

Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies

**A FEMINIST READING OF SELECTED NOVELS IN
AFAN OROMO: A STUDY IN DECONSTRUCTION**

BY
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**A FEMINIST READING OF SELECTED NOVELS IN *AFAN OROMO*: A STUDY IN
DECONSTRUCTION**

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the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

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School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Teshome Egere Mossissa, entitled: "A Feminist Reading of Selected Novels in *Afan Oromo*: A Study in Deconstruction" and submitted in the fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (in Literature) complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Declaration

I declare that “A Feminist Reading of Selected Novels in *Afan Oromo: A Study in Deconstruction*” is the result of my own effort and has not been presented to any university in the same or different form to merit a PhD degree other than that for which I am now a candidate, and that all sources used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.



Teshome Egere Mossissa

June, 2013

ABSTRACT

Oromo creative writings are developing fast. However, the critical studies conducted are far behind. More specifically, critical studies conducted in the area of portrayal of women are not exhaustive. The objective of this study is to critically examine four selected novels in *Afan Oromo*, namely *Hawwii* (2003), *Kuusaa Gadoo* (1991), *Illaa* (2007), and *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* (2011) from feminist perspective. Textual analysis has been employed as it best fits to this study. Using textual analysis, contents of the texts or their structure and discourse are closely examined.

Feminist deconstructionist approach is used to analyze the selected novels. It is used to examine female characters in the selected novels with regard to notions such as a woman's body, subject/object, motherhood and knowledge. With respect to motherhood, most female characters are found out to oscillate between the rewards of giving birth and its constriction, which deconstructs notions of institutional motherhood. Female characters such as Chaltu, in *Illaa* are shown to be mothers who assume both institutional motherhood and motherhood as a choice. Although body parts of female characters are dominantly depicted as object of gaze, under some situations, female characters use their body for survival under difficult life conditions (Yadashi, in *Kuusaa Gadoo*, Aster in *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* and Saartu in *Illaa*). Female characters are also found out to oscillate in the continuum between subject and object because of economic, social, cultural and institutional forces. As to knowledge, the notion that assigns male characters to rational, knowledgeable and that assigns female characters to irrational and nonknowledge

position is deconstructed and some female characters such as Yadashi in *Kuusaa Gadoo*, are found out to win male characters, using an argument in the court of justice. Comparative analysis made has shown that in *Illaa* the novel by female writer Rahima Johar feminist issues are valorized more as compared to the other novels by male authors. From the texts of male authors, Esayas' *Hawwii* attempts to give enough space to female characters than Abdi's *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* and Gadissa's *Kuusaa Gadoo*.

In the life of the female characters, the social and economic spaces are the causes for the psychic space to be created in them which make them the center of multiple contending forces.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

It is apparent that dynamism is at work in the world through time and space. The way people live and respond to their environment is dynamic too. This dynamism has an implication for the changes in representations, interpretations and meanings which in turn contributes towards the development of literary theory and criticism (Oliver, 1996).

Structuralism is a science of human kind born in the theories of a linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and a structuralist anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss. Levi Strauss, who studies everything from the structure of villages to myths, looks for recurring common elements that transcend the difference within and among cultures. Saussure identifies two basic concepts “signifier” and the “signified” and focuses on the signifier and its linear structure (Guerin, et al, 1994: p. 335 and Tyson, 1999: p. 201). Using Saussure’s model of structural analysis, structuralists claim that it is possible to analyze a text or other signifying structures systematically, even scientifically to reveal the grammar behind its form and meaning. To this end, they tend to look at patterns, systems and structures and attempt to give universal meaning or truth (Guerin, 1994 and Tyson, 1999).

Poststructuralists, on the other hand, emerge to give an alternative approach to meaning and interpretation to literary theory and criticism. They argue against the view of structuralists that a text is reducible to a structural system (Oliver, 1996). Derrida’s (1978) influential lecture on

Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Science states the disruption in the very concept of structure as stable system. Since then the structurality of a structure has been under question. According to him, all texts are subject to deconstruction, a process whereby apparent meaning is undermined by the play of internal counter-forces common to language itself.

Derrida's basic approach is to foreground deconstruction in texts by comparing a work's apparent meaning with various repressed, conflicting significations lurking beneath the surface – a process he called a double reading. In deconstructionist reading, one looks for the ways in which one term in the opposition has been "privileged" over the other in a particular text. In his book **Of Grammatology** (1976), when explicating the notion that privileges speech over writing he argues that one term may be privileged because it is considered the general, normal, central case, while the other is considered special, exceptional, marginal or derivative. Something may also be privileged because it is considered more true, more valuable, more important, or more universal than its opposite. Moreover, because things can have more than one opposite, many different types of privileging can occur simultaneously (Johnson, 1980).

The adaptation of Derrida's ideas to literary criticism begins in the 1970s, most notably in the work of Paul de Man (in Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer, 1994), J. Hillis Miller (in Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer, 1994), and Barbara Johnson (1976). By these critics the conception of deconstruction begins as critical mode, something that a critic does to a text. As a result of this expanded conception, terms such as deconstructionist and deconstructive reading entered the critical lexicon, and titles that followed patterns such as,

“Deconstructing ...or A Deconstruction of...” are introduced. In her book the **Critical**

Difference, Barbara Johnson (1980: p. 5) argues that:

Deconstruction is not synonymous with destruction, however. It is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word analysis itself, which etymologically means to undo ‘virtual synonym for to deconstruct’. The deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or arbitrary subversion, but by the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text itself. If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text, but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. A deconstructive reading is a reading which analyses the specificity of a text’s critical difference from itself.

Here, Johnson’s conception of deconstruction “a careful analysis of various possible readings bears obvious debts to the close reading developed by the *New Criticism* of the 1930s-40s.

However, as M.H. Abrams (19981: p. 59) notes in **A Glossary of Literary Terms**, despite similar methodologies, the aims and outcomes of deconstruction and New Criticism are quite distinct, and in some cases, opposite:

New critical explications of texts had undertaken to show that a great literary work, in the tight internal relations of its figurative and paradoxical meanings, constitutes a freestanding, bounded and organic entity of multiplex yet determinate meanings. On the contrary... deconstructive close reading undertakes to show that a literary text lacks a totalized boundary that makes it an entity, much less an organic unity; also that the text, by a play of internal counter-forces, disseminates into an indefinite range of self-conflicting significations.

The key difference, then, between deconstruction and new criticism is that, while new criticism works toward the discovery of central, unifying themes, deconstruction denies that such a thing as a “central theme” could ever be shown to exist; any meaning that a critic could ever propose will inevitably be cancelled out of contradictory significations within the text itself. This is why

deconstructionist literary criticism focuses on plurality of meaning, continuous conflict, undecidability of meaning and ambivalence.

It follows that some feminists are interested to deconstruction for they share many things in common. For example, Elizabeth Grosz (2005: p. 1) notes that Derrida makes a difference to feminism for he deals with issues of feminism such as “feminine, maternity, sexuality, or difference,...some of the most central concerns of feminist”. She also writes that deconstruction is concerned with “the body, the movement of desire, or even questions of subjectivity or identity that underlie...feminist theory” (Grosz, 2005: p. 1). From this it is possible to imply that notions such as ‘the body’, ‘questions of subjectivity’, ‘identity’, ‘maternity’ (which is commonly called ‘motherhood’), femininity’ and the issue of ‘difference’ have a wider concern in both deconstruction and feminism. The issue of ‘subjectivity’ can be related to the instability of the position of oppositional categories such as subject/object. For example, if a woman assumes subject and object positions in different contexts it means that her position is not fixed. Diana Elam (1994: p. 28) echoes this view in that “The subject and object infinitely change places within the *mise en abyme*; there is no set sender or receiver of the representation. The infinitely receding object in the *mise en abyme* closes down the possibility of a stable subject/object relation”. Moreover, Hekman (1990) writes that subject/object opposition is not static. She also argues against the notion of associating knowledge to masculinity which is at the center of western thought and she suggests the need to deconstruct it showing that the position in the oppositional category can be assumed by a woman.

It is based on the common concerns of deconstruction and feminism that feminist deconstruction, more specifically feminist deconstructionist critics focus on the analysis of literary texts on notions such as binary opposition, man/woman, subject/object, motherhood as experience/institution and the deconstruction of knowledge from feminist perspectives. Hence, literary texts, more specifically novels can be examined from the point of view of feminist literary criticism with regard to the portrayal of women. That is, whether women characters exercise their agency and occupy the subject position, whether they are constricted by institutional motherhood or use motherhood for empowerment, whether they deconstruct the gendered notion of knowledge are some of the issues that are worth studying. Before going to the statement of the problem it is important to discuss about the status of Oromo novel and the justification for the study of selected Oromo novels from feminist perspectives.

The Oromo language (here after called *Afan Oromo*) has served as a tool through which historical, cultural and social heritages of the Oromo people are recorded. Although the documentation of the language dated back to 14th century, it was during the early 19th century that *Afan Oromo*, especially lexis, underwent a transition from oral tradition to documentation (Mekuria, 1994 and Teferi, 2006). In spite of the efforts made to document the lexis, there was a lack of Oromo creative writing established on the firm ground. No single fictional writing was produced for more than a century since the documentation of the lexis (Mekuria, 1994; Tamene, 2000; Eshete, 2007).

Although documentations made in the area of *Afan Oromo* dates back to the first half of the ninetieth century, the publication of Oromo creative writings has been a recent phenomenon. It dates back to two decades only. Since the publication of the first Oromo novel **Kuusaa Gadoo**

by Gadissa Biru, in 1991, Oromo creative writings especially the production of novels have been growing fast. To mention some of them, **Dhaamsa Abbaa** (“Father’s Advice”, 2000) by Gaddisa Birru; **Godaannisa** (“Scare”, 1992) and **Gurraacha Abbayyaa** (“A Black Man of the Blue Nile”, 1996) by Daba Wayyessa. Moreover, **Hawwii** (“Desire”, 2003), **Yeroon Siif Haadhiisu** (“Let Time Excuse You”, 2008) and **Yoom Laata?** (“When Shall It Be?”, 2010) by Esayas Hordofa; **Suuraa Abdii** (“The Image of Hope”, 1995) by Kumsa Birayu; **Kudhaaama Jaalala** (“The Bond of Love”, 2008) and **Imaanaa Eemaltuu** (“The Pilgrim’s Oath”, 2009) by Abraham Tesfaye; **Imimmaan Haadhaa** (“The Tears of a Mother”, 2008) by Tolera Fikru, **Illaa** (“A Scar”, 2007), by **Rahima Johar** and **Dhoksa Jireenyaa** (The Secrete of Life, 2011) by Abdii Fite, among others were written after the fall of the regime. These and other novels have been produced within two decades. However, the critical studies conducted are far behind the rate of publications of novels (Tamene, 2000; Mekuria, 1994; Eshete, 2007). Since novels provide representations, studying how characters are depicted in this genre is imperative.

In the aforementioned novels, it seems evident that social, political, psychodynamic and cultural aspects of the people are depicted. That is, when one writes s/he might not be totally free of different biases. That is, s/he might be influenced by an existing ideology. These days, one of the ideologies that are operating actively is the patriarchal ideology. Most feminist critics interrogate this ideology contending that our world is governed by this ideology (Butler, 1990; Humm, 1994; Ruthven, 1994; Mills, 1995; Tyson, 1999; Chodorow, cited in Richardson, Taylor and Whittier, 2001). They argue that, creative writings such as novels dominantly perpetuate patriarchal ideology. Therefore, they suggest for reading of a text against the grain from a feminist perspective (Humm, 1994: p. 93).

