistakes”.

A number of participants had the opportunity to ask and reflect on their thoughts in the question and answer session that followed. The discussions were extended beyond the time indicated on the conference schedule. At this time, the man started collecting his briefcase and considered leaving the room. At the other corner, he noticed Cherinet and William from the front
seats living the room. As soon as they left, the man followed them. Dr. Cherinet and Professor William struck up a conversation about the issues. They reflected on the very argumentative as well as sensitive topics of the panel. From all the discussions they attended, this was the most vibrant one. It was the one with a heated debate and compelling arguments that left the room dumbfounded in terms of the historical evidences and the perspectives that were brought to the fore. The three individuals were the first to reach at the lobby and grab coffee. A crowd followed their footsteps to get some refreshment. This time, the gentlemen moved back to an opposite corner for a private conversation and to give room for other conference participants lining up for coffee and water.

“I wish Mulu were here, I would like to know her take on this”, Professor William stated. “Well, I can guess what her take will be. But, she would never say it. She would prefer to write a brief or a forward for a book on a similar concern than speak publicly about such issues.” “Do you think it is due to lack of interest? Could it be due to some sort of her epistemic dilemma to endorse the issues?” Professor William asked. “It might not be so but it might also have to do with her personality and her own positionality, which is always vague to me. I don’t know who Mulu is when it comes to politics and identity. She speaks all languages and she has sometimes weird perspectives. I do, however, appreciate her rigorous scholarship”, Dr. Cherinet avered.

From what Cherinet said, the man inferred so many things and his visit to Mulu’s house had also helped him to form a holistic picture of what the gentlemen were discussing. The man thought that a glance at her bookshelves is very educational in its own right. The man stared at the two points that he jotted down on his note while sitting in the panel room. He was tempted to ask them a couple of questions.

For a moment, a swift silence flourished while both Dr. Cherinet and Professor William were thinking about some perspectives of the issues.
The man left the two gentlemen at the corner and rushed to the nearest washroom. The interior doors of the washroom had unique signage which read “WHICHEVER.” The usual male and female stick figures were not around. The man felt that it might be a signal for gender-neutral washroom. Such signs are a rare case and probably recent phenomena. He entered into the washroom with some silent smile. On his way out, he came across an old man who was almost close to slap the man on his face. The old man was thinking that the man entered into a washroom assigned for another gender. Luckily, there was a janitor nearby and the man pointed at the janitor informing the old man to talk to the janitor about the issue. While the man was drying his hands, the janitor confirmed to the old man that it is a gender-neutral washroom. It turned out finally that the old man, who was a former employee of the convention centre, had vision problems. Moreover, the man didn’t notice that there were new signages placed just for the conference.

The man returned back to join the conversation. He reached while Cherinet was saying that he was also in the same line of thought with regards to the difficulties of learning from the past. Cherinet had his own thoughts as to how people should carve some ways and frame their thoughts to deal with the difficult knowledge of the education of history, and its relation to violence, among others.

The man remembered the points he tattooed on his notebook and asked Dr. Cherinet what his specific take on some of these issues might be. Cherinet stressed his interest to take a holistic approach to answer these issues and such a short time wouldn’t serve his purpose. Cherinet believes that the complexities of his identities, and the intricacies of the interaction of such identities with place informs his current take on the difficult knowledges of violence and the difficulties in the education of history. Cherinet informed the man to visit his home town and walk-and-talk with him to learn from his wisdom in this regard.

Cherinet said, “I like telling stories. It is good to tell stories, stories that were cut short due to compelling concerns, stories that were cut short due to power and violence. To tell stories
that were cut short is an attempt to exercise justice. It is an endeavor to locate misplaced souls and displaced narratives. To do so, you need to expose yourself to the whole context.

“There are some stories that are not told entirely, only a snippet of them is accessible to the world. And there are some stories that are told too often, like stories of victory and warfare, that are deafening for some story hearers. Stories of violence, when told by perpetrators, are always stories of victory. Stories told by survivors of masculine violence are snippets. Minuscules of them are told; that is even possible if there is luck. Such snippets conceal some stories, and the snippets themselves are concealed from the public by the shadow of history-- history which is the story of the violent and victorious patriarchs.” The man shared these views with Cherinet. He was excited by the way Dr. Cherinet framed the idea of concealed narratives and public knowledges. He thought of speaking with Cherinet about these issues when he will be visiting his town. They kept on the conversations.

After a while, Mulu showed her face right by their side. It was just amazing that the second day rolled by so quickly.

The man wished both gentlemen a nice night and left the venue with Mulu. Mulu asked the man how the day went and the man was sharing all the most exciting experiences he had conference-ing with people. It was enjoyable meeting with people and with ideas. He really liked the conference.

While they were walking to the parking lot, Mulu asked the man if he would like to share some of the thoughts that excited him from today. She reminded him that today they will reach home a bit earlier because they are going to drive straight home. They were a bit delayed yesterday because they had to pick his backpacks from his room.

The man took at-a-glance look at his note and mentioned the two points that he jotted down while attending the afternoon panel. Mulu listened to the man attentively. She suggested
that Cherinet is the best person to reflect on these issues and she suggested that the man should arrange to speak with Cherinet quite sooner if these topics are of interest to him.

As they entered her car, a tall slim young man with blue eyes walked past them to get into his car. Mulu waived at him with a smile. She told the man that the person passing by is her colleague in his tenure track appointment. Mulu interrupted the conversation momentarily while starting the engine. She remembered the protagonist in *Tenure*, a film that mirrors the life of an early career academic like this young colleague. For her, no scholarly article nor a work of art vividly presents the case of tenure and the challenges young academics face to assure their job security.

Mulu believes that institutions demand too much to grant tenure to academics. The effect of this, which Mulu is concerned about, is that it hampers academics from being fully engaged in general societal issues. It encourages emerging intellectuals to withhold their opinion on issues that matter most to them, due to fear, and lack of job security. She always looks for alternatives on how it might be possible to ease the requirements for academics to earn their tenure, why the senior faculty is less engaged in assisting early career faculty members in their struggle to meet the requirements of tenure. Mulu released the brakes, and slowly drove out of the parking lot. They started the journey back to her house. After a brief silence, she started to reflect on some of her perspectives in relation to the issues that the man mentioned interested him from the panel.

“I am quite a bit introduced to indigenous scholarship and I would like to share my thoughts with you”

“That is great!” the man confirmed.

“But I am not speaking as an authority. You know my field is more into the hard sciences. I only read a single book by a woman from Australia, Linda Smith. Well, all our intellectual giants were killed and we do not have a Ngugi, or a Fanon. Our women are still oppressed and we will not have a Linda Smith any sooner. I think no land can demonstrate the difficult knowledge of the education of history and the representation of violence than Ethiopia. A decade ago, I don’t know if you were in Ethiopia at that time, a journalist from the United States approached me to reflect
on an issue. What happened was students at Addis Ababa University ended up in clashes due to ethnic issues. It started in history class and ended up as a whole university students’ protest.”

“Then, you were interviewed about academic freedom?” the man anticipated. Mulu shrugged as if she were saying “You must be kidding me!” She remembered a professor in Ethiopia who used to say “Talking about academic freedom in Ethiopia is looking for your marriage ring in the Mediterranean.”

She continued, “Ethiopian history is chronicle of its ancient Kings from the northern territory. It is written in Amharic and due to language barrier, only few were privileged to read, write about and criticize it. The representation and portrayal of some people in Ethiopian history is biased. It depicted some people as if they played no role in the process of nation building. Until recently, ethnic groups from central and southern territory were not allowed to write and speak in their language. The question of equal opportunity, language rights, self-rule, education, and knowledge production using one’s own language are at the center of current political debates and resistance.”

“But, the oppression in the past regimes, according to at least some media, was class oppression. Some argue that any one of the particular ethnic groups in the country were not oppressed. I heard this argument early on and I believe so. Isn’t it?” the man asked for clarification.

“I don’t buy it. Just to mention to you, because you are an academic who is capable of grasping the fallacies in the argument easily, that when you prohibit people not to write or speak their language, you are not oppressing a particular class but all people who speak that language. All who belong to that ethnicity are oppressed. But, what you said earlier is actually a lame claim. You bring that argument only if you strive to hide the truth or confuse people with terminology because those terms are confusing in their translation into local languages”, The man stared at her in disbelief. She was more precise and convincingly accurate than those who claim leadership in the nations politics. She continued her explanation.
“When I say this, many people ask me if I were a member of a particular ethnic group who claim oppression. To speak against oppression, you do not necessarily need to belong to the oppressed. For example, in the history of the Ethiopian student movement, the major student leaders of the protest belonged to the upper class, the well-to-do families. But, they felt the pains of the poor, some of them organized the student protest against their own families and relatives and it later resulted in the 1974 Revolution. The students could have enjoyed life in Europe and North America because their relatives and acquaintances who belonged to the ruling class, and the bourgeoisie were capable of affording that. You might have read the article by Walelign, the engine of the early Ethiopian students’ movement. He challenged the notion of “genuine Ethiopian” and how other people feel about it.”

As he listened to her, the man felt that there will be hell to pay if she speaks like this in Ethiopia. He didn’t, however, interrupt her. He wanted to learn from her wisdom. She said,

“I also think that it is problematic to understand the historiography of Ethiopia. This is because Ethiopia is a creation of colonial emulation. One thing that would justify this is the territorial expansion and formation of the nation state, specially during the regime of Emperor Menelik. The rulers of the Northern Ethiopian region expanded the territory further south to integrate the regions by force. I do not deny that this somehow worked in unifying the country if this is the good of violence. But, there is a history in the shadow. There is a deeply disturbing knowledge behind it that the world doesn’t know, and the people do not tell it publicly. It is sort of difficult knowledge. The troops were violent while they were on the mission to ‘integrate’ the regions by force.”

Mulu breathed deeply. She then continued. As she put this forward, the man stated his agreement. Then he asked, “I agree with you but then how is this going to be a difficult knowledge?”
Mulu answered, “Knowledge of our failure to acknowledge violence is a difficult knowledge. And, how can you learn a history that portrays you as belonging to perpetrators? Some individuals deliberately unlearn a reality that is very visible like a spot on one’s cheek.

“Likewise, if you are troubled to locate your knowledge of something in what is already framed as knowledge, that is also a difficult knowledge. Look at the difficulty of understanding the translation of colonization? Look at the lack of equivalence for the translation of the terms colonization and dispossession, isn’t it a difficult knowledge? People can be colonies of different people from faraway places, or of the elites of the people in their own nation, or even of their ignorance and self-serving egos. If you go to Addis Ababa, a city which houses the headquarters of the African Union, you will see places named in Italiano, original names of the places in Oromo are erased. As a new layer to this, even the Amharic names that reportedly displaced the original place names in Oromo are currently being displaced by English names. If you go to the outskirts of Addis in all directions, you will notice that the indigenous place names were all changed into Amharic, and now being turned into English like CMC, Sunshine, Hayatt, Old Airport, Haile Garment, and the like resulting in the complete dismissal of ancestral culture and spiritual connections to the land. You will notice similar names in the center of the city such as Piasa, American Gebi (Gebi in Amharic means compound or fence), Ferensay Legasion (which might be somewhat similar to saying Heritage de France).

“All these names are Greek to the local and indigenous people. These names are the first soft violence that are engaged to marginalize and dispossess the people so that they don’t even know what is where. None of these names nor their meanings were known to the people. They are not known to the people today, too. These result in complete erasure of stories and histories related to the places, and the people who belong to the places, and who associate their lives, faith and worldview with the land.

“Such an evil practice detaches them from their spiritual ancestral connections to the place. It makes some out of their place and others in place. It is easier to witness the constant and
continuous erasure of history, and dispossession of people from their ancestral lands, and dismissal of their basic rights in many ways. It would have been easier for the vast majority to have a place named by their own language or keep the names the places already have. What is more difficult history than this one to the lay people? What does it feel like if you see this in the eyes of the dispossessed people? Aren’t they troubled in understanding it? Is it easy for them to recognise?”

The man kept quiet for a moment.
Mulu shared her perspectives with the man. In the middle of the trip, she flashed the right indicator light and parked at the edge of the road. They were close to enter her town.

Mulu said, “Let me share my vicarious experience with you.”
The man nodded in agreement.
“The last time I went to Ethiopia, I enjoyed Addis with my kids. We walked all around the city. We went to the zoo near the main campus of Addis Ababa University. We had pictures in front of the lions that are kept behind the bars. They were kept behind the bars but they are still scary specially when they roar. We also walked to the city hall and St. George's church.”