To this end, feminist deconstructionist focuses on the instability of categories such as binary oppositions. Hence, they focus on binary oppositions such as man/woman, agent/victim, subject/object, knower/known, knowledgeable/nonknowledgeable, and other oppositional categories. In patriarchal society, the first term references are associated to a man, whereas the second term references are associated to a woman. Such epistemological view is interrogated by feminist deconstructionists. They argue that the knower who claims to know the known (the woman), let alone knowing he could even not fully know the 'I' ("self") (Melucci, 1996: p. 3). Therefore, the knowledge constructed, with the subjectivity of the 'self' about subjectivity of the 'Other' is a knowledge that is filled with subjectivities. According to feminist deconstructionist view, the woman is constructed based on such subjectivities. The role of a critic is to identify such gaps and show to what degree the woman's subjectivity is constructed by the subject (i.e. man) who in turn is subjective (Hekman, 1990). Therefore, how female characters internalize gendered identity, how that identity is disrupted and the ambivalent and contradictory positions they take are some of the issues examined in texts.

It may not be surprising if scholars who worked on *Afan Oromo* and literature either implicitly or explicitly perpetuate the patriarchal norms. In view of this, some scholars who worked on the area of gender in *Afan Oromo* and literature contend that Oromo women lost their identity and institutions because of either cultural assimilation or marginalization (Kuwe, in Asafa, 1998; Beletech, 2003; Jeylan, 2005 and Abraham, 2007).

Kuwe, a professor of social work, a scholar in the field of political and literary criticism, (in Asafa, 1998), is a pioneer in embarking on the discrimination and denigration of Oromo women. She makes a detailed assessment of Oromo women in the national struggle for freedom in her article: **Oromo Women and the Oromo National Movement: Dilemmas, Problems**

and Prospects of True Liberation. Kuwe (in Asafa, p. 155) points out that the contribution of Oromo women is “devalued and unrecognized”. One of the basic roles marginalized is the reproductive role that millions of Oromo women played as socializing agents of Oromo people. She also mentions the contributions of some Oromo women such as Aster Ganno, Lidya Dimbo and others who played a significant role in translating scriptures and composing poems of spiritual songs.

Furthermore, Kuwe strongly argues that Oromo creative writers negatively portray women characters. According to her, women characters are absent in some creative writings. Kuwe takes two plays of a commonly quoted Oromo playwright and novelist Daba Wayessa as an example to show the image of women. In his plays **Dukkanaan Duubaa** and **Jennaan**, women characters are depicted as ‘short sighted’, ‘ignorant’, ‘emotional’, ‘temptresses’, ‘sexual objects’, together with very few strong qualities like economic independence. She equivocally interrogates why Daba portrayed woman characters negatively where there are many Oromo women, who, in reality are professionals, writers and political activists. According to her, his ability of “critical consciousness ... has fallen into the trap of the established cultural construct” (Asafa, p. 172). She goes on contending that: “Yet, it is this very unintentionality of the artist that lies at the heart of my concern. The distorted image of Oromo women have taken such deep roots that they appear natural and passive, and have been taken for truth: it is very difficult to question them” .

Kuwe is an Oromo feminist figure who embarked on the problems and dilemmas of Oromo women. Apart from tracing back the role of Oromo women in Oromo society where they were active in the Gada system (kindly see review of local studies in the second chapter), she also

commented on the role of Oromo creative writers in perpetuating patriarchal norms and the dangerous consequence of it for the coming generation of women in Oromo society.

However, Kuwe did not see how one of the women characters in the play, **Jennaan**, was depicted both economically independent and emotionally dependent. Kuwe left this part of her discussion incomplete. The reason why economic independence could not guarantee an emotional independence is untouched in her study. She did not provide readers with any reasons for and the consequence of the fact that the woman is depicted to be emotionally dependent. Hence, whether such portrayal is related to gendered ideology is not dealt with. She does not show the subjectivity of the character. This is an area which needs to be uncovered. The researcher speculates that there must be something behind the depiction of a woman having both characteristics, independence and dependence. What is more, Kuwe did not look deeper into the multiple variables that could force the subject to take multiple positions. In her analysis, Kuwe labeled women characters into negative stereotypes and male characters into positive stereotypes. A similar gap has been observed in other studies conducted as has been discussed in the review of the related literature in the section “Review of Local Studies”. In the subsequent section, the problem of the study is identified.

In sum, the publication of Oromo creative writings more specifically, novels is progressing. However, the critical studies conducted in the area are not sufficient as compared to the rate of publication of the novels. More specifically, studies conducted in the area of Oromo women are not exhaustive.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, in the departments of Foreign Languages and Literature and Ethiopian Languages and Literature, studies have been conducted on issues of how women are depicted in oral and written literature in Ethiopia. These studies have contributed a lot in adding insights in analyzing and interpreting oral and written texts from feminist perspectives, which have enriched the dimensions of the field of literary criticism. However, as Ethiopia is a country of many nations, nationalities and ethnic groups with rich cultural and social values which are worth studying, the studies conducted do not exhaustively address women's issues all across the country. Consequently, issues of women studied in oral and written texts are not exhaustive too.

There are also some studies conducted that have attempted to address some issues of Oromo women. In these studies, it has been observed that Oromo women are relegated to marginal positions. That is, women characters are dominantly portrayed as objects of sex and poverty, as irrational and ignorant and many other negative stereotypes (Kuwe, in Asafa, 1998, Jeylan, 2005; Teshome, 2004; Zewude, 2004; Abraham, 2007; Sena, 2008; Berhanu and 2008). However these studies have significant contribution to the study of Oromo people and its language in general and to Oromo women in particular, they seem to be not adequate for three reasons.

First, studies conducted in the area of issues of women focus dominantly on oral texts and only few studies are conducted on creative writings such as the novel. It is apparent that the novel plays a significant role in representing and shaping human responses to cultural, historical, social and psychological phenomena. These phenomena are so dynamic that they can influence

and can be influenced by the world of imagination (its representations). The novel is one of the imaginary materials that could also influence and be influenced by these phenomena. In view of this, the lives of women, as one of the categories of humanity, are shaped, and/or represented in the novel. Consequently, the lives of female characters as shaped and represented in Oromo novels are not exceptional to the dynamics between the phenomena and the world of imaginations and representations. Hence, it is argued that the lives of women as represented in Oromo novels are worth studying to add insights regarding the complex relationship between the aforementioned phenomena and imaginary world that provides representations.

Secondly, though works of such Oromo creative writers like Esayas Hordofa, Gadissa Biru, Rahima Johar, Abdi Fite and others have contributed a lot towards the development of creative writings in *Afan Oromo*, little attention has been given to them in critical studies made so far. For example, as described in the background, Gadissa Biru is the first Oromo novelist who has published two novels and an anthology of short stories. He also has played a major role towards the establishment of Oromo Writers Association. Esayas Hordofa is another figure who has produced four novels one of which is sponsored by Ethiopian Writers Association. Esayas is the only writer who has produced such number (four) of novels. He also has written several short stories. A critical endeavour should be made to the works of these creative writers.

The only authoress of a novel in *Afan Oromo* (as far as the knowledge of the researcher is concerned) is Rahima Johar. She produced a novel by the name **Illaa**. No one has attempted to conduct a critical study on this work. Even it took the researcher more than a year to get the work of the authoress. One can imagine to what degree the work is neglected or forgotten though it is historical to creative writings of Oromo literature. What is more, this work can serve as a bench mark to attract Oromo women writers to the area of creative writing. A critical

study on the work could contribute an insight to the work. However, let alone conducting a critical study on the work, to get the novel to read, has become very difficult in the institution where Afan Oromo and literature is given at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

Moreover, Abdi Fate is one of the emerging Oromo novel writers who have written a novel. Abdi's novel **Dhoksaa Jireenyaa** is a recent phenomena. Getting the work is also not less difficult than that of **Illaa**. It is the general impression of the researcher that the work is the first novel in its length, detailed involvement of characters in the narrative world and intricacy of the conflict and plot structure, as compared to other novels in *Afan Oromo*. This gap has inspired the researcher to conduct a critical study on the works of these authors. It is therefore to fill the gap that the researcher has selected four novels, namely **Hawwii** (2003) by Esayas Hordofa; **Kuusaa Gadoo** (1991) by Gadissa Biru; **Illaa** (2007) by Rahima Johar and **Dhoksaa Jireenyaa** (2011) by Abdi Fite for critical study from feminist perspective.

Thirdly, the critical studies made so far are on the general treatment in the themes of some of texts of these authors. Moreover, the studies conducted have not addressed the multiple, contradictory and sometimes ambiguous positions female characters take. This is the gap that this study has attempted to fill.

Recent trends, such as feminist deconstructionist critics question one (unitary) or fixed notions of meaning. They contend that the notion that puts man to dominant position and woman to subordinate position may be one of the possible interpretations of meaning but not the only one. Labeling characters into simple stereotypes according to these critics is reductionism. In fact, some feminist deconstructionist critics argue that limiting oneself to a series of gender

stereotypes by itself has become a stereotype. Elam's (1994: p. 6), comment regarding fixing women to stereotypes is worth mentioning in this respect:

Likewise, feminism verges on the possibility of turning into yet another form of thematic criticism appropriated by the academy. The most widespread form of this is an endless series of readings, whose theoretical operations could be described as: 1. find the women in the text; 2. women are oppressed___; 3. women find their voice in___. While there is a great deal of political force behind their readings which first broached these topics so as to connect readings of representations of women to social and cultural positions of women, how many times must this reading be repeated?

This contention shows that assigning women characters to object positions such as object of oppression, object of sex, object of poverty, object of violence, object of rape, object of gaze and many other object positions is not the only way by which one can add a critical insight to feminist critical study. According to Spivak, Elam, Weedon, Butler and other feminist critics, there are many factors such as textual indeterminacy, inconsistency, continuous conflicts, and contradictions that contribute to the depiction of a given character (Spivak, 1989; Butler, 1990; Humm, 1994; Ruthven, 1994; Elam, 1994; Oliver, 1997; Chodorow in Richardson *et al*, 2001; Chakravarty, 2008 and Wright, 2000, 2008). Therefore, the ground for difference between the subject/object, culture/nature, mind/body-the binary system-has been deconstructed in feminist deconstructionist thoughts (Hekman, 1990; Butler, cited in Richardson *et al*, 2001; Murfin and Ray, 2003).

However, the deconstructionist readings uncover the multiplicity, undecidability and unfixed notion of meaning. Therefore, it is the impression of the researcher that there seem to be no one single meaning and a given meaning in the novels selected is rather "moment" of meaning that rather lead to multiple meanings. Hence, one unravels the disruption of a center established by the text and patterns of behavior that are repressed in the unconscious of female characters.

Hence, there is a need to conduct a study on this subject from feminist perspective. More specifically, no attempt has been made to study these novels from feminist deconstructionist reading. It is to fill this gap in critical studies that the researcher selected four novels, namely **Hawwii**, by **Esayas Hordofa** (2003); **Kuusaa Gadoo**, by Gadissa Biru (1991); **Illaa**, by Rahima Johar (2007) and **Dhoksaa Jireenyaa** by Abdi Fite (2011). To this end, this study addresses the following objectives.

Based on the problem stated an attempt is made to address the following questions:

1. How is a woman's body described in the selected novels?
2. What is the position of female characters in the oppositional category subject/object;
3. What is the status of female characters with regard to motherhood?
4. Do women characters deconstruct the patriarchal notions knowledge?
5. Do the texts perpetuate or subvert patriarchal ideology?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The aim of this study is an examination of female characters as they are depicted in certain novels in *Afan Oromo* with regard to a woman's body, motherhood as institution/experience, female characters' position in the oppositional category subject/object and how female characters deconstruct the gendered notions of knowledge.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- investigate how woman's body is depicted in the selected texts;
- analyze if female characters are oppressed, empowered or exhibit both behaviours with regard to motherhood;
- examine if women characters deconstruct the patriarchal notions of knowledge;
- identify whether female characters exercise their agency or are victims of social, cultural or economic phenomena or both agent and victim in the oppositional category subject/object;
- compare and contrast the selected novels whether they perpetuate or subvert gendered representations;

1.4. Scope and Limitations of the Study

There are a good number of novels written in *Afan Oromo*. The scope of this thesis is confined to four novels: **Hawwii** (Desire) by Esayas Hordofa; **Kuusaa Gadoo** (Cumulative Grief), by Gadissa Biru; **Illaa** (A Scar) by Rahima Johar and **Dhoksaa Jireenyaa** (The Secret Life) by Abdi Fite. These novels are thoroughly investigated from a feminist deconstructive reading.

Other novels are excluded for the following reasons. First, some novels are excluded because they are produced by the same authors. Gadissa's (one) and Esayas' (three) novels are excluded. Secondly, novels of less literary merit are excluded as information extracted from them from

feminist deconstructionist approach is minimal. Third, novels used by the researcher during his MA study are also excluded to avoid repetitions.

Furthermore, the study is limited to feminist literary critical study from deconstructionist perspective. To this end, a focus is made to analysis of whether a woman's body is described in gendered way; whether female characters exercise their agency or become victims of cultural, social, economic phenomena or else if they are depicted as both agents and victims; the role of motherhood in either empowering or oppressing female characters or if female characters take an ambivalent position because of notions of love for their children, gestation and pregnancy and the constricting powers of patriarchal ideology and whether they deconstruct the gendered notions of knowledge or not .

Based on feminist deconstructionist approach, a focus is made on the parts of the texts that most reveal gaps, inconsistencies, or contradictions. Moreover, one of the areas of concern is related to texts that 'unconsciously' promote stereotypes in their attempts to avoid it. For example, a text may intend to avoid stereotypes by focusing on women protagonists. However, a reading "against the grain" may show that the protagonist may serve as a gendered subject where contradiction is at work. On the other hand, a text may perpetuate sexist stereotypes, but an identification of a loose stone may disrupt that perpetuation to show the plurality of meaning.

Agate Nesaule Krouse, (in Brown and Olson, 1978: pp. 281-282), in her article **Towards the Definition of Literary Feminism**, contends that "point of view and figurative language" are important in critically examining texts and more specifically female characters. The ways in

which a woman character is manipulated by a narrator and the use of figurative language such as metaphor, simile and symbol in the texts to implicitly inculcate sexism are amongst the issues dealt with.

There are limitations that the researcher has encountered in the course of the study. The first one is the money allocated for the research by the training institution is not enough. Had the researcher not subsidized himself being engaged to part-time works, the work would have not been realized. There are also variations among the universities that have sponsored PhD students where some institutions subsidize up to forty thousands and others even subsidize up to eighty thousands per a student, during the study time, the university that has sponsored the researcher did not subsidize the researcher any. The reason why variations are made among universities of the same country is unanswered question for the researcher. This indeed has affected the quality of the study.

The second one is, because the novels selected are written in *Afan Oromo* the researcher has to translate the selected extracts into English. It is not easy to transfer information as accurately as desired when translating extracts from *Afan Oromo* to English. The other limitation is that the sentences of the texts (extract) of some novels selected are too long. The researcher wants to be loyal not to break the sentences short. Therefore, up on reading the sentences, a reader may be forced to repeat the sentences once again when s/he forgets the initial part of the sentence due to its length or else s/he may find the length of the sentence awkward. However, an attempt is made to keep the flow of the idea. In general, though an attempt has been made to focus on the spirit of the texts translated, exact information might not be conveyed as accurately as desired.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is believed to contribute towards the knowledge of women's experience and values, women's social and economic conditions and their reaction to gendered attitudes imposed upon them by patriarchal ideology and its agents as they are depicted in the selected novels. It is also hoped that this research will provide readers with insights such that they could realize the importance of changing the sexist ideology (attitudinal) for the empowerment of women as human beings in the real world. Readers could also get an insight from this study that women are human beings with limitations and possibilities..

This study also is hopefully expected to inspire researchers to conduct further research on not only Oromo literary writing in general, but also Oromo literary writings from feminist perspective. Besides, the fact that the novel by the female writer included in the study may help women to be encouraged to take part in creative writing. More specifically, this study can contribute in the following ways.

1. It can contribute towards a better understanding of the gendered construction of the selected *Afan Oromo* novels.
2. It gives some insights into the understanding of gender imbalance depicted in the novels under study.
3. It is hoped to enlighten readers as to how one could extract multiple threads of meaning in a given text with regard to female characters in the selected novels.
4. It is anticipated to contribute towards a better conception for readers and researchers in the area of critical study to understand the role of patriarchal, economic, social and cultural forces that contribute to the subjectivity of female characters.

5. It can contribute towards introducing the work of a female authoress, which is a forgotten work, which has not been attempted so far.

1.6 Methodology and Procedures

1.6.1 Method

Textual analysis has been employed as it best fits to this study for the main objective of this study is to examine the plurality of meaning with regard to female characters in the selected novels. This is because, a central question that textual analysis addresses is how characters in the fictional world come to make sense of the world and carry out their everyday lives. To explore this, this method of analysis focuses on behaviours, interactions, feelings and symbols to uncover the meaning embedded in them. In other words, one of the major uses of textual analysis is to explore phenomena and experiences from the perspectives of characters experiencing them. In view of these, examining the experiences, speech actions and exploring their “thoughts”, “feelings” or “behaviours” of characters could make literary criticism a scientific study.

As the main goal of textual analysis is to organize texts into a meaningful format, continuous conflicts, episodes, figurative aspects and contradictions from the selected texts have been selected and organized to a meaningful set of patterns, categories, and/or themes. Words, phrases and the context of comments (for example, the narrator’s comment), among other aspects of text, have been areas of focus in this study. Using textual analysis, the researcher has closely examined evidences such as words, images and events from the texts selected, as they are pertinent to notions such as oppositional categories.

Furthermore, comparative analysis is made after each text is analyzed in respective of sub-themes such as the portrayal of a woman's body, motherhood and knowledge. In comparative analysis, an attempt has been made to compare and contrast the selected text whether they avoid, perpetuate or take an ambivalent position with regard to gendered representations.

Evidences are gathered from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of data are the selected texts used for the analysis of gendered representation of female characters and the subjectivity of characters. More specifically, the texts are critically examined from the point of view of the depiction of women protagonists and other women characters, which are thematically important for a feminist literary analysis. This includes women characters' engagement in conflict with men characters, how the role of patriarchal ideology (especially using institutions like family and marriage, institutional mothering) influences the texts and how marginal elements from the texts disrupt the attempts the texts make with regard to women characters. Analysis of male protagonists and some thematically important male characters are focused on to compare and contrast male and female characters. Moreover, attempts have been made to identify and examine stereotypical roles which women are assigned to (which are implicitly perpetuated) and how they are deconstructed by the texts themselves.

Empirical data such as theoretical and literary critical views, for this research project has also been obtained from secondary sources. In this regard, an information is obtained from theoretical framework and critical studies made by feminist critics. This is because it is believed that they are useful to enrich the analyses from various perspectives. In particular, the secondary sources are texts that deal with ideas related to the topic which includes texts dealing with issues of feminist deconstructionists.

1.6.2 Criteria for Text Selection

There are criteria applied for text selection. First, diversity of authors is addressed to obtain information from different authors. To this end, four different authors are selected for this study. Secondly, some prolific writers in *Afan Oromo* are selected for this study. For example, writers of the first two novels are prolific writers in *Afan Oromo*. For example, Gadissa Biru is the first novel writer in *Afan Oromo*. Other than the novel selected for this study (**Kuusaa Gadoo**), he produced another novel named **Dhaamsa Abbaa (2000)** and an **Ontology of Short Stories (2011)**. Other than playing his role in paving the way for the production of Oromo novels, his professional study (English Literature) also has helped him add literary quality to his creative writings. His professional duty also enabled him play an active role in establishing Oromo Writers Association which he is serving as a chairperson. As for Esayas Hordofa, he used to be a journalist for Ethiopian Radio, *Afan Oromo* programme. His exposure to journalism in the language enabled him produce significant creative writings with significant literary quality. Other than his first novel **Hawwii**, he also produced two novels namely **Yeroon Siif Haa Dhiiftuu (2008)**, **Yoomo Laataa (2010)** and **Tsigereda (2013)**. Their works are selected because they are influential writers in *Afan Oromo*. As to the other two writers (Rahima Johar and Abdi Fite), they are young emerging writers in the history of creative writings in *Afan Oromo*. Rahima's work is selected because it is the only novel produced by a female writer in the history of Oromo creative writing. Therefore, selecting the work of a female writer should not be something left for an option. Abdi's novel is a recent work in which contemporary social, economic and cultural phenomena are depicted.

Thirdly, historical accounts are also addressed. The first two novels give a picture of the earlier social, historical, cultural, economic and psychological accounts. For example, **Hawwii** deals

with issues of Emperor HaileSELLASIE's period where as **Kuusaa Gadoo** deals with the issues of the Dargue regime. The last two novels deal with contemporary accounts of the society. The novels are presented in the study according to their historical account. Though the intention of the researcher is to make the text selection proportional taking equal number of texts of both sexes, he gets only one text written by a female authoress. It has even taken the researcher more than a year to get the text written by the female writer. Though it is minimal as compared to texts written by male authors, it has become helpful for the study in order to vary the source of data. Therefore, in this study, textual analysis is used based on data obtained from the four selected novels, namely, **Kuusaa Gadoo** (Cumulative Grief), **Hawwii** (Desire), **Illaa** (A Scar) and **Dhoksaa Jireenyaa** (The Secret Life).

Initially, it is planned to select seven novels. However, when analysis has been made it is realized that seven novels are not manageable. Therefore, the study is limited to four novels. The reason why the study is limited to four novels is that the study is a deconstructive literary analysis. In such studies rigorous and detailed analysis of the texts are made. If the number of novels to be analyzed increases, it is apparent that one should focus on the breadth at the cost of depth. This study rather focuses on an in-depth analysis of the selected works. Even, during the initial stage of the study seven novels were selected. However, when the actual study began it became not practical to study the attempted novels because of limitation of the space given by the institution.

This study also has not included the novels of other authors since the number of novels published currently is more than forty. The works of other authors are not included because of the following reasons. First, works by Daba Wayesa such as **Godaannisaa** and **Gurraacha Abbaya** were treated by the researcher during his MA study. Second, other novels such as

Yeroon Siif Haadhiistu and **Yoomi Laataa** are produced by Esayas Hordofa and **Dhaamsa Abbaa** is produced by Gadissa Biru. These novels are left out to avoid focusing on the works of the same author in order to give emphasis for diversity. Third, other novels are left out for they are not liable to the theme of feminist literary analysis.