“Wow! That is awesome!” said the man.
“It is but it also had awful aspects”, said Mulu. “We then had pictures in front of the statue of Emperor Menelik in the centre of the city. While having our pictures taken in front of the statue together, my youngest daughter asked me some questions.”

“Mom, what is this statue about? Is this an Ethiopian warrior saint?”
“I replied to her, ‘He was the emperor of Ethiopia. His name is Menelik the Second. This statue commemorates his contributions to the creation of the modern Ethiopia. He succeeded in leading the Battle of Adwa and save the country from colonization by the Italians’. My daughter then asked, ‘Mama, you do like him?’

“Then, I said, ‘Yes!’ and we laughed and we were all excited. The next day, we traveled further to the south. Our plan was to visit the Sof Omar caves. As you know, the Sof Omar is the longest
cave in Africa with over nine miles of interior length. It is also known for its most beautiful Chamber of Columns”34.

“Wow! You planned your trip well in advance, eh? I didn’t know that you were all over the country.”

“Yes. But, this time it was not awesome. It was awful!”

The man protruded his eyes, and looked at Mulu with shock.

“Really?” the man whispered in low tone.

“Yeah, it is. Before we reach at this destination, we noticed a small town on our way. We visited this town. It is located in the south eastern part of Arsi. We saw the Aanolee Martyrs Memorial Monument35 on our way. Unless it is a matter of denial, I am quite certain that every Ethiopian knows the history of the violence at Aanolee in Arsi region of Oromia. The incidents which happened there “epitomize the cruelty and barbarity of Menelik’s army”36 and they are reminiscent of the insanity of every empire builders. I had to stop for a moment because my daughter wanted to know more about it. The erection of this monument was not known to me as well. It was as foreign to me as it was to my kids. So many things changed in the past two decades.”

Her voice was lowering as she breathed the last sentence. So strange was the way her speech faded into silence that the man turned his neck and looked at her face.

He then posed a question to Mulu, “But, people talk about the Derg era and the killings in the socialist regime as the worst. Is that not?”

It seems that her first hand experience from her recent visits to the country impelled Mulu to speak against some hearsay. Her voice pushed the silence aside as she replied to the man.

“I think we are in a sort of vicious circle. Slight differences are visible, though. During the Derg era, the killers were soldiers and they killed everyone regardless. Now, the killers are in police uniforms and they kill based on ethnicity.”
After a brief blank silence, Mulu tracked her narrations and continued telling the man about her experiences with her daughter in Ethiopia.

“The moment my daughter walked to the monument with her camera, my stomach sunk. I felt…ehhh.” Mulu sighed. She had to breath deep, and she moved her eyes away from the man and started speaking in low tone. She was struggling with tears.

“I saw the monument. My daughter asked me that same question she had asked me in front of the statue of Menelik in Addis. She asked me what this monument is all about and why it is erected in this place.

“How can I explain this to my daughter? I myself was in an indescribable mental state. That was the moment I really came to understand the emotional aspect of the other sides of Ethiopian history and how those mothers living an inch away from the memorial monument feel about it. The the Aanolee Martyrs Memorial Monument commemorates the violence those mothers endured. And this monument, unlike the statue in Addis, tells hidden stories. It tells stories of mothers, women, girls and daughters. I also think now that by looking at this statue, the women nearby are dying everyday of grief.”

The man stared at her in disbelief. He then asked Mulu whether she is concerned about the history of the violence or the violence the statue depicts.

Mulu replied, “I am not concerned about history. Nor am I concerned about the violence as a thing of the past. Statues are not histories, but the commemoration of histories”

Some memories are inevitable when they come by their own.

The man kept quiet. Mulu might have remembered something at that point. She might also have thought that most of those mothers living near the statue keep sharing their pains to their sons and daughters.
She felt their pains. She told the man, “I myself feel the pains. You know I am a mother. I felt the tenderness in my breast and nausea. If I felt that much just at a single visit of the commemorating statue, what might those mothers and daughters feel everyday when they live there, see it? Can you guess what the people whose ancestors were victims of the incident feel about it? What would be the feeling of those dwellers in the area like? I have pains, I have pains… I don't know!”

Mulu remembered that by the time her daughter walked closer to the statue with a camera, she left the car to tell her daughter return back into the car. At that moment, a dozen of kids were playing on the ground. One of those kids Mulu saw was unforgettable. The kid was painting something on the soil just using his fingers. Mulu saw what the kid was painting. The kid finished painting it and when he looked up, a mother was standing there, looking at him with her heart filled with melancholy. Mulu took the picture of the drawing the kid made on the soil. She still keeps the picture on her computer.

After a brief moment of silence, Mulu looked at the man deep into his eyes and she said, “But, I think these things will not continue like this.” She then drove slowly. While struggling with tears again, it took her longer to cover a hundred meter than the time they had taken to cover half the journey. Suddenly, her phone rung. Her husband was calling. The man didn’t notice the ring tone. He heard only her reply. He anticipated it must be her husband checking on her. Maybe, he is worried about her unusual delay.

“Love, I am coming, I am almost there, I was busy in a department meeting!”
Gold or pedagogy?

As soon as they arrived home, the man met Mulu’s husband. Mulu’s husband was playing with the kids in the living room. They took a little break while listening to some slow music. Then, Mulu requested the man if he might be interested to join them for a walk by the water. Mulu lives a couple of blocks behind the water. The scene was beautiful, the place was quiet, and the weather was foggy.

The man agreed. They left the kids to the babysitter at home. The babysitter was actually her relative and a bit mature in age. Mulu always felt comfortable leaving the kids with the babysitter. The man followed Mulu and her husband as they exited by the rear door. The rear is
quieter than the front and it sounded like a totally abandoned place. There was no vehicle, no people, no noise. As they walked approximately a hundred meters, Mulu held her husband's hand and they were walking a bit slowly. Suddenly, she turned to her guest and asked whether he is enjoying the scene. The man confirmed.

Mulu’s husband told the man, “This was exactly what we were doing thirty years ago, at our tender young ages. We are fortunate to have all the time spent together with love and peace. I mean we are not doing this because it is your last night with us.”

The man smiled and asked Mulu’s husband if Mulu and her husband had known each other since childhood. Mulu’s husband answered, “We have known each other since we graduated from high school. Back then, she was studying in a boarding school and I was in a public high school. My parents were very poor. And, both of us were not into a serious relationship. It turned out to be like this after we graduated from college.” The man nodded his head. They walked in a brief silence.

Mulu praised the man for his willingness to stay with them. She told the man that she would always be pleased to host guests coming to her city for the first time. She also told him to share her address with any guest from Ethiopia coming to stay in her city or seeking any help. The man agreed.

Mulu remembered her life and the good old times she spent in her mother's wings. She remembered her boarding school, the real place where she build her intellectual identity. Then she dived into the memory of how her relationship with her husband started to flourish. She felt the cold air she breathed like the air of gratitude. She felt as if she were speaking the words spoken by one of Murdoch’s characters in The Nice and The Good, to herself.

“How wonderful love is, the most wonderful thing in the world. And how lucky I am, to be able to love without muddle, without fear, in absolute freedom!”
The soft wind was kneading their face like the palm of a child who is eager to know what lies underneath their skin. They walked around the water and as they kept walking away from their home, the wind got gentler and stronger. Mulu was unable to walk, but she insisted. She wanted to walk further. The wind blew stronger and the colder air from the ocean was piercing their ribs. Mulu leaned on the shoulder of her husband as she walked against the wind, the wind was whistling and the water was disturbed. The silence of the sea was broken.

“I think it is better to return back now”, her husband suggested.

Mulu was still interested to keep on walking for a while but her scarf struggled in the evening breeze. They turned back and started their return. Suddenly, everything became quiet. It was as if there were no lives in the surrounding area. The man liked the pacific spirit from the ocean and looked at his hosts. They were just looking at the thin road taking them home. By the time they arrived home, they found the babysitter on the couch soothing Robel. Angela was very active and running around the room. The space was not enough for her, she was so excited and full of energy. She was completely immersed in her own world. She didn’t even notice that her mom and dad were in.

As they come closer to the couch, Mulu turned to the man and said, “Robel is quiet, he is like me. My mom always used to tell me that I was quite like Robel”
Then her husband interjected. He said, “But, it is not good”
“What is not good?” Mulu asked.
“Being quiet, I mean silence”
Mulu turned on the television and reduced the volume while she was grabbing a sit. She started looking at both men while pondering over the idea mentioned by her husband. She remembered one of her favorite books “Quiet: The power of introverts in a world that can’t stop talking” by Susan Cain.
Mulu turned to the man and she said, “I will give you a book about this later. Remind me before you go to bed. I have two copies. The whole idea of the book is about this issue. At the back of
the book, a blurb mentions that people often ignore one-third or so of the population- the introverts.”

She further rehearsed from the book and said, “They are the ones who prefer listening to speaking: who innovate and create but dislike self-promotion; who favor working on their own.” She then mentioned a research discussed in the book which shows that a sample of low reactive children, quiet ones, were studied and compared with high reactive children. The result showed that the low reactive children turned out to be confident, creative, devoted to family and lovers, and loves learning on their own.”

Her husband nodded in agreement and said, “That is good!” And then Mulu continued, “Well, the study mentioned that such people love the life of the mind” Then the man took the turn, “So, Robel will be like you!” “I would love that”, Mulu confirmed with a small smile.

It seemed that her husband wanted to have more discussions. He said, “but silence is not good any way.” Suddenly every thing turned silent.

Everyone was hearing only the footsteps of Mulu as she walked towards the kitchen. She stopped in the middle of the room, turned her face back to her husband and continued the conversation with smile. She said, “Look! We were created to stay silent, and to keep quiet. Isn’t it the reason why we have two ears and one mouth? I am wondering why you argue against silence. Why do you devalue silence?”

Her husband replied, “Silence is the pedagogy of the oppressed. I mean it is not a pedagogy for the oppressed. The oppressed are not empowered enough to speak. They are not silent by nature. Rather, they are silenced. They learn silence socially. While speaking is the character of the privileged, silence is the character of the suppressed. All over the world, this can be noticed clearly. The individuals in a colony in a nation38, or the survivors of residential schools still advocate for silence. Although, there is an interesting argument associated with the culture of
silence which is often advocated through colonial epistemologies such as the ones you mention from the books or other sciences, the reality is different.

“The reality about silence, however, is that it’s a preferred location only as a last resort, as a means of resistance. Silence is a feature of those people who are de-contextualised from their cultural setting; it is the preference of people who are dislocated from their land. It is no different in Ethiopia. As you know, in Ethiopia, it is a reality well—documented that people were not even allowed to write, and even speak, using their own languages. It is not changed much to date. The history of the Oromo can be a good example. The great majority of the nation has been oppressed. Oppressors keep telling the people they govern that Silence is Gold but all the media is invested in speaking only about certain dominant groups or religion. They portray the customs of a specific region as a representative of ‘Ethiopian-ness’ which is still the problem in the country.”

Mulu and the man kept quiet while listening to her husband.

Her husband continued, “Wherever you go, at the individual or social level, speaking is a privilege and silence is a survival mechanism. If some are leaders and rulers in patriarchy enjoying the firm grip on the society, then there always are others who are suppressed, oppressed and silenced. Hence, even though I am also the product of a culture that greatly appreciates and encourages silence, I understand that silence is nothing more than a manifestation of the layers of oppression.”

Mulu was astonished by the level of her husband’s tone and by the precision of his arguments. She rarely noticed her husband engage in discussions like this seriously. He continued crumbling the arguments that privilege silence in every way he can. He looked at her while continuing the argument.

“If we were created to stay silent, and to keep quiet, we didn’t need language and those speech organs. Even nature offers a testimony to my argument. We shouldn’t have been endowed with our ears and mouth. Silence is a safe haven sought by the wretched of the earth.”
Mulu is, however, against these thoughts. In her attempt to contradict her husband, she said, “I don’t agree with you framing silence as a survival mechanism. Silence is good. It is speech which is a survival mechanism. Silence could be framed as a struggle for freedom, and speech as a transaction for power. In silence, I feel like I am sharing the pains of my mother. I am she!”

“Do you mean I am her?” the man asked.

“Nope! I am She. If I say I am her, isn’t it like putting her/myself in the object position, or denying her/myself a subject position? But, I/she deserve(s) a subject position and an equal status like “I”.”