1.6.3 Analytical Procedures

Analysis and interpretation have been used as analytical procedures in this research. The texts (extracts) are patterned for analysis and interpretation according to the themes identified. The themes are organized based on the major theoretical approach (feminist deconstructionist) used in this study. Therefore, texts from the selected novels have been referred and/or quoted. After that the texts are translated in to English by the researcher. As it is a literary translation, it is not easy to transfer the exact information to the targeted language. To minimize the gap scholars who are well versed in both languages and who are teaching literature in *Afan Oromo* are chosen and the drafts of the translated texts are given to them so that they comment on the translated version. Then, texts are analyzed and interpreted under the themes classified in feminist deconstructionist approach. For example, extracts related to notions of feminist deconstructionist literary criticism such as deconstructing woman's body, deconstructing knowledge, deconstructing subject/object, deconstructing institutional motherhood, are collected, organized, analyzed and interpreted under these themes.

The quoted texts have been organized based on the themes identified under the major theoretical approach, namely, feminist deconstructionist literary criticism. Texts are believed to be properly organized and these have enabled the researcher to critically analyze the selected texts. That is,

the dominant textual/thematic aspects have been identified in relation to the major objectives of the research.

A textual analysis of extracts from textual sources has been undertaken carefully. In particular, the analytical tool developed for textual analysis by McKee (2008), has been adopted as a guiding tool for the literary analyses and interpretation in this study. Then, interpretations of various dimensions have been applied. In each stage, interpretative activities, re-writings and paraphrasing of original passages in the researcher's language have been undertaken in such a way that the new version accounts for details included under it. Based on the analysis and interpretation of the texts, how female characters are depicted as objects of gaze, how female characters deconstruct notions of knowledge, the role of institutional motherhood in constricting female characters and their reaction to it are attempted to be analyzed.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into six chapters. In the first chapter, the problem is articulated. In addition to the articulation of the problem, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, the scope and limitations of the study, significance of the study and methods and procedures of the study are included in this chapter.

The second chapter is devoted to the review of related literature where tissues of Ethiopian women are presented. Moreover, issues related to Oromo women are also discussed in this chapter.

In the third chapter, the definition of feminist literary criticism and theoretical framework of feminist deconstructionist reading is dealt with. Here, the general concept of deconstruction and

notions such as binary opposition, subject/object, motherhood and knowledge are presented based on the views of feminist deconstructionist literary critics.

In the fourth chapter, two novels, (**Hawwii**, 2003 and **Kuusaa Gadoo**, 1991) are analyzed. The reasons why these two novels are selected is that the two texts are commonly quoted in the history of Oromo creative writing. Moreover, notions related to institutional motherhood and its deconstruction, the deconstruction of woman's body, the deconstruction of subject/object and the deconstruction of knowledge has been critically examined.

In the fifth chapter, two novels, (**Illaa**, 2007 and **Dhoksa Jireenyaa**, 2011), novels published in recent years are analyzed to fill the historical gap to be created if only novels of earlier historical accounts would be selected. Based on deconstructionist approach, how the binary opposition established by the text is deconstructed; how the boundary between subject/object is disrupted and how woman's body is deconstructed are notions that are critically examined in this chapter.

The six chapter is devoted to comparative analysis of the four novels. Four novels are compared and contrasted from the perspectives of the perpetuation of gendered ideology, the role of a narrator towards the female characters in the novels and to what degree the texts avoid gendered representations are closely examined. After that, based on the findings of the study, conclusions are drawn.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief overview of the historical account of *Afan Oromo* and literature. From the historical sketch, it is hoped that one can get an insight of when Oromo literature at large and Oromo novels in particular began to be published. This enables the researcher to identify a gap that is left unstudied. After that, studies conducted on the issue of Oromo women and Ethiopian women are presented consquatively.

2.1 The Historical Overview of *Afan Oromo* and Literature

Language is a tool through which historical, cultural and social heritages of a society are recorded. The Oromo language also serves these purposes. Studies show that *Afan Oromo* (Oromo language) is spoken in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. Several ethnic groups in Ethiopia such as Sidama, Adare, Berta, Agnuak, Koma, Dawro and Kaficho use *Afan Oromo* (other than their native language) as a means of communication and trade (Tamene, 2000; Mekuria, 1994 and Eshete, 2007).

However, before the first half of the ninteith century, the language did not get an attention as shall be seen in the subsequent historical scatch which would show that it remained one of the least studied languages (Asefa, 1997 and Mekura, 1994). As the literature of a given society is related to the development of the language, it is difficult to expect a written literature in Afan Oromo before that period. Because literature is the reflection of culture, the fact that the language was not developed made the people not widely known in the outside world other than

Ethiopia. That is, the social relations, traditions, beliefs and values embodied in *Afan Oromo* literature have not been communicated adequately.

Some studies argued that the documentation of *Afan Oromo* as a language went back to 14th century (Teferi, 2006). However, it was during the early 19th century that *Afan Oromo*, especially lexis, underwent a significant transition from oral tradition to documentation (Mekuria, 1994).

In the first half of the 19th century, attempts were made by European scholars to document African oral literature indicating a significant shift of European attitude from centuries of stereotypes that portrayed Africa as a land without indigenous literary traditions. The leading motive of the then European scholars was evangelizing Africa. Besides evangelization, they made commendable efforts in documenting folktales, folk songs and lexis.

Consequently, it is not surprising that some of the most important events in the history of the *Afan Oromo* took place during this period. German scholars such as J.L. Krapf and Karil Tutschek were some of the scholars who studied *Afan Oromo*. For example, as cited in Bikacha, 2003, Krapf's **An Imperfect Outline of the Elements of the Oromo Language** in (1840), was published by the Church Missionary Society in London. Added to this, he translated the Holy Scriptures into *Afan Oromo*. Karil Tutscheke also developed an interest towards the language. He was introduced to the language by an ex- slave *Akkafedhee* who had been taken from Oromo land to the slave market of the Middle East and then to Germany by European travelers. After collecting data from *Akkafedhee* and other Oromo ex- slaves, Krapf completed the first draft of **Oromo- English – German Dictionary** in 1843 which a year later was published together with another book "**The Grammar of Oromo Language**" in 1844. The work of these

two scholars served as a base for other scholars to work on *Afan Oromo* and literature (Zealelem, in Bichaka, 2003; Mahadi, 1995 and Gregg, 1976]).

Following the German scholars, Zelalem writes that two other European scholars, Father Masisa and Etro Viterbbo documented the vocabulary of *Afan Oromo* entitled **Amharic-Oromo Dictionary** (1867) and **Oromo Dictionary** (1892) respectively (Zelalem, cited in Bikacha, 2003). Even though the works of these scholars were remarkable in the documentation of the vocabulary of the language, no effort was made to document Oromo literature (Zealelem, cited in Bikacha, 2003).

Onesimos Nasib and Aster Ganno, after a commendable effort of the European scholars, contributed a lot to the documentation of *Afan Oromo* and literature. The work of these two Oromo scholars, which was a collection of Oromo oral literature, was published under the title: **Jalqaba Barsiisaa** (1894) [The Oromo Reader]. The collection consisted of 79 short narratives, which consisted of different oral texts and short stories that reflect the socio-cultural relations of the people. Moreover, Onesimos translated John Bunyans "Man's Heart" in 1899 into *Afan Oromo* and Aster, as cited in Gadissa (1991), wrote a book **Si'a Lama Oduu Shantamii Lama** (Fifty Two News, Twice) in the same year. The effort of these Oromos and western missionaries heralded the transition of the language and its literature from orality to documentation (Onesimos, 1894).

As Zelalem notes, some of the works of Onesimos Nasib and Aster Ganno such as **The Oromo Spelling –Book** were honored at the continental level in Africa. For example, as cited in Zelalem (1997), Chinweizu (1988), in his famous book **Voices from Twentieth – Century**

Africa, Griots and Towncries included two works from the works of Onesimos and Aster (Zealelem, 1997).

One of the most important efforts to be noted in the earlier works was the contribution Aster Ganno made in assisting Onesimos Nasib. She played a great role in establishing Oromo literature in the late 19th century. She made a remarkable contribution by writing Oromo songs, fables and stories and compiling an Oromo dictionary. Her contribution was noted by Mekuria (1994: p. 94), "... much credit for the final structure of the language in the works of Onesimos ought to go to his young female assistant." Hence, it is possible to see the contribution that an Oromo woman like Aster, made in laying the foundation of Oromo written literature.

Despite the fact that these Oromos made an effort to contribution in establishing a foundation for Oromo written literature, the then government was not pleased with their effort. Onesimos was accused for all his works and was warned by Emperor Menelek even not to teach religious teachings his own children using *Afan Oromo*. Regarding this, Mekuria (1994: p. 96) had the following to say, "The Emperor allowed Onesimos to go free but forbade him not to continue with his teaching. He was not even allowed to teach his own children." This indeed discouraged those who had interest in working on Oromo language and literature.

During the power struggle in Addis Ababa after the death of Menelek some scholars made attempts to work on Oromo literature. For example, Cerulli's (1922) **Folk Literature of the Oromo of Southern Abyssinia** was the major contribution in this period. This work incorporated the best and most varied collection of Oromo folk literature (Gregg, 1976: p. 170). Different kinds of folk songs like, love songs and pastoral songs were included in the work.

Gadissa (1991) writes that books in *Afan Oromo* which consist of themes related to religion and linguistics were written by religious and other scholars towards the second half of the 20th century. However, the contents of these books were mainly religious and oral. On top of this, even the books written in this period in the language were scanty. Under such historical circumstance, especially in this period, no literary material was produced, especially creative writing.

As can be seen from the brief survey above, works that contributed to the development of Oromo literature were scanty. Even when compared to the earlier works by Tutschek, Krapf, Onesimos and Aster, it seems that no progress was made to develop Oromo written literature. Worst of all, no attempt was made in the area of creative writing in *Afan Oromo*.

Attention began to be given to vernacular languages like *Afan Oromo* after the fall of Haile Selassie and the rise of the Dargue regime. However, the objective was target-oriented. That is, the contents of books written in Ethiopic alphabet were issues related to politics and religion. Therefore, the aim of the texts written in this period was to propagate the revolutionary agenda.

Reverend Dafa Jamo, as Gadissa (1991) writes, was one of the persons committed to the development of *Afan Oromo* and literature. He wrote books which were didactic in nature that deal with societal ethics, the importance of basic education, the unity between men and women in development and the importance of avoiding extravagant marriage ceremonies. His book, **Huursaa** (“A Terrible Sound that the Water Fall Creates”), written in 1969, had few fictional elements.

However, one important event, in the history of written Oromo literature during the Dargue regime, was the beginning of a weekly newspaper, **Bariisaa**, published in 1975. This

newspaper (contrary to the books published for political consumption) proved that *Afan Oromo* could be a language of scholarly discourse, poetry and oral narratives. After Onesimos and Aster's effort, through these genres of literature, the cultural, social, and political life of Oromo people began to be reflected in the news paper. In addition, the newspaper revealed the fact that Oromos continue to write and read in their language once again after Onesimos and Aster (Gregg, 1976: pp. 171- 172).

In spite of these efforts made during the Dargue regime, there was a lack of Oromo creative writing established on strong foundations. So far, no single fictional writing was produced. Even those who tried to do so were suppressed. For instance, Gaddisa stated in the beginning of his first novel that in the revolutionary regime, he was asked to translate his novel into Amharic which he refused to do, and that he waited for its time (Gaddisa, 1991: p. V).

As has been seen in the aforementioned sketch, Oromo literature was not given due attention. More specifically, no novels were written in *Afan Oromo*. This made the history of Oromo novel only two decade old (1991- 2011), in spite of the large number of people who speak the language.

Even though not published in the form of prose fictional narratives, some creative writings were at least broadcast on Ethiopian Radio, *Afan Oromo* Programme. The two leading people who wrote short stories and plays for radio broadcasting were Daba Wayessa and Gadissa Biru. Daba's works, as cited in Gadissa (1991), which were broadcast towards the end of the Dargue regime were **Utuu Hin See'iin** ("Thinking It Differently"), **Gaaddidduu Farraa** ("The Shadow of Evil"), **Gurraacha Abbayyaa** ("The Black Man of the Blue Nile"), **Jennaan** ("As Said") and **Heeruma Galgalee** ("Galgale's Marriage"). These works deal with themes like

corruption, and love affairs. Especially, the theme of **Gurraacha Abbayyaa** revolves around the life of Gumuz people, more specifically the complex life of Gumuz women. On the other hand, Gaddisa wrote a short story **Waa Lama Dhabuu** (“Losing Two Things”). The short narrative depicts the negative aspects of associating education with business (Gaddisa, 1991).

After the fall of the Dargue regime, many long fictional narratives were published. For example, **Kuusaa Gadoo** (“Cumulative Grief”, 1991) and **Dhaamsa Abbaa** (“The Father’s Advice”, 2000) by Gaddisa Birru; **Godaannisa** (“The Scare”, 1992) and **Gurraacha Abbayyaa** (“The Black Man of the Blue Nile”, 1996) by Daba Wayyessa. Moreover, **Hawwii** (“Desire”, 2003), **Yeroon Siif Haadhiisu** (“Let Time Excuse You”, 2008) and **Yoom Laata?** (“When Shall It Be?”, 2010) by Esayaas Hordofa; **Suuraa Abdii** (“The Image of Hope”, 1995) by Kumsa Birayyuu; **Kudhaaama Jaalala** (“The Bond of Love”, 2008) and **Imaanaa Eemaltuu** (“The Pilgrim’s Oath”, 2009) by Abraham Tesfaye; **Imimmaan Haadhaa** (“The Tears of a Mother”, 2008) by Tolera Fikru, **Illaa** (“A Scar”, 2007), by **Rahima Johar** and **Dhoksa Jireenyaa** (The secret of Life, 2011) by Abdii Fite, among others were written after the fall of the regime. These and other novels have been brought out within two decades. This amazing progress shows how the language and the people have a rich potential to develop Oromo literature.

2.2 The Review of Studies of Oromo Women

The issues of Oromo women with respect to social, political, economic, and cultural aspects are reflected in many writings. It seems not manageable to review all these studies. However, the works of some scholars which are believed to be important for the study are discussed in this section.

Scholars who worked on the issues of Oromo either implicitly or explicitly included the issues of Oromo women in their works. In this section, the works of Martial De Salviac, Lambert Bartels and Kuwe Kumsa, Figuch Wako, Jeylan Husien, Zewude Tadesse, Sena Gonfa and Berhanu Bekele are reviewed. After that, a brief summary of the works done in Ethiopia with regard to gender have been given.

Martial De Salviac (1900) was a Catholic missionary from France who served in Ethiopia and most importantly, who ministered the gospel to the Oromo people in 1860s. He wrote a book in French **An Ancient People, Great African Nation the Oromo**, which was published in 1901 and which Ayalew Kanno translated to English in 2005. The book won the French Academy Prize in 1951. In this book, the Reverend Father explored the habits, customs, laws, religion and folk traditions of the Oromo people in detail. Some of the issues such as paternal family system practiced in Oromo and the secondary position women are assigned to are worth discussing since they add insights to this study.

One of the issues Salviac included was the paternal family system. Regarding this, he wrote that the strength of cohesion in the Oromo home was similar to that of the Catholic home and that it rested on “the same laws, and cemented by the same spirit as the primitive family of the patriarchs before” (Salviac: p. 225). While explaining the existence of polygamy in Oromo, he quoted the elders view that “... the Oromo know that God prescribed for them only one wife, an affirmation proving at least... with these people, the conscience is still alive” (Salviac, p. 250).

This indicates that in an ontological relationship (nature of existence and the relation between them) of Oromo woman and man, polygamy is not a practice given from God. The Oromo,

according to Salviac knows this. From this, it could be inferred that polygamy is proscribed by limiting one man only to one woman. That is why as Salviac observed: “The majority of the Oromo are monogamous” (Salviac, 2005: p. 209). On the other hand, Salviac commented that “the rich and the notable ... have several wives.”

As noted above, there seems to be two practices in Oromo family. The first one is marrying an extra wife and the other one is limiting oneself to one wife. Those men, who in one way or the other, have the opportunity, drive, interest or motive to have more than one, break the law and have extra wives. From this, what could be inferred is that polygamy arises either from external factors (may be, social status or economic power) or internal factors (drive or interest). From this, what can be noted is that there is no problem with the essence of things in the relationship between Oromo men and women, in terms of the “principle of balance” in which case both enjoy equality in marital status. However, the dominance of men over women seems to have been created in the course of time.

Polygamy, as Salviac’s observation showed, was implicitly reinforced with the pretext that when an Oromo husband died, the brother of the husband or his closest relative married his wife for the children to be in state of being defended and sustained. However, had defending and sustaining the children of the late brother or relative been a genuine fact, the promise could not have been broken in the time of abject poverty as commented by Salviac (Salviac, 2005: p. 254) :

The strictness of these principles has placed certain husbands, following the great famine of 1889 to 1892, in a position so bizarre as troublesome. Among the numerous victims, the calamity brought the claimants into the hand of the young girls, the ones that survived. They had fulfilled the conditions of the contract, and their betrothal was inalienable and must pass in heritage to the

serving brothers. The latter did not show up. Disconcerted by the public calamity and the general disarray, each was busy saving his own life.

From a feminist perspective, the practice mentioned in the quotation above is a patriarchal programming that favours men to exploit women. The programming made women wait to be rescued by men's wealth. Regarding this stereotype, Tyson (1999: p. 870) writes that the patriarchal ideology makes women "... wait patiently to be rescued by a man ... wait to be rescued by male's wealth and be happy." However, the pity is, as seen in the above quotation, though women waited to be rescued, no one would dare to do that. This shows that the "principles" the patriarchal system established betrayed men who failed to rescue the women who were left helpless due to the catastrophe.

On the other hand, Salviac appreciated the respect that Oromo family had for visitors saying "... the woman and the daughter occupy a rank so honorable that the visitor must greet them after the father of the family" (Salviac, 2005: p. 278). The missionary who wrote about Oromo people applauded the rank the Oromo women had. The rank according to him was "greeted after the father of a family". One may wonder why the rest were not greeted after the mother of the family. And what it means to be "honored"? Was that because she was greeted in the second place? This indicates the sexist stereotype of the expatriate's patriarchal tradition which was similar to that of the then Oromo. It is this secondary position that the patriarchal man consider as an "honor". However, for feminist critics, this sexist stereotype limits women to the secondary position.

Bartels (1983) was another scholar who made a study about the Oromo religion. He was a pioneer in adding insights regarding the Oromo religion. His insights are helpful in the sense that one can interrogate the existing patriarchal notion of religion as they are depicted in the

selected novels. The knowledge and insights he contributes living with the people shows his devotion and commitment. Myths and rituals of the Western Oromo (the Matcha Oromo) were focused in his study. He made a detailed observation of rituals practiced by Matcha Oromo women. According to his study, *Buna Qalaa* was a ritual offered for *Maaram* (believed to be the goddess mother in Oromo) upon the birth of a child. Moreover, *Dhaaba* and *Ateetee* were among the rituals practiced by the women. From these ritual practices, *Buna Qalaa* and *Ateetee* were exclusively women's rituals. Below, we shall see the concept of *Maaram*, the man/woman relationship, the image of women and the notion of motherhood as Bartels observed them.

Bartels (1983: p. 124) commented that “*Maaram* is the ‘divine’ of motherhood. She is evoked and addressed in songs by the women at any birth-ritual. She was also evoked in ritual such as *Ateetee*”. The themes of the songs mentioned in his work depicts that ‘the songs express very well the women’s intimate relationship with *Maaram*’. This shows the fact that Oromo women, exclusively have an attachment with her. As it was observed by Bartels, men (including male-children) could not participate on such ritual. However, they could request women to pray for them. For example, a song that depicts women’s praying for men was mentioned in Bartels’ study as:

Yeelalaa fayyaaf boo’u
Adamsaa mirgaa boo’u
Maareen agartee laata
Agartee laatteef laata? (Bartels, 1983: pp. 126-127)

The one who cries seeking for health
And the hunter who longs for trophies
Did *Maaram* hear them?
Did she give them what they long for?

Gamachu, a scholar who made an extensive study regarding the Oromo worldview, as one of the informants of Bartels, commented that: “Women are happy to have *Maaram* as their mother, a mother with whom they share the secrets of motherhood: menstruation, pregnancy and diseases which prevent them from bearing healthy children” (Bartels, 1983: p. 127). This depicts the divinity of *Maaram* in the worldview of both Oromo women and men. This view is used in this study in the analysis of notions of motherhood such as pregnancy, love and gestation with regard to female characters in the selected novels.

The roles women were assigned to, as Bartels observed, included praising men who were heroes and praying for them so that they could kill big animals to show their courage. These depict the patriarchal power appropriating the power Oromo women have for its own strategies that man is an agent who is courageous and strong and woman is subordinate and weak. However, the irony is that men are not free of being ridiculed if they do not fit into the standards set for them that show their manliness. This is noted by Bartels (Bartels, 1983: p. 274) as “One of the things women have always despised most in men is cowardice... ‘You are like me (you are a woman; you did not kill)’ is still a common challenge in quarrels between women and men and girls and boys”. This is also observed by Fugich Wako, which will be discussed in this chapter. In both studies, women ridicule men based on the standards set for them by patriarchal norms. As the songs collected by Bartels depict, the man/woman relationship is that he is strong and she is weak and the latter waits to be praised for his achievements (Bartels, 1983: pp. 274-277). However, it can be implied that there is a contradiction between what are set as a standards by patriarchy and what men actually do.

Another most important notion observed by Bartels was the notion of motherhood. The biting of the coffee fruit symbolizes woman's value to reproduction and plenty of offspring. For the women, while biting the coffee fruit, there is a praying that they make as quoted by Bartels (Bartels, 1983: p. 288) "...cut evils...cut fatal diseases...cut evil words..." After offering such prayer against the three vices while biting three corresponding coffee fruits for each prayer, she finally summarizes her prayer saying, "Finally, we say: This *Buna Qala* means fullness. O, *Waaqaa* make us live day and night in the midst of plenty of offspring." As the lexical items from the prayer of the woman indicate, after praying against 'evil' including 'evil words' and fatal disease, she prays for the plentitude of an offspring. Here, the central theme is fertility. The woman, interviewed by Bartels, knows the drawbacks of 'motherhood'. Of course it is fascinating to see Oromo women in playing their sacrificial role towards the continuity of the human species. The practice depicts that Oromo women used to experience motherhood.

As Bartels observed, *Dhaaba* was another ritual that Matcha Oromo women practiced. There were essential materials, which were important in *Dhaaba*: *qilla* and two jars. One of the jars is bigger than the other. There is an interesting feminist value in *Dhaaba* as a ritual activity. First, a fermented beer from barley, which the women signify as fertility, was filled to *Qilla*. Then, the mother filled the two jars. The bigger jar was filled first and then the smaller one followed. There was a reason for this. The bigger jar was called "*haadhoo*" to mean mother and the smaller one was called "*ilmo*" to mean child. It was the 'mother' which was filled first and then the 'child' followed. One of Bartle's informants said: "The child has always to be filled from the mother, never the other way round, since, from the very beginning, *Waaqaa* created them thus." (Bartels, 1983: p. 300). Of course, both the mother and the child were filled to the brim which signified fullness and plenty. Then, both jars were put in the backroom, the

‘mother’ higher than the ‘child’, side by side touching one another. Then the mother prayed, saying: “Keep me together with my children”.