“Hmmm”, her husband murmured.

Mulu moved forward to the kitchen to grab something for everyone to eat.

Her husband kept quiet for a moment, pondering over the different faces of silence to further advance his argument. He remembered a silent night in which he lost his brother. The night his brother left the country for good, Mulu's husband was sleeping in the bedroom and his brother was in the salon. That was the time of crisis.

It was a very silent night.

When he remembers it, he becomes always amazed why even the birds did not sing that night, nor why he didn’t hear the dogs barking at that evening. He even remembers that he didn’t hear the old man in the neighborhood who used to sneeze loudly. After the middle of that night however, the dogs made too much noise, and were barking, signaling that a ghost was roaming around. Suddenly, somebody knocked at the door. Hearing the knocks at the door, all his families were sweating in fears. The butchers must be there. They heard them speaking with each other.
Enter or no?
Why not?
No!

Break the handle, use your stock.
Constable, we missed the reactionary. Sure he entered next door?
He is next door.
Go! Go! Hey, run!

Grab this reactionary by his neck!

They run past the door. The earth was shaking from the heavy boots and the footsteps of the officers. That night was like a doomsday. By some kind of miracle, the soldiers didn’t return back, but the dogs were barking the whole night.

Mulu’s husband remembered that his brother escaped early in that morning, covering his face like a woman in a white cotton, as if it were his mother going to church for early morning liturgy. He didn’t return back home. He remembered that when he woke up in the morning, and went to make the beds while his mother was cooking breakfast, he noticed that everybody was in deep fear, sweats had left shadows of everybody’s shape on the white bed sheets like a pencil drawing on a white sheet of paper. At that time, they were close to finishing high school. Addis Ababa was a stronghold for a number of political factions and military squad firing at each other.

His brother just disappeared. He left a note on a piece of paper and said he planned to join the freedom fighter rebels. He mentioned that is better than dying in the kitchen like a woman. Mulu’s husband wished he could have talked to his brother about his feelings of those scary silent nights. He thought of his fears, and his worries of those times. He remembered that had it been him in the salon hearing those conversations, he had had responded aggressively out of fear and despair, and the soldiers had shot all of them in the room. He couldn’t forget how all family members heard the faint sound from the tires of the vehicle called oozzi, the killers’ car, in that deep silence. They heard the camouflaged Russian UAZ-469 drove on the grass with no
noise, they heard the tires rolling slowly, past their house. Even though they were all sleeping and covered with blankets, they heard the rolling tires sounding like a spider running on a paper. Then, the dogs were barking, perhaps they were running behind the vehicle. That morning, they saw the marks both tires of the ooozi left on the grass. He murmured to himself, “God saved us that night.”

That was the memory of the silent but not holy night in the unforgivable bloody February.

After about two decades of civil war and political turmoil, the power of the military junta came to its conclusion. The guerrilla fighters had gained international support for their resistance against the Derg regime, specially from the Western countries.

Globally, the cold war was coming to its end. Then, the Derg regime, which was socialist in its ideological orientation, came to the edge of its grave following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and lack of military supplies. The country entered the same vicious circle again. The man felt it was like the same time as his brother had left the country. The same atmosphere of fear reigned. Mulu’s husband had thought about it, it was time to die in his mothers kitchen or escape at night exactly like what his brother did seventeen years ago. The following morning, he left at the same time as his brother did, early morning, with women going to church, hiding himself in white cotton cloth. He walked the whole day without any feeling of hunger or exhaustion. The only thing he remembered was his rising adrenaline and tachycardia until he crossed the border to Kenya. But, he had one hope- his high school girl from abroad. And that was Mulu.

While he was recollecting about the past, he waked up from his dream-like mental state by the soft clinking sounds of the wine glasses against each other which Mulu brought to the table. He noticed that Mulu was fetching some glasses and red wine for everyone. After a while, she returned back to kitchen again to bring some plates and food for dinner.

Tomorrow will be the last day of the conference. Mulu wanted to hear about the story of the man. However, the man asked them a question and the discussions went astray.
“While we were walking, you started telling me about your love story and then the storm interrupted us. I want to hear about it more”, the man smiled. Mulu briefly told their story. She told her life experience, specially right before her marriage.

She always remembers those very challenging days of her time, specially the days she were in a refugee status. Due to her mothers diligence, Mulu escaped the Derg regime. Her mother hid Mulu in the boarding school. The coming to power of the regime was not a bed of roses for the military personnel. The military met fierce resistance from the people and the response was brutal. By the time it was settled, Mulu had already joined college and things had became smooth.

She served in the country after her graduation from the College of Medicine. After a couple of years, Mulu left the country. Luckily, she flew to the States where she did her specialization in Human Medicine. Her last year of study coincided with the collapse of the Socialist Derg regime. At that time, she claimed refugee per the pressure from her mom who advised her not to return back into the turmoil. She felt that nobody knew that feeling of placeless-ness and stateless-ness except herself.

She always remembers that depressing time until her asylum was approved. She didn’t have financial issues at that time. She was however, extremely worried about the outcome of her application. Every time she entered into the lecture rooms, she always remembered that she had no state nor (citizenship) status, and it was the most depressing experience. She explains it by saying, “It was horrible. I had eaten but not satisfied, I had earned but I didn't feel I had money. I had worked as a specialist but I was insecure. It was a murky situation. I felt I was placeless not only in America but also all over the planet, I felt I was dislocated. I was in extreme despair. It was a curse. It was the most frustrating experience. I don’t want it to happen to anyone on earth. God forbid!”
It happened like this. As soon as she completed her studies, Mulu called her mom and asked what day would be good to get the tickets for her return flight. She had a plan to fly back home and celebrate her graduation. However, her mom didn’t approve it. She rather shouted at Mulu from the other end and then hung up the phone before Mulu asked for details.

“Please, please, please……Do not think of coming here. Everybody is killing everybody else. Your friends are no more. How can I tell you? I will not be able to talk to you over the phone after 07:00 pm. Curfew is imposed and we are in utter darkness. All the curse on the earth is now under our sky. Do not come. Don’t worry if we don’t answer phone calls; please do not call us at night!” That was the only thing her mother told her. Mulu figured out that the Socialist regime was crumbling. The country was near State collapse.

There were no greetings. Best wishes over the phone were a luxury. At that time, she was calling from a call centre. There was no mobile phone like these days. She heard the ugly truth from her own mother. She felt like she was stabbed on her back. She was shivering and was not able to stand by the booth. She felt so angry and terrible. She had felt so helpless, and hopeless. She remembered the old blond woman at the call centre who came to support her and help her grab a seat as while she was staggering out of shock. It was a painful experience.

Mulu was left with one hope. Seeing her beloved mother had become hallucination. She could, however, help her lover cross the Atlantic and help him live the rest of his life with herself. Mulu told the man that the only time she had that same disgusting feeling in her heart was just a year ago when she went to the Ethiopian Embassy. Her daughter was graduating from high school. She asked her parents to take her to their birthplace for a visit before going to college. They all agreed and they had to apply for Ethiopian visa at the nearby consulate. On the day Mulu submitted the application, a consular officer looked at the form she was required to fill in. He then looked at her with a harsh derisive look before uttering the statement: “You are not allowed to enter Ethiopia!” Mulu felt like she was dying.
“It is my country and all my relatives are there. On top of that, I have no other business and I am a working class professional. The world knows me. Please help me!” She implored the person but there was no favorable response.

Mulu had felt like dying, and she cried in the consulate. She remembers the feeling of that despair and emptiness. This was the time she remembered that horrible experience. However, she was finally granted a visitors’ visa and she visited her country of birth with her kids after such a long time.

The world was changed, the entire places she had known were demolished, high rises were built everywhere, her poor neighbors and the empty plot of land where she used to play with her friends are no more there. And the places were all given in strange names. She felt like she was visiting another country.

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They shared their stories and dinner. The time after dinner was silent like an ocean after a storm. Mulu told the man that there are towels and other bath needs in the bathroom cabinets if the man wants to grab shower. Then, she went upstairs with her kids and her husband and the man went to his bedroom. Mulu told the man to turn the lights off when he is going to sleep. She said, “I love the marriage between silence and darkness” and walked upstairs with smile. She was actually speaking to her husband who is darker than she is and her personality, which is often described by her friends and family as silent. And the man knew what she meant by that.
This was the last morning for the man to stay with Mulu and her family. It felt like the last time to love-exist-think. Mulu drove the same route to the college. Mulu was actually driving to the college to drop the man at the convention centre. She knew that the man would be leaving the city in the afternoon. She had seen the itinerary the day before yesterday. While on their way, they had some conversations.

The man said, “I really enjoyed the conversations and the dinner and I don’t know how to thank you for everything.”

“You are always welcome!”

“I liked your love stories and your commitment!” smiled the man.

“Thank you!”

“Your commitment, going all the way looking for your man in a refugee camp, and getting all the paperwork done. I know that men do this often but it is quite a bit strange for a woman to do this, and in our culture a man seeks a woman, the woman is to be sought after even if when she is interested, she would never say it, right? I mean….”

“I love. You know I love love, and love is something inescapable. I love because love is a *metaphysical demand* we must respond to. When I say I love love, at this point, I love everyone. It is my obedience to the being in the personalism of my lover and my loved ones. Love is the spirit that keeps us moving, it is the courage that holds us from slipping.”
Before they exited the town, she asked the man if he would like to have the last breakfast at their usual stop in a bit. The man didn’t hesitate. Mulu raised the volume of the background music in the car. It was “A Homeless Wanderer”, a piano played by the Ethiopian Saint Emahoy Tsegue Mariam Gebrou. The man remembered the morning narrations of a classical Amharic novel on the national radio, a book recently translated into English as Love unto Crypt. This instrumental was played as a background during the narrations. While he was a seventh grader, each Monday morning was eagerly awaited for. Everyone counted down the dates to know what happened to the protagonist in the novel. The voice of the narrator with the rising and falling intonation, imitating the dialogues of characters as if it were real, and making the listeners feel the emotions, was indescribable. Everybody used to talk about the story of the lovers, and the challenges they face, social as well as cultural barriers, and the unpredictability of love.

For Mulu, it is a different memory. She remembers her mother who used to read short stories and novellas to her kids before they went to bed. The composition evoked special memories in their mind, unique for both of them, special in its own way. The same music, unforgettable memories. Listening to The Homeless Wanderer, Mulu is always overcome by the power of love, and she always falls in the tapestry of the memories of the unconditional love she earned from her mother.

They arrived at the spot where they had to park in order to grab muffins, sip dark roast coffee with cream, and feel awake. Mulu seemed quite relaxed. She was not speeding like the day before. It turned to be was an opportunity for the man to educate himself from her stories and to ask her further questions about her views on some issues. And in the coffee shop, there were not many people lining up like in the other days. They both quickly grabbed whatever they wanted and returned back to her car. As they walked to the car, the man asked Mulu regarding her claims about love. The man just remembered that she said she loves love and she loves everyone. The man was troubled by her claims and asked her how it is possible to love love itself. Isn’t love by itself a verb? Isn’t it an action that we do as a subject?
But, for Mulu, love is some sort of action as well as idea, or concept. Love is a verb as well as a noun. She believes that because our language falls short of describing some phenomena, the phenomenology of incapability in language to describe some concepts such as love proves the transcendental quality of the concepts themselves. Such concepts transcend language itself. This is actually true for other concepts such as eternity or death as well. We cannot just describe them, we do rather immerse ourselves in them and we “transform into” them.

“It is interesting but what if we do not immerse ourselves in them? What if we do not love?”
“I think no. I think you cannot not love”, her answer was abrupt. While listening to the man, she started driving with a moderate speed.
“But if I cannot not love, I may speak about it, right?” the man sought her confirmation.
“I may remain silent”, Mulu opposed the idea.
“Isn’t speech the manifestation of love, isn’t it how we express love? or isn’t silence our representation of fear, or more accurately the fear of love?”

Mulu remained silent. Then, she started ruminating over the issue. Actually, silence comes before speech. At the beginning there was silence.
“I think the whole story of creation that manifested the world into being started with speech. At the beginning there was word and creation started with word”, said the man.
“What if at the beginning there was silence? At the beginning there was silence, and at the end, there was speech!” Mulu proposed.

“I think at the beginning there was speech, Word, and at the end there was silence. For example, after a huge distraction, after shatters and clatters, everything turns into rubble and then there will be a deafening silence, a scary series of silence. When we talk of creation, actually we shouldn’t go far. Let us start from ourselves. When a child is born, the child cries first. So speech comes first”, said the man.
“Well, if you think about it from a religious perspective, it makes sense. But, if you take a different perspective or a holistic approach, it might be different. Anyway, let us be silent about it for now”, Mulu smiled and the man smiled back.

“Ok. Then, how do you situate love in your work? How do you situate it in your activism? How do you understand it?”

“I think it is better to see it in quite a bit philosophical sense- ‘I love and therefore exist and think and love again’ in the same order as stated in *Tell Them Something Beautiful*. Love is an existential requirement. Seeing it the other way, I love my work because I love and exist and think. One of the reasons why I love my labor is because it allows me to think freely. Ones I have a clear thought and in some cases sufficient research evidence about an issue, then I speak for love, or out of love, for issues that empower people. I speak against issues that deter people from being in love. If you see me speaking against political structures or divisive systems or sectarian ideologies, that is because they are obstacles to love. Where there is no love, fear reigns. And where there is fear, people resort to violence.

“I do not encourage violence. So, the better alternative is silence- but love is second to none. Situating it in my work, academic freedom helps me to think and exist. My protection from harm and my social security is due to academic freedom which is granted through tenure. That makes me love my occupation. What is the use of this freedom if I am not multiplying love and by so doing ensure that others feel and realize that they are loved? The act of love should be the process as well as the product in academic freedom. I do not want to limit this to academic journals or disciplinary jargons. Wherever there is the opportunity, I will responsibly go for it. The moment I understand the situation of others, be it through research as a vehicle, through reading as a way of knowing, or through my endeavor to put myself in others shoes, then I love them and I become happy. That is what Tolstoy says, ‘*Happiness is in your ability to love*’.”

The man was excited. He asked her, “Have you ever published anything in this area?”
“Not really! I published about the issues I always like to shout about in public. These are about the health of mothers. If not, then silence and oppression in academia are the next. In academia, I think the tenure system and the institutional procedures to grant tenure are oppressive and they are full of fear than love.

“Even beyond academia, there is this issue of silence. In person, I really promote silence. I enjoy the world of introverts. Remember the book I gave to you. And when it comes to public intellectuals, they are always speaking out there, and even when they are speaking against a status quo or whatever you have, they are driven by love. There is some love that drives them to speak, may be to save some loved ones or to preserve some loved culture or something. Love is anyway at the epicenter of the public intellectual praxis. Instead of looking at the public intellectual as someone who is fond of criticizing or appearing in front of journalists, I think a different way of learning about it, a unique way of understanding that praxis is essential. And love is my focal point in this regard.”

The man was so excited by the conversations he had with Mulu. He felt the moment passing like a blink of an eye when he noticed that Mulu was backing up to park her vehicle at the basement of her office. Mulu advised the man that he is welcome to leave his backpack at her office. The man agreed and followed her to her office. As soon as they dropped the backpacks, they had to attend different sessions of their preference. The man already decided what sessions he will be attending.

On top of that, he also wanted to continue the conversations he started with Dr. Cherinet. He reserved lunch time for this conversation. Mulu told the man that there will be a regional conference in the coming few months, it will be held in Victoria- B.C., and that the exact date will be announced soon. The man was so excited and he decided that he should be attending. He asked if Mulu will be part of the conference. Mulu informed the man that she has some plans but she has not yet decided about the issue. However, she was quite certain that most of the people who are
attending the current conference will also be going to attend that conference and hopefully talk about some crucial multidisciplinary issues. ‘I must be CON-ference-ing in Victoria!’ The man told himself.

Following this, he went to attend some of the parallel sessions. By the time the morning sessions were over, the man felt tired and wanted to sit at a corner and check his emails. Suddenly, he remembered that he had already booked this time for a conversation with Dr. Cherinet. He felt like he may not be able to see Dr. Cherinet again and he wanted to hear more portion of Dr. Cherinet’s stories.

Dr. Cherinet caught sight of the man at the corner as he was coming to the lobby area for coffee break. As he approached the man, he asked, “No coffee today?”
“I had too much, really. I prefer not to, at least for now”, replied the man.
“No problem. We can still chat without coffee!”
“Are all the stakeholders you have in mind attending this conference?” asked the man.
“Most of them are. But, I also recognize one thing. Not all stakeholders are decision makers when it comes to higher education”
“I do agree with you. But, if I may, what would be one concern that you would like to share with stakeholders in this conference?”
“As an educator, I should be addressing my deep concern regarding the current trends in knowledge production in Ethiopia. I am referring to an aspect of it, specifically the new policy of higher education in Ethiopia.”
“What aspect of the policy are you unhappy about?” asked the man.
“Currently, there is a plan to open about twenty to thirty additional medical schools all over the country in less than five years. Ask yourself: what about educators and trainers? Will they be able to increase the number of qualified educators and expand the schools at the same pace? What about student supervisions? How will they be trained to be competent enough to treat people? It seems that the project is overambitious. Bringing such ideas to the fore is my responsibility.”
The man nodded in agreement. He then asked, “I recognize that you work and live here in the United States. But, I am just curious, does this expression affect you in anyway?”

“In Ethiopia, such a speech may have grave consequences. It is certainly more than enough reason to lose your job in Ethiopia. And I will still be affected in some way only for challenging this policy. But, I shouldn’t stop speaking. I mean I shouldn’t stop thinking. The speech comes from the thought. At least, I am living abroad, and global policy makers and donors, at least some of them will lend us their ears. It is not an easy contribution if we succeed in raising the awareness of the public that the plan ahead doesn’t work for the them, it will rather bring a distraction to their life. It is my belief that academics, specially those in the diaspora, are at the fore and in some ways privileged to raise such issues and call them to the attention of the general public. In fact, it is not an easy ride, and this speech may be considered an offense even though it is just an evidence-based recommendation. For those who understand it, I am asking everyone to consider a policy alternative and this shouldn’t be considered as something that harms anyone”, replied Dr. Cherinet.

“I really appreciate that. But, I don’t think I would do it if I were you. In fact this relates with academic freedom as well. But, it is not political in its content. At least I believe so.” The man looked into the eyes of Dr. Cherinet.

Dr. Cherinet smiled before he started responding. “Hmm….First of all, it is hardly possible to separate academic and political spheres, especially in Ethiopian context. Political interference into the academic life is not a new issue in Ethiopian political landscape in general. Many academics and journalists are in prison even today and anyone can refer to the human rights advocacy organization’s plethora of reports.” The time was over again before they conclude their discussions. They had to return to their preferred sessions after coffee breaks.
As soon as the second-half of the morning session was over, the man decided to go out of the building for a lunch. More than an hour is gone by now. The man was browsing for the nearest restaurants on his cell phone when he suddenly noticed Dr. Cherinet in the lobby.

Dr. Cherinet approached the man and asked if they can have lunch together. They agreed and left the building. While walking to the nearest restaurant, Dr. Cherinet asked the man whether the man will be around for the reception. The man informed Dr. Cherinet that he will be leaving soon and his flight was scheduled for 07:00 pm. Dr. Cherinet mentioned that the man will be missing CON-ferencing, wining and dining with people.

They reached at a nearby restaurant and they ordered their meals. While having their meals, they talked about so many issues.

Dr. Cherinet asked the man, “Did you like the conference? Was it helpful?”

“Oh, it’s great. I enjoyed it a lot. I learned a lot and I met many people.”

“How was your time with Mulu and her families?” Dr. Cherinet continued asking the man.

“It was wonderful, really! Mulu has a wonderful family and I enjoyed the time with her husband and her kids.”

“Good for you. So, you have friends hereafter when you come to this city”, smiled Dr. Cherinet.

“Indeed. I also enjoyed the argument we had about silence. Last night, we all ended up in a kind of debate, three of us, and that Mulu won the argument.”

“Interesting! We grow with that saying told to us a thousand times, Silence is Gold. I appreciate anyone coming up with a different perspective.”

“Hmm. By the way, I am just curious to know what your own take on silence is”, asked the man.

“I think silence has a lot of dimensions. I just cannot give a single explanation for it. However, I see silence in two perspectives. Silence is the universal. It is the totality of speech. I do not agree with the idea of silence as the absence of speech”42.

“What do you mean by that?” the man asked for clarification.
“I mean for example when you minimize the volume of your radio, the sound gets lower and lower and when you are no more able to hear any sound, then you say there is silence. Actually, at that moment the radio is still speaking. It is your sense that cannot detect the low level of the sound, and in fact, senses deceive.

“My grandmother used to tell me a story every night. One day she told me a story about the Emperor. She said ‘Haile Selassie used to ignore any complaints coming to Their Excellency against their governance’

“You also refer to the Emperor as They?” the man asked

“Well, the Emperor has never referred to himself as a singular subject like “I” or “he.” I heard tones of Their speeches with “We” in order to refer to His Excellency. Anyway, my point is the Emperor never gave a shit about the concerns raised by the people. One day, grandma told me that all the people in the rural areas, farmers, shepherds, priests, drivers and everyone were silent. Then the Emperor, grandma said, asked his servants, ‘What are people complaining about these days?’ The servants replied, ‘Nobody is complaining at this point. Everyone is just silent’. Then, the Emperor asked, ‘When you say everyone, does that mean even farmers?’ ‘Yes, everyone, even shepherds are silent. Suddenly, everyone stopped complaining’. The moment They heard this answer, the Emperor ordered all their servants, ‘Ok, now, go out and reach the people immediately. There is a serious protest against our emperorship’.”

The man looked wide-eyed. At this time, Cherinet added, “Do you see how silence is framed now? I am telling you this as an example that silence is in fact not a total absence of speech. It is probably a powerful speech.”

“Does that mean silence as a protest?”

“Let me give you one more example. In fact, I heard this from a speech by Professor Mesfin. You might have heard of it too. Mesfin was once commenting about the commitment of the people in the Christian Orthodox tradition. He was speaking to a journalist on the radio and he said, “Do not fool yourself when you see thousands of people walking to the church every morning. It is a sign of protest.”

“They are going to attend liturgy or praise God. How can it be a sign of protest?” asked the man.
“My friend, I think you are not aware of so many things. In the absence of the rule of law, or the equality of everyone before the face of the law, where shall the people go and tell their grievance?”

The man didn’t answer. His face turned pale. He continued asking further questions.
“Ok. That could be one explanation. But, so many things happen in the world and in this country in general. How do you explain the silence of academia?”
“I draw on my experience. I understand the world through stories. How else shall I conceive of it? I don’t want to confuse you by mixing meditation, awareness, and contemplation, with silence. Those are either spiritual or internal. They are not imposed. Silence is imposed. It is the last resort that we turn to when we are not entitled to speak.”
“Ok. Then, how do you frame silence in light of the location of the intellectual? Like exile, diaspora, and the like?”
“Well, if you are dis-placed, you are place-less and your speech and your silence are not different things for the tradition you want to challenge. It is only when the closer you are that your speech is felt in the “field”, like a near magnet attracting metals.”
“In that case, then the notion of the public intellectual doesn’t apply to those in exile because their speech doesn’t result in any change in anyway. Right?” said the man.
“Perhaps, yes. But, perhaps no. I say no because, I also feel that these days the world is more intertwined and closer together than ever before and everything I say is heard all over the world in a fraction of seconds.”

The man was delighted by the conversations they had. After they finished their meals. They walked back to the conference venue. It was a sunny day with a clear sky. They continued the conversations while walking to the conference venue. The area was abandoned and there was no one noticed by the roadside. They were walking by the rear side of the downtown which was very quiet. The man attended only a single session after lunch. Because his flight was scheduled at the evening, he decided to leave the conference venue early.

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As soon as the first of the afternoon sessions was over, the man left the room immediately and took the elevator to Mulu’s office. He was rushing as if he were chased by the conference participants leaving the venues for a coffee break. The man collected his backpacks from Mulu’s office. At this time, Mulu was not in the office. The man thanked Mulu’s office assistant. She was so welcoming and she wished the man a safe journey. She said, “Please come again!” The man showed a silent smile. He then left the office.