There is an interesting value that can be observed from the *Dhaaba* ritual activity. The beer that is filled from the mother to the child depicts that the former is the source of everything. One may argue that Oromo women used to be very conscious of their power of fertility, as a similar view is observed in Europe, as Luce Irigaray asserts: “The all (*the child demanding breast*) that it received in its mother’s belly; life, air, warmth, movement, etc”, (emphasis mine), (Lodge and Nigel, 2000: p. 318). From, this ritual, it seems logical to infer that in Oromo worldview, ‘mother’ is the source of everything, perhaps, energy, air, warmth, safety, -plentitude, for the child. We can infer that ‘plentitude’ is inculcated in the deep psyche of an Oromo woman. Contemporary feminist critics such as Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, Chodorow and Butler, contend that women need to build an empirical knowledge that centers behind the ethics of “reproduction and production” which Kristeva dreams as “the third generation women”. However, the pity is that the value of motherhood, which is conceived and practiced long time ago by Oromo women, by now, seems to be a marginalized area.

In sum, Bartels contributed a lot to the studies of Oromo religious values and specifically to the religious values practiced by Matcha Oromo women. Some of the notions he studies such as: *Buna Qala*, ritual offered to *Maaram* upon childbirth and motherhood are notions which are insightful for feminist discourse. Motherhood with its empowering notion and constricting representation is an untouched area and need to be explored. To this end, this research has attempted to investigate the religious values and motherhood as a contradictory space which is both empowering and constricting.

Kuwe Kumsa, (in Asefa, 1997), was another critic who made a detailed study about Oromo women in her article **The *Siiqqee* Institution of Oromo Women**. She began by defining *siiqqee* as “A symbol which is a socially sanctioned set of rights exercised by Oromo women.” In her study, she used a historical feminist perspective to explore what *siiqqee* was, what rights it symbolized, what factors contributed to its decline, how it was practiced by Oromo women, and the prospect for reviving the *siiqqee* institution on a new bases Kuwe (in Asefa, 1997).

Kuwe, quoting Gamachu Megersa’s view, wrote that the *siiqqee* institution was a mechanism through which check and balance was maintained in Gada system which enabled women to “form parallel organizations of their own which actively include women.” Although women had such organization, Kuwe, based on Gamachu’s view, commented that they were regarded as “*Muka laaftuu*” (soft wood) that showed their “liminality” which according to feminists’ perspective is a sexist way of depicting women.

According to Kuwe and Gemechu, Gada provided laws for Oromo women and the society honored the laws. Hence, as Kuwe (in Asefa, 1997: p. 119) noted “ The *siiqqee* institution functions hand in hand with the Gada system as one of its built- in mechanisms of check and balance.”

Kuwe, in her study, also noted the mother – daughter bond in Oromo tradition. As she went on describing the symbolic value of *siiqqee*, she wrote that *siiqqee*, cut and carefully fashioned, was given to a bride on the date of her marriage. It was the mother who gave it at a time of blessing. When the blessing took place, the mother hold one edge of the *siiqqee* and the daughter hold the other. This in turn symbolized the tie between mother and daughter and the

Other than the aforementioned studies conducted in the area of Oromo women, some scholars have made a significant contribution in studying issues of Oromo women in oral and written literature. These scholars include Figuch Wako, Jeylan Husien, Zewude Tadesse, Sena Gonfa and Berhanu Bekele. The issues they have addressed are discussed below.

Figuch Wako presented a study of the issue of Oromo women in his article in **Journal of Oromo Studies** (2003). Under the title **Contesting Marginality in Jest: The Voice of Borana Women in Oral Tradition**, Wako noted that there was male dominance and female marginality as a social phenomenon among the Borana people (Figuch, 2003: p. 91). He observed that the women had a verbal weapon known as *qoosaa/taphaa* (a joke/a play) through which they portray their resistance against men's hegemonic practices.

He further observed the image of men and women in Borana Oromo that showed male dominance. Men were considered as clever, virtuous, and heroic whereas women were depicted as uninformed, monstrous, and liminal.

Figuch (2003: p. 97), based on Ton Lev's quotation of proverbs, summarized the perception of Borana society about women that ranges from ambivalent terms "Women and Tobacco are never completely bad" to outright lies "A woman will rather cry over something false than over truth". In between the continuum, women were perceived as dutiful beings whenever and wherever they went and were easily replaceable. This shows the very wide range of difference between the negative and positive images of Borana women.

In his article, Figuch (2003: p:115) concluded that despite the fact that men were given positive qualities like bravery, strength, persistence, endurance, women in their song questioned the

validity of such notions, “by subjecting these invincible men to scrutiny.” Moreover, he went on giving a conclusive remark that the “songs deconstruct the myth of male superiority”.

Jeylan Husien (2005) was one of the young scholars who made a detailed study of the Oromo women in oral texts. He argued that though Oromo women had exercised some rights in the *Gada* system it became powerless together with the demolishing of the power of the system. Based on Asmarom’s (1973) study, Jeylan (2005: p. 107) wrote that Oromo women lack comparable age- based social organization. However, Jeylan echoing Lagess’s observation noted that Borana women were privileged in that they had a “status” of “senior wives, junior wives, and mistresses”. However, what type of a privilege a woman observes being a ‘mistress’ is worth questioning. Rather, the purpose of such ‘hierarchy’ is to use the woman as a sexual object. On top of that, the hierarchy is among the women themselves in relation to their husband. This is a patriarchal system of oppression which realizes the husband’s power of control by dividing his wives into hierarchical positions. I think Legesse and Jeylan have overlooked the implicit role of man to dominate woman.

One of the customary laws of Borana Oromo, as Jeylan wrote was the style of dressing. The woman had to dress with a cloth made of leather and if she violated that the husband was given a right to punish her. This depicted that a married woman was under the control of her husband that showed the hierarchical nature of gender relationship. It also limited women to one of the gender stereotypes-modesty. Jeylan noted that the same belief was depicted in most proverbs he collected.

In spite of the fact that women were oppressed by patriarchal norms, Jeylan wrote that there were occasions on which women exercised their power of agency. This included ritual practices

such as *Ateetee*. His observation, of course echoed Bartels' observation of Matcha Oromo women. In Jaylan's view, any attempt, especially by a man, of annoying a woman who was undertaking the ritual was followed by aggressive response of the group of women which resulted in religious sanction. It was here where they exercised their collective right and where the woman exercised her power of agency. Moreover, their power of "prayer was used in the past as a powerful means of terminating harsh ecological disruptions (e.g. crop failure, drought, endemic diseases) and other social crises such as protracted warfare." (Jeylan, 2005: p. 113).

In his study, Jeylan found out that the proverbs he analyzed communicated three notions: indoctrinating the dominance of men over women, the patriarchal society's fear of the status, power and freedom of woman and finally appealing to more than one instinct at a time. Other than the third one which showed a positive image of motherhood, women were depicted to be indecisive, shallow, weak, silly and subordinate. They also lacked a skill in public speech, spend time on tedious and exhaustive routine activities at home, and needed to be tamed by their husbands. On the contrary, men were portrayed as courageous, companionate to take risk and dominant. What is worth noting in his findings is that motherhood was glorified in the proverbs. However, the ambiguous space it has is left unstudied.

Teshome Egere conducted a research entitled **The portrayal of Women in *Dhaabaa's* Selected *Afan Oromo* Prose Fictions** (2004) for his MA study. In his study Teshome has found out that female characters are depicted as object of poverty, object of sex, object of male violence and are homeless. The present study is an extension of the researcher's post -graduate (M.A. thesis) work. The researcher is interested to extend the study because of the following reasons.

It seems important to explain the reasons in detail. First, the previous work is limited to texts of one author only. In this project the researcher is inspired to extend his study to the creative writings of four Oromo authors. Based on that comparative analysis will be made to examine how the authors depicted woman characters. The second reason is the difference in applying critical methods. In the previous study, a well defined approach was not used. For example, how the body of a woman characters are fragmented, the deconstruction of institutional motherhood, the deconstruction of knowledge, the subjectivity of female characters due to their oscillation in the oppositional category subject/object. But using such critical ventures, the researcher would like to extend the previous study.

Zewude Tadesse (2004) also conducted a study on the issue of women in Oromo creative writing in his MA thesis. His study was entitled **Gender Issue in Two Oromo Novels: *Kuusaa Gadoo and Dhaamsa Abbaa*** by Gaddisa Birru. Zewude showed that the author's women characters were victims of culture. But, the way in which culture victimizes the women characters is not exhaustively discussed. Secondly, he does not show the ways in which the text deconstructs itself by evidence from the marginal elements. Thirdly, how women character's body is described or envisaged as a fragment for voyeuristic purpose by narrators and male characters is not touched upon. Moreover, a well defined critical method is not employed by Zewude.

In Zewude's study, culture was seen separately from patriarchal traditions. Even though "patriarchy" could be seen under the broad concept "culture", Zewude dealt with it as though it stood by itself. In fact, patriarchal ideology is a cultural production. Hence, what is seen under the subtopic of the analysis "women as victims of culture" could be seen under the sub-topic

“women as victim of patriarchal culture”. The same confusion is observed in concepts like “sexism” and “sexuality”. The issues analyzed under the concept “sexism” are related to sexual practices such as sexual violence, sexual attack, i.e. practices related to sexuality. But, factors related to sexist language, as it refers to sex- based activities which relegates indoor activities like cleaning the dishes, cooking, serving food, taking care of children as the only activity performed by women are not analyzed under the concept “sexism”. Sexuality, as Hebert Marcuse (1974), as quoted in Kristeva (1981: p. 183) wrote, is “...libidinal energy confined and concentrated in the erotogenic zones of the body, mainly: genital sexuality and the sexual “orientation” by which people express their desire”. Hence, even if sexism might be broad to include practices related to sexuality, it seems that Zewude is taking the term “sexism” to refer to practices related to sexuality only. Therefore, sexism as one of the ways by which patriarchal ideology perpetuates is not dealt with in unambiguous terms in Zewude’s study.

Moreover, Zewude focused only on the major women characters in the two selected novels. However, there are minor women characters who play significant role despite the fact that limited space is given to them. Moreover, Zewude did not touch upon the role of the authorial narrator in perpetuating the patriarchal notions which implicitly sides with men characters. In the present study, notions of deconstructive feminist literary criticism in terms of education, agency, motherhood as an ambiguous space, the fragmentation of the body of women for voyeuristic purpose are critically examined. In spite of the limitations discussed, Zewude’s work should be appreciated as one of the pioneering research essays in the field of gender studies, related to Oromo cultural situations.

Sena Gonfa (2008) in her MA thesis studied the way women were depicted in proverbs, the relationship of the proverbs with the daily experience of women and the socio-cultural attitude

of the community as it is reflected in the proverbs. In her finding, she concluded that women were dominantly depicted negatively. That is, they were portrayed as dependent, weak, ignorant, irresponsible, senseless, illogical, irrational, unpredictable, adulterous, unfaithful, jealous and inferior.