As he entered the elevator in front of the office, he took out his earphones and plugged into his mobile phone. He, then, turned the music on. He noticed all of a sudden that the famous Tizita by Mohamoud Ahmed was already the first on the list of videos he last watched on YouTube. He turned it on while booking an Uber cab from the application on his phone. As soon as he left the lobby, a black Mustang was waiting for him outside. The man was astonished by the precision of the technology. He was able to see the face of the driver, read the full name of the driver, the license plate, the make and model and the color of the vehicle, all at once. A polite Persian driver sent his greetings to the man approaching the window by the passenger seat. The man felt as if he were entering into the vehicle of one of his friends.

“Good afternoon, sir!”
“Good afternoon! You know my destination, right?”
“Yes, I do. Sir! My name is Farahan. If you need water, there is one at the back for you. At the end of your trip, if you are satisfied or not, there is a way to provide your comment on the application. You can also see my profile on this website”, the driver spoke while handing a tiny business card over to the man. “If you are not happy with anything, you can also cancel the trip. Thank you for choosing Uber!”

“Thank you so much!”
“All right!” smiled the driver.
“Are you Persian?” the man asked the driver.
“Yes, I am. How do you know?”
“There is a Persian neighborhood near my place and there is a Persian poem by Rumi on the wall near my shelf. And I had a brilliant professor who told me he is Persian, too!”

“Oh, nice!”

“Everybody knows Rumi!”

“Rumi is my favorite.”

“Artists are just ghosts. I mean spirits. They are everywhere, you know, in every language, and culture,…. and they cross borders easily. Don’t they?”

The man wanted to pose this question, ‘Who are entitled to cross borders easily? Artists or intellectuals? Politicians or Philosophers?’. He just remembered the conversations he had with Dr. Cherinet about art, Greek, Andromeda, and similar issues. He was in transient silence for a moment.

After a while, the man replied, “Er...perhaps, they do. I think they do so because they have the instrument that helps them to do so”.

“They have love!”.

Both men said it simultaneously and the coincidence made them laugh loudly.

The Ford Mustang roared like a lion. It was thrown into the highway like a cheetah. The man reached the airport with a speed of light. His arrival at the airport was a bit early. He did go through the checkpoints and finally had to sit in the waiting area. He was not interested to unpack his backpack and he just decided not to have a look at any screen. No cell phone, no laptop. No nothing. This may be the best time to stretch his legs and take some rest. Suddenly, the man heard a familiar name called out and he turned around. There was no one by his side. He looked up and focused on the huge screen on the wall.

A journalist was speaking to a guest and it was a live transmission. The man was surprised to have a look at the face of the person who had been his generous host for the last three days. Mulu was speaking on an issue. She was asked by a journalist to comment on current issues regarding political developments in her country. He remembered she had an appointment to
speak with a radio journalist yesterday and with a community newspaper editor the day before. And now she is live on the national television. He just interrogated himself, “How can she manage her time for all these activities...” Before his thought comes to conclusion, he just remembered his last conversations with her in her car. One speaks for others because of love. And academic freedom nurtures that potential in some way.

Mulu is certainly not affiliated with any political party and she is only interested to speak, to speak out of love and humanity. As a result, her speeches are not limited to the science that she waters every day like a plant in her garden. Rather, humanity is the center of her speeches, and she calls this the act of love. If not, then silence is at the forefront of her preference. The man watched the whole conversation until the end. He left the area by the time the security personnel requested passengers to lineup for document checkups. Shortly, he’d be flying, and he may not be here again. He may not hear those lovely stories again. He bid the city goodbye and kept the stories in his soul.
It has been a year since the man last saw Mulu and her families. The *Higher Education Stakeholders’ Conference* the man attended months back was really fruitful. It was a magnanimous conference, the most typical example of all the conferences the man went to in his life. The man received an email from Mulu regarding the next conference to be held in Victoria. The man learned that Mulu is not among the organizers. The man had hoped that she might be speaking at one of the sessions or chairing another session. The man kept in touch with Mulu since then and he learned a lot from her views and her engagement in public. Some memories are inevitable. He couldn’t really forget what a lovely family Mulu had and her views, and her kindness towards people. Of all her thoughts, it was really hard not to rethink or reflect on what Mulu mentioned regarding her last Ethiopian visit with her daughter. Her falling tone of voice while struggling with tears when she was telling him her feelings, “I felt the tenderness of my breast!” always clicked in his ears. History is brutal. The difficult knowledge of history and the knowledge of difficult history are merciless like a double-edged sword. The man had already marked his calendar. He planned and prepared himself to attend the conference in Victoria.
No place feels life any better than the land of the Squamish First Nations, especially in summer days. When it is warm, and the sun shines from the clear sky, Vancouver has the spectrum of all colors. It is a good opportunity for the man to be at this most populous city in British Columbia. One of the merits of living the life of the mind is the opportunity to travel and connect with people: CON-ferencing!

The man hoped that Victoria will also be as colorful and lively as Vancouver. But, Vancouver is a silent city, described as a “lonely city” by its own journalists. The man hoped that he would also be able to talk to the wise man in Victoria, the person full of sparkling smiles- Professor William. Rarely did he come across such an individual full of trust and faith. Rarely did he come across such individuals who always wanted to help everyone coming their way. Before arranging his backpacks for his tomorrow’s trip, the man checked his email and printed out the conference schedule. His eyes widened in disbelief. He felt excited like a kid whose mother promised to take him to a candy shop. Mulu’s name is printed as a guest speaker for the closing session on the first day of the conference. He kept on skimming through the schedule.

He grabbed a highlighter and marked three must-attend sessions. Number one on his list was Academic Freedom across Geographies. He then highlighted Academic Freedom as a Praxis of Speech Challenging Silence; the last session on the back page of the paper also caught his attention despite its being the last presentation session before a closing panel. The title of the session caught his attention and he highlighted it as well: Name My PhD- Doctor of Story Telling! The man was aware of storytelling as an emerging field in Educational Studies. He told himself he will be attending the session and then Mulu’s closing session.

He carried the same backpack that he had in his trips to the Higher Education Stakeholders’ Conference. Carrying too much stuff is less comfortable on travels. Right before leaving Vancouver, the man went to the nearest Starbucks for a coffee in the morning. The coffee shop was a wide space with comfortable couches all around the room. On the walls of the room were oil paintings. One such paintings portrays a black woman collecting coffee with her bare hands.
and walking barefoot. The description under the painting says “COFFEE ARABICA- GROWS AT HIGHER ELEVATION.” On the wood next to the picture of this woman is written “ethical sourcing”, all words written in smaller letters unlike those under the painting. The man did never notice what was written except staring at the picture on the wall in front of him in all those times he came to this place to sip his coffee. Now, he remembered his farmer families. Suddenly some thoughts transported him off shore.

The beautifully tormented black skin on the face of the young farmer tempted the man to think that she must be an Ethiopian woman. The picture looks like an Oromo coffee farmer, and she perfectly matches Haadhako (which means my mother in Oromo), a hand-painted picture of a mother which the man won from a silent auction by a diaspora community fund raising event. He told himself, “Sadly, they are dispossessed from their land, maybe they are employed as guards or cleaners to the “investors” on their land.” He returned back to presence from his thoughts about his relations who reside far from him on the land in between the Indian and the Atlantic, and the Red Sea and the Southern Ocean.

He finished his coffee, and the light breakfast. He thought about the routes he wanted to take to reach in Victoria. The Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal is 30 minutes away from the heart of Vancouver down south. As it was an early morning, the man walked to the nearest skytrain station. The skytrain is usually faster. It comes every five minutes and a stop would never take more than two minutes. In less than five minutes, the man got off the skytrain to get an express bus. The man took the express bus number 13 to take him to his destination faster than the regular ones. The express bus took about half an hour before it reached at the gate of the Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal. Vancouver is a rainy city. It has unpredictable rain almost throughout the year. The day was unusually cloudy and the sky harbored silver white cloud. As soon as the man arrived at the terminal, he bought a one way ticket at the entrance and lined up with other people going to the same destination. Once on the Ferry, the man started reading a book he carried with him. While crossing the water to the island, the man was deeply invested in the multifarious is-
sues that were raised in this book. On the ferry, there were all kinds of scenes ranging from lovers kissing each other to mothers taking care of their crying infants and toddlers.

There were people from all corners of the world and from all walks of life: travelers going to visit the place, regular commuters, those running away from the growing expenses of living in Greater Vancouver, and partners looking for privacy. The man sat in the ferry for approximately forty-five minutes. He then left his seat and walked to the deck of the ferry to enjoy the moment. Suddenly, he noticed a woman with her partner at the edge of the promenade deck, and a friend taking their picture. The scene was scary as the too adventurous adults were close to sink into the water from the top of the deck. The man walked towards the other end of the ferry to feel the wind. He could hardly see Vancouver; the ferry disappeared through the foggy air on the water and approached Victoria. At the nose of the ferry, the man occupied a corner, in the absence of those lovely partners who would run for this corner to get their pictures caught before anybody else. But, the wind was so terrific that he was not able to stand at that spot for more than five minutes.

The man guessed, *Maybe that is why nobody is closer to this spot.* The man felt the cold air from the fog flew through his nostrils. He felt as if he were breathing ice cold water. He was able to see a huge mountain from afar, which looked like Mt. Baker, its top grey hair a bit exposed, but telling everyone that they cannot hide from him. The ferry turned to the right, slowed down and came to stop at the Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal after exactly 1.5 hours. The person was thinking of getting back into the ferry for a coffee as he felt too cold. But, realizing that the ferry was arriving at the destination, he changed his mind and planned for coffee at his hostel. He also remembered that Professor William lives in here and it might be a good opportunity to save some time to enjoy some conversations with him. The man arrived at his hostel late in the afternoon. He felt that he was exhausted. He wanted to cool his body off and take some rest than rush out to meet friends. He will certainly have some time to visit some of Victoria’s museums and galleries, among others.
The International Conference on Intellectuals, Development, and Democracy (ICI-DD) was organized by an association of independent intellectuals, most of whom professors emeriti, living in the Western Canada region. It is an interdisciplinary conference which engages scholars in every sphere of life. At the turbulent time of post-truth era, and increasing neoliberal challenges flexed on higher education from within and without, breaking the silence is important, engaging intellectuals in visibilizing neglected people, considering aspects of life in the shadow, and thriving solidarity is imperative. This conference is scheduled to be held in the Victoria Conference Centre for the following two consecutive days. The man anticipated some of the interesting issues that will be raised in this conference.

The man had booked a hostel not farther than a kilometer away from the conference venue. after spending the night in the hostel, the man decided to leave the hostel early to arrive at the venue in time and engage in CON-ferencing: meeting and consulting with people. Before leaving the hostel, the man reflected on some issues. He had planned whom he would be spending his lunch time with. He also felt that the idea of CON-ferencing in its current practice is not the best fit for everyone. When people talk about conferencing, the images that the word conjures in the mind of most individuals remained to be all about flights to vibrant cities, booking hotels, powerpoint presentations, or at its best exposure to professional jargons.

The man felt that academic conferencing had evolved into something less connected to life. What was the intended pedagogy of CON-ferencing at the outset? The man just wondered and asked himself such questions. Had the speakers and guests going to such conferences been listening to the stories of people in silence? Are conferences making knowledge more accessible to the non-academic community? Are conferences limiting the publics of the intellectuals only to make them become academics within their specific disciplines? The man kept on pondering over such issue to challenge the traditional ideas of conferencing.

As soon as he arrived at the registration desk, the man noticed Professor William. It was a lot of excitement to see the generous smiles of Professor William and once again his welcoming
handshakes. Handshakes are a rare gift in North America. Professor William is a unique person, his handshake is firm and strong and it is accompanied by a warm welcome, generous smiles, sparkling eyes, and a tide of “How are you?” Everybody who speaks with him feels at home and everyone is pleased to experience his charisma. Professor William pointed at the people gathered at the corner of the lobby. He then showed the man the place where people were grabbing a coffee. He said, “Dr. Cherinet is here and a lot more people you met at the Stakeholders’ Conference, too! Please help yourself.”

The man agreed. He collected his conference package and disappeared into the crowd at the coffee table. He looked at the highlighted conference sessions again to make sure he will be heading to the correct venue. Everybody attended the opening session and a short panel in the big ballroom. The ballroom is named Green House. It is named so because of the color of the walls which, people said, is painted a hundred years ago by a First Nation’s artist to symbolize the relationship of nature and life and the spiritual commitment of the people to protect the natural world. After the opening panel, the man joined a crowd in a room to attend a presentation entitled Academic Freedom as a Praxis of Speech Challenging Silence. The presenter was a Professor Solomon, an Ethiopian diaspora from the Pacific States of the United States. Just in a moment, the facilitator introduced Professor Solomon and everybody stopped their whispers and conversations. Professor Solomon was just speaking to the audience and he had no powerpoint nor a printout to read from. It was a vibrant session followed by question and answer sessions from almost everyone.

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Well, I am not going to use any of those technologies for this presentation. After all, I belong to the Humanities and the Humanities have words only. As the philosophers say it, in the beginning, there was Logos. I thus speak from my words. It is just a reflection of my thoughts. Professor William has been my all time colleague and I came to this city for the first time as a visitor. That was a long time ago and I was generously invited to deliver an “inspiring speech” to the first prospective graduates of the teacher candidates’ program at the University of Victoria.
Today, after so many years, I am invited again to speak, not to do a presentation. I am not presenting anything. I am presenting myself in front of you.

My talk involves some issues of academic freedom and the speech-silence controversy. My views are influenced and shaped by my own positionality as an academic as well as an intellectual from the Ethiopian diaspora. Sometimes, it is really odd and difficult to map the contours of one's identity as an academic and a public intellectual. Well, my views of academic freedom and public intellectualism are greatly shaped by my life and times at two totally different academic and social cultures. I will just provide you with a brief story-ing of what I lived for years. For many people, there is this assumption that academic freedom grants people the right to speak as they wish, and thus it is a praxis of speech against silence. However, my view about academic freedom in terms of speech vis-a-vis silence is totally different and somewhat metaphorical. I will try to relate this to the notion of public intellectualism since most of you believe that I belong to that “species”.

It would be great to draw a Greek myth to your attention to make the issue clearer. I am quite certain that you folks in the Humanities are familiar with the myth of Secundus: the silent philosopher.44 I will make it shorter to serve my purpose. Secundus was a philosopher who takes silence as his religion. A Greek Emperor at that time, Emperor Hadrian, heard about the endurance of Secundus in maintaining silence which, they say, was not possible for ordinary flesh and blood. The Emperor summoned Secundus and upon Secundus' arrival, the Emperor stood from his seat to greet him, with a primary intention to test whether the philosopher will maintain his silence or not. What would you do if an emperor of a great empire stands to say ‘Hello’ to you? Secundus remained silent. He was asked, advised and threatened to speak. However, not a single word came out of his mouth. He didn’t flinch. At this time, Emperor Hadrian said, “Speak philosopher so we may come to know you. It is not possible to observe the wisdom in you when you say nothing.” Secundus remained silent. The Emperor tried to convince the philosopher but it was not successful. The last option was to threaten the philosopher. This didn’t work and the
Emperor was offended by the incident. It was a bit tricky. Perhaps, you might be saying now that these philosophers are not afraid of death.

The Emperor told the executioner in private to talk to Secundus and convince him to speak while walking him to his grave. But the deal is, if Secundus says a word so as to save his life, the executioner is told secretly to cut off Secundus’ neck. On the way to the place of his execution, the executioner did his best as advised by the Emperor to convince the silent philosopher to speak. He said, ‘Secundus why do you die of silence? I am going to pass a sword through your neck. Why do you die in silence? Isn’t it better for you to speak and save your life?’ But, Secundus endured. He remained in silence as usual. The executioner took him to the place where Secundus was supposed to allow a sword pass through his neck and that will be the end of his world. The executioner tried hard to convince Secundus telling him that this is his last moment and only if he speaks will he be saved. But, Secundus was Secundus. He was silent. He despised life. He was ready to confront death in silence.

The executioner learned that there is no way to convince this philosopher and make him speak and thus, he decided to drag him back to the king. Then, he told the king that the philosopher uttered not a single word since he left the Emperor. The Emperor, upon hearing this, rose in front of Secundus and said, “In observing silence, you have imposed upon yourself a kind of law, And that law of yours, I was unable to break down. Now, thus, take this tablet, write on it, and converse with me by means of your hands.” Amazingly, Secundus took the tablet and started writing on it. You would be wondering what Secundus wrote on the tablet. Secundus wrote to the Emperor that the Emperor has the power to kill Secundus because the Emperor is the ruler of the empire. But, Secundus affirmed, no one on earth has the power on his words. From there, he then continued to deliberate on other philosophical questions.

I am not mentioning this without reason. Sometimes you may feel that academics are evolving into a silent species. You may feel they are just silent when some unjust, barbaric and brutal incidents happen against humanity. Given the university as a troubled place amid neoliber-
alism, and the *Humanities* the most tormented from the storms of growing commodification of knowledge in higher education, it seems less surprising to see the emergence of a silent intellectual species who never speak about what happens beyond their ‘*town*’, which is the university. Sometimes, I convince myself to see the silence of academics as a vehicle towards speech.

By that, I mean academics remain silent like Secundus until they get the *tablet* that enables them to speak, which I think is their tenure. But, it is my observation and my belief that this tenure *brings with it some kind of power and privilege*, at least social and financial security, and it takes many years, even a decade or so for some people to become tenured professors. I dare not say that they internalize silence as time goes by. I would rather argue that their power changes their life’s demands, and the issue of justice or speaking to people and power remains secondary. The means becomes the end in itself. The claim that they need to be tenured to exercise their freedom fully will be ripped in the bud. There is a possibility that as soon as they are tenured, their worldview is changed.

In contrast to this, I see public intellectualism as a life calling. Only some among academics end up as public intellectuals. Public intellectualism is not only about being a ‘homeless wanderer’, by that I mean an intellectual in exile, or a gadfly that stings every dictator. It requires consistent engagement. I know a small number of individuals in North America, and a couple others in Ethiopia, probably they might be in their late sixties or beyond. Two great intellectuals, Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam and Professor Merera Gudina, have always been challenging the dictators in their nation. From the diaspora, I may need to acknowledge the efforts of Professor Berhanu Nega. Anyway, they have always been sentenced to prison. The country has passed through different revolutions and changes of regimes. They have lived as an academic in the past three regimes. In all cases, they had spoken to people. They had confronted power, they were put to jail, and they were incarcerated. But, these have never stopped them from speaking publicly against injustices and issues that matter most to their people. To reduce their practice to the protection of tenure would feel like to undermine the risks they took. In African context, tenure
doesn’t exist and if it exists, it doesn’t protect people from the risk that speech carries with it. Rather, the allure of tenure and promotion silences academics in some way.

About a month ago, I was flying further south to talk to communities of practice in education. A professor approached me and he commented about the visible presence of Ethiopian intellectuals in his community in the United States. There are some academics in the diaspora who succeeded in their academic life and career. They are also known for their engagement in public-intellectual praxis. It is not uncommon to find such intellectuals writing critical articles on online media and newspapers or deliver speeches on national media as well as other outlets. The question is, therefore, why is the public engagement of some of these intellectuals “too much” and others "too little"? The way I see it is different. First of all, it is natural that we instinctively desire what is prohibited. These individuals were high profile academics who were denied exercising the right to self-expression. They knew they would have gone to jail if they were this critical at their home institutions in Ethiopia. Or, probably they ended up here seeking some protection after some grave experience which is hardly possible to imagine in a North American intellectual imagination.

Some people in my country are deprived of basic rights, including their right to speak and write in their own language. I find it hardly possible to envisage a homo narran out of individual academic in such contexts. I may see a Secundus in such a context waiting for his/her tablet to be given to him/her by the authorities. I read “Silence is not Golden: A Critical Anthology of Ethiopian Literature” 45 written about two decades ago discussing a case which should have been put forward early on. What surprised me is that, despite incessant public protests and changes in regimes, nothing has changed in enabling people to speak their mind and to use their language as well. Ethiopian academics in North America voiced this quite frequently. In North America, in addition to the strict observance of the privilege which comes with tenure, everyone is entitled to exercise free speech. It is like wearing two hats to appear before two publics. Intellectuals in Ethiopia, however, are like Secundus. And they do not even have a single hat and the rain is hitting them. But, when something barbaric happens in their home country, those intellectuals in
exile speak out loud in a way you might feel is like “too much noise”. Theirs is different from what you feel when something happens somewhere you are not well acquainted with.

Public intellectuals are not limited to the category of the ‘intellectual species’. By that I mean they possess additional attributes that make them a different sub-category of the intellectual species. They have something in common across geographies. Passion is inevitably one thing. But, I shouldn’t leave you without calling Paulo Freire's notion of witness to your attention. Freire discusses witness as a dialogical action of revolutionary leaders. He argues that a witness has five qualities. Among these, I like the three qualities, namely consistency (between action and words), boldness (to confront existence as a permanent risk), and the courage to love the world for the liberation of humankind (without any accommodation to injustice). I bet all the public intellectuals, all those who challenged a status quo have most of these qualities regardless of their location. Without the will to confront existence as a permanent risk, a tenured academic will not be engaged in a consistent public-intellectual exercise. Intellectual production detached from action doesn’t serve a broader public beyond disciplinary specialists. It is now clear that being public doesn’t mean simple presence among the people. I think I should stop here and we can have the rest in question and answer format.

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Everybody clapped their hands in glee. The man noticed a number of participants were engaged in the question and answer session and the conversations were continued even during the health break. While sipping coffee, Professor William approached the man and mentioned, “Professor Solomon is my old friend, we call him “the ribbon-moved-prof”. Professor William added that Professor Solomon likes to tell his story. Professor William advised the man, “Ask him why people call him the ribbon-moved-prof. He is so excited to tell his stories, he is a great narrator. You will see the homo narran in him.”

The man was excited. He was struck by the stunning ways Professor Solomon addressed the public. Professor William noticed the level of excitement that the man had just by looking at
the shining smiles on his face. Professor William remembered an audio-record of Professor Solomon that he kept in his office. He then mentioned to the man, “If you are interested to listen to his stories, I also have his full speech recorded, something like fifteen or so minutes long.”
“What was his speech about?”
"I invited him to deliver a speech to the prospective graduates of my first teaching in the Teacher Education program. You would be surprised, it is humorous, but there are some issues to learn from it, specially about the life of the mind in Ethiopia, or the journeys of an Ethiopian intellectual before exile.”
“Great! Is the recording found at your office?”
“Yes. It is about fifteen minutes drive. We can do it now if you want.”
The man agreed. They left the conference venue right after lunch for a brief visit to Professor William’s office at the University of Victoria. Professor William drove the man to his office at the university. It didn’t take more than fifteen minutes to drive to the office. As soon as they arrived at his office, Professor William passed a headset over to the man. The man sat to listen to the audio record from a desktop computer.

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Thank you for the invitation, Professor William.

Dear prospective graduates of the Teacher Education certification program: Good afternoon! I arrived at this town a couple of days ago for a brief visit and ended up in this spacious state-of-the-art lecture hall to deliver a speech to you, the first graduates of the newly launched Teacher Education Program. It is really a privilege. Thank you.

Teaching is my passion and I am sure it is your passion as well. Maya Angelou, one of my favorite writers, says, “My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.” If you have a place in your heart for some passion, compassion and humor, I think teaching is the best choice.
My colleagues call me by a nickname. They always call me the ribbon-moved-prof. The ribbon has a place in my academic life and career and that is why people always associate me with it. I am a son of farmers. My parents were farmers, both of them, in rural Ethiopia. They were just traditional farmers who used oxen to till the land. I have two sisters and a brother and I was the fourth person in the family. I didn’t know my mother well, I have a faint memory of her because she passed away early, maybe when I was seven or eight years of age. I became a shepherd, I had to look after the cattle. No family member influenced me to be an academic. My father couldn’t even get the opportunity to learn how to write his name. He was a traditional farmer. In those days, there was not even electricity in our village until I finish grade 12th.

Despite his illiteracy, my father was well aware of the value of education and he was among the first few farmers who mobilized resources to set up a small school in our village. My dad used to advise me, “My dear, there is nothing to pass to you as an inheritance. I don't have wealth to pass on to you. The only way you can survive and become a better person is by going to school and working hard.” He had no clue as to what it means to be an academic but he was aware that those who went through the school system used to earn and live a much better life than the farmers life. Don’t think that it was an easy ride. Most of the time, when your parents are poor farmers, you grow up in an open neighborhood. I mean you go home only when you are hungry, right? And there is no body to look after you. And, if your mother already departed this life, can you imagine the vacuum in your life?”