Berhanu Bekele's (2008), in his MA thesis entitled **The Portrayal of Women in Folktales and Popular Sayings of the Oromo of East Wollega** found out that women were depicted negatively except in a few folktales and sayings. Berhanu categorized folktales that depict patriarchal norms such as marriage by man's choice where a women were there as an object of choice and the preference of male offspring as positive notions. However, it is difficult to categorize such tales as positive notions. If the tales are critically examined, the women characters' identity is ambivalent. For one thing, they are victims of patriarchal marriage institution. For the other thing, their role is only to reproduce male offspring, not a female of their type. Moreover, the famous archetype in Oromo folktale *Akkoo Manooyyee*, in Berhanu's study is labeled as poor decision maker. However, her character type is depicted to be enigmatic and farsighted. Though not materialized by the skill and design of that period, the idea she had in her mind cannot label her to be a poor decision- maker. Nowadays, it is not surprising to see spacecrafts and airplanes flying in the sky. The fact that she thought ahead of her time cannot make her a poor decision maker.

In sum, Salviac observed that in the cosmological view of Oromo, God allowed one-to-one marriage. However, because of economic level, social status (external forces) and the energy, drive or interest to have several wives (internal factors), some Oromo men violated the law and marry extra wives. Kuwe and Gamachu (in Asafa, 1998), noted the prevalence of women's institution (i.e. *siiqqee* institution) in the Gada system which served as a "check and balance"

and the practice of religious institutions such as *Ateetee* in which women exercised their power of agency (Bartels, 1983; Sena, 2008 and Jeylan, 2005). In these studies of Oromo women, there was a gradual control of Oromo women's power and repression of their values. Even if some institutions served exclusively the interest of Oromo women, they were not powerful as such to influence the systems such as the Gada system. That is, in the course of time, because of social and cultural dynamics the institutions and rituals became limited in power, where Oromo women suffered from the power of the patriarchal system. Figuch, Jeylan, Berhanu, Sena and Bartels also contended that despite the fact that Oromo women had occasions on which they showed their resistance, there was a patriarchal stereotype that privileged masculine power and that assigned women to behaviours such as weak, silly, jealous, short-sighted, irresponsible, irrational and the like.

2.3 Review of Studies of Ethiopian Women

In this section, review of studies conducted in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature is presented. An attempt has been made to review the works, which are related to these studies to identify the gap in which the current study is different from the studies conducted so far.

Asafa Worku (1987) conducted a feminist literary study in his work entitled **Literary Techniques of Women Writers in Their Prose Works (1959-1985)**. What makes his work insightful is the fact that he focused on female writers for representation of characters from female writers perspective can contribute new insights to the Ethiopian literary scene. His work is devoted to an examination of literary techniques used in prose narrative of female

writers. He made a commendable effort in analyzing the style the women writers used. In his study, Asafa found out that female characters are not presented “objectively”.

Zerihun Asfawu (1988) also conducted a study on the image of women in his article entitled **Images of Women in Ethiopian Short Stories Written from (1949-1985)** which is presented to the ninth Annual Conference of the Ethiopian Studies. His work has found out that female characters are portrayed stereotypically as housewives, sexual objects, dependents, and the other negative behaviours.

The other researcher who conducted a study on the issue of women in Ethiopia is Mulumebet Zenebe (1996). She made a comparative analysis of men and women in the prose fictions of female writers. The objective of her study is to identify if men and woman characters are portrayed as similar or different. Using Gynocriticism as a methodology, she found out that some female characters in the works are depicted as strong.

Mekonnen Zegeye is another researcher who conducted is MA study on **Images of Women and Plot Structure in the First Four Novels of Fikire Markos Desta**. This study is insightful in that it focuses on the people who are known for their indigenous cultural value in Ethiopia. His findings show that regardless of “patriarchal yoke” such as the depiction of female characters as sexual objects, objects of harassment and abjection, some women charterers are depicted as “strong”, courageous and liberated. The fact Mekonnen attributes the latter behaviours to the exposure of female characters to the western culture is debatable. For one thing, the coming of the westerners to that area is a recent phenomenon. The other thing is that a behavior is not acquired over night. Even if it is acquired, the indigenous tradition may not allow the women to practice it. Therefore, the positive behaviours that the female characters

show seems to be either a behavior that arises from indigenous values or it may be the result of the image construction by the text.

In Yihenew Melese's work entitled, **A Feminist Reading of Tobia and Enedewotach Kerech** (2004) some female characters are depicted as firm, wise, physically strong, sympathetic, creative and saviours. On the other hand, others are depicted as insensitive, to freedom, destructive, shortsighted, traitors, whores and "cheats". Though Yihenew contributed a lot in identifying series of negative and positive behaviours, his work has not shown whether female characters exhibit both behaviours under different circumstances or not.

The study of Napoleon Kifle (2006) is another work that contributes toward feminist analysis in Ethiopia. In his study entitled **Major Themes in the Works of Women Poets**, he focused on themes such as love, lack of self-respect and integrity, moral issues, tolerance, optimism and hope and some negative behaviours such as poverty and lack of self-respect and integrity. What makes Napoleon's work different from other works discussed so far is that he focused on a genre (poems) which others have not attempted. His finding is not essentially different from the rest as he too fixes the portrayal of female characters to either negative or positive behaviours.

Another researcher who contributed towards feminist literary study in Ethiopia is Meheret W/Michael's (2007), **A Feminist Reading of Selected Films: A case Study of Two Female Authored Amharic Films 'Sara' and 'Roman** (2007). Her study focuses on how female characters are portrayed from socialist settings, the role of patriarchy in victimizing women and sexual abuse and rape that victimizes women. In her study, she found out the prevalence of gender hierarchy between man/woman where they are found out as powerful and powerless

respectively. Moreover, Meheret found out that female characters are depicted as victims of rape.

Tekliu Tesfalidet (2008) also conducted a study on portrayal of female characters in Amharic novels in his work **The Portrayal of Major Female Characters in Four Amharic Novels**. In his finding, he has shown that female characters in the novels selected were portrayed as mere housewives, prostitute, poor, weak, timid and selfless. He also found out that some female characters are depicted positively as intelligent.

Gebreyesus's (2008) PhD study was a work that examined women characters in selected Tigirigna novels. He analyzes the women characters using different critical methods. The work is an insightful contribution in Tigirigna critical study with respect to the portrayal of women for it is detailed and addresses various issues such as subordination of women because of gender hierarchy and the marginalization of female characters politically, economically, socially and psychologically. Gebreyesus' study is different from this study in that he did not use feminist deconstruction as an approach to his study of the selected novels. Moreover, this study deals with novels in *Afan Oromo*. In the subsequent section an attempt is made to review studies conducted in the area of Oromo women.

As seen above, the emergency of feminist literary criticism on the Ethiopian literary scene, these days, has attracted the attention critics. This practice contributed towards the production of MA thesis as seen in the above brief review of studies conducted, in the area of oral and written literature in Ethiopia at large and in Oromo in particular. In studies conducted so far, women characters are dominantly portrayed as objects of sex, rape, poverty, weak, short sighted, traitors, whores, submissive, poor, prostitutes and many other negative stereotypes and

some positive behaviours such as cute, intelligent, wise, physically strong, sympathetic and creative. The studies are dominantly devoted to labelling female characters to either negative or positive stereotypes. However, the findings dominantly undermine the contradictory positions women characters take. Therefore, in this study, attempt is made to examine the contradictory and ambivalent positions women characters take to show the polyphony of meaning. This, according to the present study is a gap for it is argued that female characters may take contradictory positions because of the crushing power of patriarchal ideology, economy, social and cultural forces.

Furthermore, though these scholars have made an endeavour to the study of issues of women, this thesis is different from the aforementioned works for the following reason. First, this thesis has included the works of four different authors on two of which (Rahima's *Illaa* and Abdi's *Dhoksa Jireenyaa*) no study has been conducted yet and on the other two of which the works conducted are not exhaustive. Secondly, deconstructive, more specifically feminist deconstructionist approach is offered in this study. Thirdly, the issues addressed in this study are broad and detailed. These issues include notions such as motherhood, knowledge, the position of female characters in the oppositional category subject/object to show whether female characters are both agents and victims. Fourth, it also addresses the contradictory, ambiguous and ambivalent positions female characters take in the selected novels. This has been found out to be the gap that the project has attempted to fill. In the subsequent chapter, the theoretical framework used for analysis has been presented. To this end, feminist deconstructionist critical study has been discussed to develop a framework for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

FEMINIST DECONSTRUCTIONIST LITERARY CRITICISM

The purpose of this chapter is to give a definition and theoretical framework of the study. To this end, first, the definitions given to feminist literary criticism by authorities are discussed. Second, the theoretical framework used in critical analysis of the selected texts has been presented. Feminist deconstructionist reading is dealt with under the theoretical framework as it is used as a model for the analysis of the selected novels. In feminist deconstructionist literary criticism, the notion of binary opposition, notions such as woman's body, subject/object, institutional motherhood and knowledge are presented. The purpose of dealing with these notions is to explain the status of women if they are psychologically, socially, economically, politically, and educationally oppressed and marginalized in a patriarchally organized society as portrayed in literary texts.

3.1 Feminist Literary Criticism

The term feminism is originated from the French word **feminisme** during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and then spread to other languages and parts of the world (Offen, 1988: p. 564). Feminism as a movement in the broadest sense is a collective effort to improve the situation of women. The term is further developed to other countries of Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia. Its meaning has changed over time. Hence, scholars have proposed different definitions of feminism (Offen, 1988).

Critics give comprehensive definitions for various theories and critical approaches. However, out of various literary theories and critical approaches, feminism seems to evade a comprehensive definition. Ruthven (1994: p. 20) shares this view saying "...attempts to define feminist writing are bound to be premature ...". Moreover, as commented in Guerin *et al* (1999: p. 182) Rebecca West, an author and critic remarks that she herself has never been able to find out what feminism is. Likewise, Sara Mills (1995: p. 3), in her book entitled **Feminist Stylistics**, writes: "Feminism (or more accurately, feminisms) is difficult to define because of the many different kinds of feminism which exist today". Therefore, even though other literary theories and critical approaches are singularly definable, feminism is usually called "feminisms" or "feminist approaches" in its plural form.

It follows that the diversity and heterogeneity of feminism is attributed to the inevitable diversity and heterogeneity of culture in the real world. "This has been especially important as feminists try more and more to examine the experience of women from all races and classes and cultures, including, for example, Black, Hispanic, Asian--- and Third World Women (Guerin *et al*, 1999: p. 183).

Hence, one can easily understand that feminism has plural approaches from the fact that it centers on the complexity of women's lives in different cultures and historical circumstances. However, according to Krouse (in Brown and Olson, 1978: pp. 281- 282), all approaches of feminism precisely share certain characteristics in "that they advocate or support greater freedom or equal rights for women in politics, education, employment, or personal life". By implication, today, there exist historical and new feminist views which are concerned with revealing the injustices perpetrated and false images thrust on women in patriarchally appropriated societies as Mills (1995: p. 3) argues:

Most feminists hold a belief that women as a group are treated oppressively and differently from men and that they are subject to personal and institutional discrimination. Feminists also believe that society is organized in such a way that it works, in general, to the benefit of men rather than women; that is, that it is patriarchal.