Everyone in the neighborhood assumes responsibility to discipline you and provide you with advice and words of wisdom as well. I was in a farm plowing with my family. My dad gave us the freedom to roam around, to move around and try different things by ourselves. I do not forget the farming we were engaged in while living with my parents. I was disciplined, devoted and strong. I did everything you could imagine about a traditional farming: plowing, collecting weeds by hand, cutting grass using sickle, looking after the cattle, hit by the rain for hours and hours, get stuck in the mud and all that. Well, you think of a massive machine or tractor in a green field when somebody talks about farming here, right?! Alas, that is not known to us, it was
not even in our mind. There was intense poverty and my family suffered a lot. Some people used to encourage my dad to give some of his kids to the wealthy in town or the orphanages in cities. I really admire his determination. He said ‘No!’ outright. He decided to struggle to death and work harder to bring up his kids. And it was very hard in the absence of a mother. I made it to high school which was great but the worst part of it was that I had to commute about ten kilometers every day to school.

How many of you are connected with your schools? And with your teachers? I was in Ethiopia this summer and I went to visit my high school. It is somewhat deteriorated. I walked by the route I used to take when I went to school. That reminded me the conversations I had with my mentor at a university in the Pacific Coast. He invited me to join a team of hikers on one weekend. We went to a park with him and he was kind of concerned about me and kept telling me to drink water, be careful and the like. I didn’t drink even a drop of water. We hiked about five miles, and you know, he got tired and I was not. He was like ‘What is going on here? You have to explain it. I was worried you will be tired and you will run out of oxygen; the altitude is very high and...’. I laughed and I said ‘the thing is I did this every day for my entire high school life. You call it hiking and I call it going to school. That is the difference!’

You would be surprised if I tell you that this was very enjoyable for all of us, I and my junior school friends. But, life is not always filled with such delightful endings. The saddest part of my adulthood came due to the loss of my dad; you know he was everything to us. I was in North America and I was not able to be around him during his last moments. In fact, I did everything I could to help him, I helped him in many different ways. I had a very vibrant life and that is where my nickname comes from.

Hold on, er... I know you are eager to hear where my nick name comes from. As you might know, you go to college in Ethiopia not because it is your preference or your desire to become someone in some profession. You don’t have the luxury of choosing your field. Rather, it is the government that assigns you to a college. There were only two universities in Ethiopia by the
time I completed secondary schools. They were Haromaya and Addis Ababa Universities. most of the universities and colleges that exist today were not established. The colleges and other institutions that were established by then were all under Addis Ababa University. Admission to the university was very competitive and it required the highest scores from the Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination (ESLCE), I think it was a matter of selecting roughly 3000 students who would join college.

My overall ESLCE score was not that high and I was not assigned to the college of my choice. I knew I was qualified for a two-year diploma instead of a bachelor degree. I joined a diploma program at Addis Ababa University. The university is relatively big, and you come across people from different ethnicities and different groups, I was really excited to be part of it. I had the opportunity to see the gowns prepared for the bachelor's degree graduates. I saw my gown and it had no ribbon because I was a diploma graduate. It was just a black cloth and I felt unhappy and jealous of those who were going to wear that gown with a ribbon. I decided at that moment that I must return back to school and wear this beautiful gown with a ribbon. I was displeased when I saw the photographs of the students graduating with Bachelors degree. Surprisingly, I returned back to the same college and received my Bachelor of Arts degree.

Then, the same thing happened again. This time my graduation was in Christmas Hall. It is a huge hall, and I saw all kinds of gowns, and hoods, and ribbons, and the ones worn by Master of Arts’ graduates were very alluring. The caps, the shiny red hoods, and the long black gowns, I really do not forget the scene until today, the image is imprinted in my mind until today, I do not forget the grace of the students, all of them were so graceful and handsome. Their faces were shining. They were all delighted about the journey. So, I returned back for my Master of Arts degree, well I should say for my hood and gown. I graced the graduation hall with my hood and ribbon.

I was excited during my Ph.D. graduation in the same way as I was during my diploma graduation. In fact, my excitement at this time was not for the gown and the hoods, but I still like
and respect this ceremony, criticisms aside. My critique about education is more of its content and delivery than its ritual. I think the education in Ethiopia is more focused on content and less on developing the life skills of learners. The only thing I would praise the system, however, is for the opportunity it offers to everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, wealth and the like. You may have your own reasons that inspired you to be a teacher candidate. It is my hope that you will make the best teachers in your province. I believe that you will allow your students to be who they are. And I hope you have learned a lot from my great friend Professor William who knows how to make everyone feel more human.

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The man took the headset off and turned his face to Professor William. Professor William looked at him and said, “I hope you liked it!”

“I got a clear idea about the person and why you call him with that nickname”, the man smiled.

“Isn’t it interesting? I hope you learned something.”

“Sure. I did.”

“By the way, Mulu is not coming to the conferences. Have you heard about that?”

“Not really. What happened?” the man was shocked.

“Well, I was hopeful until this morning and didn’t need to change the schedule. I called her office the day before yesterday and I learned that she had a visit to Ethiopia and that she was supposed to be back on duty that same day I called. She had told me earlier that she adopted two daughters from Ethiopia. Perhaps she went to pay them a visit. But, she didn’t show up to her office at the expected date. Moreover, she was supposed to be with us today.”

The man looked into the eyes of Professor William and said, “We had some serious conversations and I felt that she would never return back to Ethiopia for the rest of her life”

“Well, we all say something when we are in despair or emotional but life goes on. You know what I mean?”

“I see. But, some memories persist. They are haunting and they are inevitable”, said the man.

“Do you think Mulu still miss home?” asked Professor William.
“Perhaps she does, perhaps not. But, I think everyone has some memories to share with others. These are like the tip of the iceberg. And, there are some memories that I call haunting memories. They are underneath, deep in our soul. I mean you never know, you never see them, you do not hear about them. William, I am just curious had you talked to Mulu about her recent visit back to Ethiopia?”

“I think she has been there twice. Was it the one she went to help establish a local Human Rights Council?” asked Professor William.

The man was not sure about the purpose of her trip. But he remembered that she had been in Ethiopia with her daughters. Suddenly, the conversations with Professor William made the man remember what Mulu had shared with him. The way she parked her car by the roadside, the way she shared her feelings, the way she struggled with tears, the way she expressed her pains, all of it was conjured up like a movie scene. He remembered it all.

“Well, she was speaking with me, she even parked by the side of the major road on her way home. I remember we were not able to interrupt it and she was able to get back to presence by the time her husband called to check on her.”

“ I see. But, I am not really worried about her. She is known to be silent as the cemetery in the night. She has no stake in the mess. She should be fine. You know what I mean?!”

The man understood. However, his mind was incessantly ringing unstoppable questions. He had known the level of her commitment. Something extreme might have happened. Otherwise, she would have been here sharing some perspectives with people, and conferencing with everyone. William and the man left the office and they drove back to the conference venue. The road from the University of Victoria to the Conference Center was not crowded. The flow of the traffic was smooth. The man enjoyed looking at the huge fields, and dense forest in the city on their way back to the Conference Center. By the time they arrived at the conference venue, people were already going to the parallel sessions they chose. More participants were going to the room assigned for the presentation by Dr. Mulu.
They had no clue that she was not even around. The man left Professor William and headed to the restroom. Professor William told the man to see him at the conference room. While exiting the washroom, the man felt the need to reconsider which session to go to. He referred to the conference schedule that he highlighted early on. Another interesting session was the one entitled “Name My Ph.D. *Doctor of StoryTelling!*” However, that session was scheduled for tomorrow morning. The man was upset that Mulu was not there. One of the reasons he traveled all the way to Victoria was to continue his conversations with Mulu.

The man felt that his instinct was telling him to leave the conference venue. He was not as excited as he expected himself to be. His mind kept boggling him as to what happened to Mulu. He resorted to his alternative plan. Usually, the man just leaves a conference venue and walks around a city if he is not comfortable sitting in conference rooms for long hours. He sometimes tells himself that this might also be the merit of scholarship—traveling, seeing places, meeting people, and learning about places.

Perhaps it is better to visit a museum or another historical site of interest. He pulled out the tourist map he already collected from his hostel. He had highlighted the *Parliament Buildings* as a potential site to visit before the conference is over. A long time ago, the man remembered he visited some of the attractions in this city. He never forgets the tiny colorful creatures he visited in the *Victoria Butterfly Garden*. This garden harbors thousands of tropical butterflies. It is a good place to appreciate nature and to wonder about the possibilities of creation. While reflecting on his past experiences in this city, the man walked out of the conference venue for about a hundred meters. He then noticed that there was a bike rental shop nearby. He walked into the shop. After a brief negotiation for a discount, the man passed his ID and a hundred dollar bill to the slim woman behind the counter. The woman allowed the man to pick his favorite bike. Following this, the man picked a *city bike* and galloped to the *Parliament Buildings*. At the *Parliament Buildings*, he enjoyed the free guided tour for about an hour. It was a fantastic tour to learn about the history of Victoria city, the place of the Esquimalt and Songhees First Nations, and a glimpse.
of a really British Victoria in general. The only thing the man was displeased from what he heard from the tour guide was the absence of the native people in the parliament.

As soon as he left the building, the man was so excited looking at the green pasture in front of the building. Nature is beautiful. He just walked down the stairs, crossed the sidewalk and sat on the ground. Many visitors were taking selfie with the fountain nearby. The man wanted to sit on the green grass longer. However, He felt that he should return the bike before it is an hour- not to pay any extra for the rent. He walked to the corner where he locked the bike. He then started his way to the bike shop. In the middle of his ride, he remembered Mulu’s reaction while she was narrating her visit with her daughters in Ethiopia.

He told himself that some memories are inevitable, and they just come, and they just persist. He regretted that he couldn’t tattoo all these in his diary. He should have imprinted all these stories on that diary, these unforgettable stories from the shadow of his own history. As he was speeding down the hill, the man noticed that he was approaching a pothole. The bike was speeding up. The man struggled to control the bike. He squeezed the brake lever firmly against the handlebars. His action was abrupt. However, it was too late. The man didn’t remember what happened next.

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By the time he became aware of himself in the early morning of the following day, the man murmured something, and there was only a nurse nearby. The nurse didn’t hear what the man was saying at the beginning. “Ah, I shouldn’t have missed that session!”

The nurse was confused and looked deep into his eyes. The man was thinking about the session he highlighted on the conference schedule, Name My Ph.D. ‘Doctor of Storytelling’. The man thought about this session for long. ‘What will it be about? What does it mean? Does the current development in storytelling in Educational Research a signal to such a nomenclature to come? But, who will be allowed to do it if there is such a thing as Doctor of Storytelling? And
who will be the faculty members? Will the professors be the elders of the First Nations People? How will academic promotions be handled for those who will pursue such a thing?'

The man turned his face to the right. At this time, a doctor came in with medical reports of the man. The doctor told the man that he has no broken bones but a very minor concussion, no other serious damage to any of his organs. However, the doctor recommended some actions to consider.

“You are really fortunate. Do keep yourself away from any physical activity, walking or jogging. Avoid consuming alcohol, taking sleeping pills or anti-anxiety medications. Do not take acetaminophen, ibuprofen (or other anti-inflammatory medication), narcotics or any other medications to treat headache pain. If there is any feeling of incessant headache or unusual feeling in your skull, report to the nearest medical facility immediately. For now, you are good to go!’ The doctor left right away.

The man smiled and he moved his legs slowly down to get off the bed. The man felt as if he were taking good rest. He hadn’t noticed what happened to him until he woke up in the hospital. Actually, what happened was that an old woman walking her dog noticed the incident as she was behind his bike. She then called 911 and the Para-Medics brought him to the hospital immediately.

After the brief visit by the doctor, the man felt at ease. He called a cab and returned to his hostel. He reached out to Professor William over the phone and informed him about the situation. Professor William was shocked by the news. “I thought you had already left!” was what he remarked in disbelief.

After a brief conversation, Professor William told the man, “By the way, Mulu is back from Ethiopia but she reported that she was delayed because one of her adopted daughters was admitted to a hospital to remove her appendicitis.”
“Oh, really? I am glad that she is fine anyway. Good to know!”
“And, I have a surprise for you?! Can you guess?”
“Maybe yes, maybe no!”
“Go ahead. Only one attempt”

The man knew that Professor William is a very friendly and socially engaged person. However, the man was rather exhausted and was not interested to engage in extended conversations with Professor William. He replied with a low tone and said, “You have seen me highlighting the sessions I wanted to attend. Did you get a copy of some footages for the sessions I missed?”
“‘No, not at all’
“Then, what is it?”
“I knew you had stayed with Mulu during the Stakeholders’ Conference. Mulu just noticed that you dropped a diary in her guest room. It is locked and intact. She had sent it to us through a colleague because she is aware that you are attending this conference.”

The man was dumbfounded. He couldn’t breathe.
“What?! oh, Professor William, this is a real surprise. This was one of my worries that kept me distracted everywhere. I feel that even the accident happened partly because I was not able to concentrate as I was thinking about the loss of my diary and all the things inscribed in it. You don’t believe the depth and variety of pleasant stories I tattooed in it. Thank you so much!”

Professor William told the man that he will be coming to the hostel tomorrow to visit him and hand the diary over to him. He also mentioned that he will be driving the man to the Swartz Ferry Terminal.

The man took a good rest for the whole day at the hostel. The night passed with excitement and hope. In the following morning, Professor William arrived at the hostel exactly at 07:00 am in the morning. He parked his shiny black Tesla at the entrance of the hostel. He took the diary with him and walked into the hostel. It was a tiny diary gilded with gold. The man
bought the diary to keep track of events, record stories, and his personal encounters. He bought it so that he will have enough stories to share with his mother and to let her know what he encountered from his trips across the lands of the native peoples.

Professor William handed the diary over to the man. They left the room and slowly walked to the vehicle. William drove to the Swartz Bay Ferry Terminal. They were having conversations while riding but the car was the quietest car with literally no audible sound coming out of the engine nor the tire. It was just flowing like a river. It was a short, cozy and quiet trip. They didn’t converse much at this time.

Professor William might have felt that the man needs a good rest.

“Ok, you are almost on time. Did you buy your ticket online?”

“No. I will get one from the vending machines”, said the man.

“Alright! Have a safe trip!” Professor William gave the man a hug and said, “Take rest and keep the consult of the physician.”

The man agreed. The man also had earlier training in human medicine. As soon as he entered the Swartz Ferry Terminal, the man walked slowly towards the vending machine. He collected his tickets and entered into the Ferry.

It had already started raining outside. Everybody sat inside the Ferry. It was a quiet trip. No significant sound was heard except the announcer coming very often. The man was feeling physically exhausted. He didn’t even know that the trip was over by the time the ferry stopped at the Tsawwassen Ferry Terminal.

As soon as the man left the Ferry, he noticed an express line bus right outside the Ferry Terminal. It was almost ready to leave the site. The man was the last person to get on the bus. When he entered the bus, the man noticed that almost all seats in the bus were occupied. A teenager sitting close to the back of the driver left her seat and invited the man to have a seat in her stead.

“Thank you so much!” said the man while taking the seat.
“No worries!” the teenager replied swiftly. The bus flew to Richmond, a vibrant city south of Vancouver.

The man had to transit to the Skytrain. The station is a walking distance adjacent to the bus stop. The Skytrain took a shorter time for the same distance from the Richmond Skytrain station to the Skytrain station close to his residence. And, it was incredibly fast. At the exit of the Skytrain, the man took a bus for a short distance to his house. The physician was right. The man felt uncomfortable about walking fast or long distance. He felt exhausted. But, he convinced himself that the feeling might be from his earlier health issues than from the bike accident. In less than two hours, the man felt even more tired and he found himself in his bed.

As a person with a background in medicine, the man had known that he had experienced under-active thyroid, also called hypothyroidism. A person may feel physically exhausted when their thyroid gland ceases to produce enough of certain hormones. Despite his knowledge of the cause and the treatment of this problem, the man despises the science. He is not serious about treating himself accordingly. At his bedroom, the man felt like the character in Dostoevsky’s *Notes from the Underground*. He felt exactly like him, the St. Petersburg character. He was conversing with himself saying:

*I know the problem but I just despise the solution. So, I am a sick man, a wicked man, an unattractive man whose knowledge accounts for his misery.*

He spent the rest of the day and the whole night dead asleep. The next day, the man felt to have some outdoor activities, possibly sitting somewhere at some silent corner of the city. Suddenly, he changed his mind and decided to spend some time in a garden nearby. Gardens are the best places for naturalists to enjoy life and silence. Seeing, feeling, touching, walking or sitting on green grass, standing by tall trees, or smelling sweet Arabian Jasmine, all these are possible at once in a garden. The man enjoys looking at trees that stand tallest as if they were trying to touch the navel of the sky. The man has his favorite garden where he often spends time sitting under a
tree. His favorite garden is small and beautiful and fertile. She harbors a number of trees and green grasses.

Late in the afternoon, the man walked slowly to that garden. The man walked in the garden. While walking slowly, he noticed the trees that stood tall, the trees that were fallen, the trees that were eaten by fire half the length of their body, the trees that were turned to charcoal deep inside, the trees that lied on the ground out of old age, the trees that cried resin and sweet, trees that were cut and ready to be taken away to satisfy the capitalist greed. He suddenly felt that these trees have exactly the same life as human beings. He felt that if they are given a language, they would speak a lot more because they always stand still and watch the world. He felt the silence and the cold weather in the garden mingled in some kind of divine providence.

While walking by the trees, his cell phone rung. The man took his phone out of his pocket. He just noticed that it was Professor William calling.

“Hello! Good afternoon!”

“Hey William, Good afternoon!”

“I just wanted to check on you? How was your trip?”

“It was great. I was a bit exhausted and feeling sleepy. I didn’t feel I was traveling at all! I didn’t even know the Ferry reached at Tsawwassen by the time everybody stood to exit.”

“Oh, good. It seems to me that you are walking around somewhere right at this time. I hear some background noise”

“Yeah! I am close to a park by the neighborhood. I just wanted to have a look at the trees”

“But, the physician told you to avoid these things, right?”

“Yeah, but…you know my style. I practice the science, but not for myself! And, the garden is not far from my place.”

“Ok. Take care. Attend to the prescriptions and the recommendation by the physician. You may like to have a look at a recent article about trees. I will forward it to you”

“That is very generous of you. What is it about?” asked the man.
“It is a scholarly work from the Unceded Territory of the Coast Salish First People, entitled *Campus Trees*”

“Aha. This must be even more exciting.”

“You will get it just before you leave the garden. Enjoy it!”

“What is the gist?”

“Well, you know the oldest trees that were cut recently from the Social Science and the Humanities campus at Addis Ababa University, right?”

“Certainly!”

“Something quite similar but I leave the details for you to find out.”

While speaking with Professor William, the man also remembered a tour guide in a national park who mentioned some scientific conversations about trees, their speeches, their silences, and their communication and all that. He always gets astonished when he thinks about trees communicating like human beings. *But, they are always silent when we see them*, he told himself.

Suddenly the stream of thoughts forced him to reflect on campus trees. The fate of campus trees seems somewhat similar everywhere. Two years ago, giant trees like these ones were all cut from Addis Ababa University. Trees like the ones in this garden, trees which extend their arms to touch the sky, were destroyed to prepare a space for the construction of buildings. He thought about trees and he remembered a saying from his rural folks. Some trees are lucky, they make seats for Kings. Others are always cut for firewood. In Ethiopia, only the sycamore trees are protected and preserved as the sacred trees which the people gather around during traditional ceremonies.

After agreeing with Professor William, the man felt the urge to speak with Professor William over the phone about the details of what the last session of the conference was all about. He missed it because of the accident. Professor William informed the man that he will be looking for some footages from the conference organizers to share with him. The man thanked Professor
William for his assistance. Professor William advised the man to get back home and take good rest. He advised the man to remember his minor concussions and take care of himself. Then, he hung up the phone.

The man decided to stay in the garden for a while, just looking at the trees, walking by the fallen trees, listening to their silences, and trying to understand them. The day was getting dark from the clouds that were ready to drop their tears on earth. Everyone in the surrounding was hurrying to escape from the roar of the thunder and the wind that urged the clouds to cry. Then he decided to escape the rain and started jogging towards the exit. As the wind was getting stronger, the man felt severe pain everywhere in his head. It was a random but incessant pain. He stood for a moment and looked at his cell phone. He felt as if the world were spinning. He leaned on the nearby tree to gain balance. The trees struggled to resist the pressure from the wind. The sky was getting even darker; it looked as if its womb were filled with the tears of the dark rainy clouds. All of a sudden, a thunderstorm occurred. It was powerful, and threatening, but short-lived. It occurred randomly and then a stony silence descended all over the place and subdued nature.

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Endnotes

1 In the novel entitled The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born, the Ghanian writer Ayi Kwei Armah uses such names as “the man”, “the teacher”, “the walking dead” and the like to name the characters in the book. I used a similar style in my work and I would like to acknowledge that Armah’s The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born influenced my writing style in some way.


6 Ethnologue is an annual reference publication in print and online that provides statistics and other information on the living languages of the world. It was first issued in 1951, and is now published annually by SIL International, a U.S.-based, worldwide, Christian non-profit organization. The number of languages mentioned in the novel are taken from this web page. Ethnologue: Languages of the World. Retrieved from https://www.ethnologue.com/browse/countries

7 Airbnb, Inc. is a privately held global company headquartered in San Francisco that operates an online marketplace and hospitality service which is accessible via its websites and mobile apps. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Airbnb


9 Bible, Jeremiah 13:23 (King James Version)

10 In-depth analysis and discussion of the killings during the Derg era can be found in the book by Kissi (2006)


12 Tibebu, 2008, p. 355


13 By football, he means what North Americans call soccer


15 Explanations for terminologies in football taken from https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defender_(association_football)


18 This is a real incident that happened somewhere at an international conference for educators.

19 This reminds us of Ubuntu!


21 This deliberation about work draws on a cultural understanding of work in Amharic in a sense it is used today. A similar, but more philosophical deliberation, is found in Arendit(2013). Arendit, H. (2013) *The human condition*. University of Chicago Press.


24 A literal translation of Amharic proverb “አንወር ያስለክወ ያሚሸስ ከላከል”


Taken from Dr. Sharon Stein’s dissertation which provides a critical discussion of such issues and offers potential frameworks and vocabularies to challenge such issues. Stein, S. (2017). Contested imaginaries of global justice in the internationalization of higher education (Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia).

I was first introduced to the notion of difficult knowledge while working with Professor Amy Metcalfe on her *Difficult Knowledge Project* which helped me to identify related readings and scholars who developed the notion in the area of educational studies.

Further information about Dr. Metcalfe’s *Difficult Knowledge Project* is available here: [https://blogs.ubc.ca/difficultknowledge/](https://blogs.ubc.ca/difficultknowledge/)

This movie can be accessed on iTune. Goldman, Jared; Schiff, Paul et. al. 2009. *Tenure*. Blowtorch Entertainment. United States of America.

Walleligne Makonnen, a former student at Addis Ababa University, was one of the leaders of the Ethiopian students’ protest. He put forward a compelling Marxist perspective of the oppression he noticed. This article is frequently mentioned by historians to depict the cause of the protest and the nature of the question of oppression in Ethiopia. Makonnen, W. (1969). On the question of nationalities in Ethiopia. *Newsletter*, 9-13.

Retrieved from [https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ethiopia/nationalities.pdf](https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ethiopia/nationalities.pdf)

Vondark, J. (2015, December, 15). SOF OMAR CAVES - Bale Mountains, Ethiopia [Video file]. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHrPdGf0sUM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHrPdGf0sUM)

The following list provides easily accessible resources about the Aanolee Martyrs and the Aanolee Memorial Monument


37 I learned about this from a seminar by Dr. Jason Ellis, a historian in the department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia, 2017.

38 I adopted “a colony in a nation” from the title of this book…


39 State collapse, breakdown, or downfall is the complete failure of a mode of government within a sovereign state. Sometimes this brings about a failed state. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_collapse


41 Dr. Samuel Rocha on a seminar in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia, 2017

42 I came across this idea of silence negating the absence of sound based on the claim by Saville-Troike (1985) “a distinction should be made on the absence of sound when no communication is going on, and silence which is part of communication”.

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43 In an article, Walter R. Fisher argues that in the beginning there was logos. (Fisher, 1985, p. 74).


45 Abraham Demoz levelled sever criticism about the issue of language in an article mentioned below.

46 Freire (1993) discusses the five essential elements of witness which do not vary historically. These are consistency between words and action; boldness, radicalization, courage to love, and faith (Freire, 1993, p. 176). Based on the viewpoints of some of the study participants, I considered some of these as basic qualities of the academic public intellectual. For details about the essential elements of witness, see the following:

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