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the role of feminist literary critics is to explain how women are psychologically, socially, economically, politically, and educationally oppressed and marginalized in a patriarchally organized society as portrayed in literary texts. More specifically, feminist literary critics study the roles assigned to women (stereotypes), women's sexual exploitation, their economic and psychological dependence, their agency, their contradictory position in discourses, their vulnerability to violence, their subordinate positions in society, etc which "are reflected, supported, or challenged by literary texts." (Guerin *et al*, 1999 : p. 182)

Furthermore, feminist literary criticism partakes roles with other literary inquiries like deconstruction, Marxism, psychoanalysis, and others, which one way or the other, touch upon the injustices and the unfair relationships between women and men in a male-dominated culture. For example, Ruthven lists seven different types of feminist approaches, which constitute current feminism and are linked with the aforementioned literary disciplines. These are socio-feminists, semio-feminists, psycho-feminists, Marxist feminists, socio-semio-psycho-Marxist feminists, lesbian feminists and black feminists. Moreover, feminist deconstructionist literary criticism is one of an evolving critical method. In this study, feminist deconstructionist approach is used in analyzing the selected novels. It has been chosen because it is a strategy that could enables one "challenge hierarchical and binary oppositional logic", for it offers the "the idea of the 'in-between' which constitutes one tool for dismantling binary thinking" and it enables one to identify continuous conflict, inconsistency and instability as

depicted in literary texts. Therefore, from the point of view of female characters, this approach is helpful in that one can unravel how female characters enter to conflicting, contradictory, ambivalent situations because of economic, social, psychological and cultural forces and the attempts they make to get out of their limitations and maximize possibilities to exercise their agency Poovey (1988: p. 54). In the following section, attempts has been made to present feminist deconstructionist literary criticism.

3.2 Feminist Deconstructionist Literary Criticism

As discussed in the introductory part of this study, the major approach used is feminist deconstructionist theory. It is important to explore theoretical conceptions that revolve around this approach to come up with core issues which could enable the researcher use them in the analysis of the selected novels. First, the general notion of deconstruction has been discussed. Then, the researcher has explored the views of scholars regarding the basic issues such as binary opposition, the deconstruction of woman's body, subject/object, institutional motherhood and knowledge.

Deconstruction is one of the most radical thoughts of the 1960s and 1970s. The proponent of this trend of thought is Jacques Derrida. It is radical in the sense that it questions the western system of thought. For example, Derrida questions Plato's idea of "perfect forms" that exist in an abstract, timeless dimension of thought; Descartes' rational thought engaged in the act of self-reflection which is illustrated by his famous statement "I think therefore I am"; and the structuralist belief that "human language and expressions are generated by innate structures of human consciousness". These thoughts are termed by Derrida as 'logocentric', because they place "at the center of (centric)" their "understanding of the world for us" (Tyson, 1999: 249).

These thoughts according to Derrida, are human concepts and hence are a product of human language. Therefore, for deconstruction, language is the ground of being.

With regard to literary texts, Spivak, (in Brennan, 1989 and Besley, in Davis and Schiliefer, 1994: p. 364), write that deconstruction refuses to identify meaning with authorial intention or with the theme of the work. Rather, it tends to locate meaning in areas which traditional criticism has seen as marginal- in the set of oppositions or hierarchies of terms which provide the framework of the text. Besley further contends that: "In its attempt to create a coherent and internally consistent fictive world the text, in spite of itself, shows incoherence, omissions, absences, and transgressions..." Here, it is important to focus on terms Besley used such as: "transgression", "absence" and "incoherence". The social world is constructed in a way that one should not go beyond a certain limit. There are cultural, moral and legal codes that constrict one not to go beyond the limit. This study also focuses on instance in which female characters in the selected novels transgress these codes in their attempt to exercise their agency.

However, literature is the world in which what is repressed as a result of these codes is transferred. Hence, notions such as "transgressing" the laws, which are not dominant themes in a text, can be depicted as marginal element. Such notions could create "incoherence" despite the fact that a text attempts to create coherence. According to Besley, no consistent and coherent plot constrains the free play of the discourse. Therefore, such notions can enable us to show the transgression in texts (Besley, in Davis and Schiliefer, 1994: p: 363). In this study, an examination is made as to how female characters subvert the social, institutional, cultural and religious codes when their lives are entangled to one and/or some of the latter forces. In the subsequent sections notions such as binary opposition, deconstructing woman's

body, subject/object, motherhood and knowledge are presented from the perspective of deconstruction, especially feminist deconstructionist.

3.2.1 Binary Oppositions

Binary opposition is a concept developed by Derrida, to suggest that the trend of thought and expression in western culture is in terms of contrary pairs. According to them, something is white but not black and masculine and therefore not feminine. Other common and mutually exclusive pairs include beginning/end, conscious/unconscious, and presence/absence, birth/death. Derrida suggests that these dichotomies are not simply oppositions but also evaluative hierarchies, containing one term that western culture views as positive or superior and another considered negative or inferior. Derrida has deconstructed a number of these binary oppositions or has argued against the static (fixed) nature of terms.

He also challenges the history of philosophy of western modes of conceiving and articulating knowledge. In the course of his description, he notes that according to them, fundamental concepts like “goodness”, ‘naturalness”, “reason”, and “truth” are self evident in their absolute “rightness”. Following him his followers such as Gayatri Spivak, Diane Elam, K.K. Ruthven, Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Sarah Kofman, Barbara Johnson, Louis Althusser, Fredric Jameson, Judith Butler and others question the stability of the binary oppositions such as male/female, educated/uneducated/, speech/silence, truth/error and many other oppositional categories (Spivak, 1989; Butler, 1993; Davis and Schleifer, 1994).

Deconstructionist feminists such as Gayatri Spivak, Kristeva, Wright, Ruthven and Butler have adapted the ideas of Derrida and other deconstructionists in their critic of binary opposition. They have not only argued that language is structured in accordance with binary oppositions

such as man/woman, reason/emotion, and active/passive, but that qualities which are in the first term sequence are associated with masculinity where as the second term references are associated with femininity. Furthermore, they have asserted that patriarchal ideology values those qualities associated with masculinity over those associated with femininity

Other than the instability in interrelationships, there is also instability within the same subject. Regarding this, Kristeva (1981) in her famous article: **Women's Time**, has contributed insights which are important for feminist deconstructionists. She notes: "... the diversity of our identification and the relativity of our symbolic existence". She contends that diversity of identification, relativity and contradiction are not only at the level of oppositional categories. They also can manifest themselves not only in interrelationship but also "within ourselves". Hence, she wrote that: "From that point on, the Other, neither an evil being foreign to me nor a scapegoat from the outside, that is of another sex, class, race, or nation. I am at once the attacker and the victim, the same and the Other, identical and foreign" (Kristeva, 1981: p. 34). She pointed out that the very notion of identity was challenged. Hence, she interrogated: "What can 'identity', even 'gender identity' mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged?" Here, she noted the very subjectivity of an identity which the third generation women needed to focus on.

Her suggestion has an implication that other than the deconstruction of the binary oppositions, the rivalry from within should not also be marginalized. In this view, she shares aspects of feminist deconstructionists in the sense that, though for her an author (text) appears to create a fictive unity, a single meaning and identity, there are forces from the "inside" that dismantle the attempts. Literary texts, according to her, show how "the narrative web is a thin film constantly threatened with bursting" (Kristeva, 1981: p. 141). Although all narratives attempt to be

coherent, in so long as themes such as abjection and melancholia are recurring, it would persistently be interrupted and hence become a tale of suffering. Therefore, images such as death, decay, defilement became the recurring themes of the text (Kristeva, 1981).

Some of Kristeva's views have been helpful for the analysis of the selected novels in this study. These include that fact that binary oppositions are not static (hence, female characters are not only objects but they at times are subjects), that inconsistency is not only revealed at the level of oppositional categories but also within the subject ('I am at once the attacker and the victim, the same and the Other, identical and foreign I am at once both').

Furthermore, Ruthven (1994) contend that though attempts are made to keep the binary oppositions static, it does not work because of a shift from structural parity (the structure of the depiction of both characters in similar ways or in equal positions) to semantic disparity (inequality or discrepancy in the depiction of the characters as signifying process). When showing the disparity at semantic level, Ruthven takes two phonemes in English /r/ and /c/ in words 'rat' and 'cat'. The two phonemes are "equal and opposite when they compete systematically to accompany /a/ and /t/". By opposite it means viewing the phonemes, to borrow Shoshana Felman's (1994: p. 41) view, not as "Other" but "different in their own right". Ruthven goes on contending, "...it is only at another signifying process –the semantic –that phonemic differentiation between /cat/ and /rat/ is subject to hierarchical difference". And, this is termed as "semantic disparity". In view of this, we shall see attempts made by the text to keep the unity of the text by establishing the structural parity between the female and the male characters in the novels selected. Identifying the binary opposition is not to show that deconstruction is devoted to such practice. Rather it is to show that there is no more center and centers are there at the periphery (marginal) positions. What is more, the aim of disrupting the

the binary opposition is to show how female characters though at times marginalized, the other time are agents who change their lives beyond their limitation. Hence, in this study, an attempt is made to examine the portrayal of women in respect of notions such as knowledge/nonknowledge, institution/experience, subject/object. Therefore, Ruthven's view is also important for this study for it gives a theoretical insight that relationships go beyond oppositional category where hierarchies are at work. So, examining how hierarchical the relationships between characters is imperative.

Similarly, the notion of the disruption of binary opposition is also explicated in the works of contemporary feminist theoretician Judith Butler (1993) in her book entitled **Bodies That Matter**. Judith Butler, a scholar in comparative literature and rhetoric, well known theorist of gender, sexuality, identity and power argues that sets of knowledge developed with regard to oppositional categories are based on constructions. The constructions at times give a cause and effect relationship for sets of binary oppositions. For example, Butler comments that sex (male/female) is seen to cause gender (masculine/feminine) which is seen to cause desire (towards the other gender). This is seen as a kind of continuum. From her view, it is possible to imply that the notion that assign men to strong, active and rational and women to weak, passive and irrational category based on their gender difference is a construction. For Butler, the anatomical difference could not lead towards fixed categorization. If one of the genders accept the category and act accordingly, it means that s/he has developed a gender identity. Butler's approach is to break the supposed links between these, so that gender and desire are flexible, free-floating and not 'caused' by other stable factors (such as sex), rather 'caused' by social, historical and cultural factors. Therefore, notions of instability of the oppositional

categories which are explicated by Ruthven and Kristeva are also complemented by Butler. What is extracted from the views of these scholars is instability of the oppositional categories.

Complementing the views of the above scholars, an African feminist critique, Obioma Nnaemeka (1997: pp. 2-3) also discusses in the introductory part of the book, **The Politics of (M)othering**, the “complexity and ambiguity” of African literature in general and African women’s writing in particular. According to her, labeling women’s issue simply to “oppositional binaries” like “tradition/ modern, agent/victim” where the existing reality and lives of women disrupt such binaries is not the right position. Hence, she argues that women are “---both traditional and modern, both victim and agent, both goddess and whore--- in short human”. She further notes that the essays in the book mentioned above dismantle agent/victim, resistant/weak, subject/object dichotomies. In addition, she says that victims are also agents who can change their lives, outlooks, and ways of thinking or viewing the world and vice versa (Nnaemek, 1997: p. 60).

From Kristeva’s views discussed, it is possible to derive a notion that gender identity is a construction. Because it is a construction, it can be deconstructed. Therefore, oppositional categories such as man/woman and masculine/feminine, self/other, agent/victim and subject/object. are not fixed. The position of the first term sequence can be assumed by those who assume the second term sequence and vice versa. This is what is echoed by Ruthven who argues that at semantic level, oppositional categories are not merely oppositional but hierarchical. Butler also supports their views of the instability of the oppositional categories. The view that she gives that a subject oscillates between her/his limitations and possibilities are one of the examples that further indicate the instability of the position the subject takes (Olson,

2000). The other important concept for the analysis of binary opposition is Nnaemeka's view of the fact that women are both subjects and object, agents and victims. This implies that the position of a woman is not fixed. She at times takes the position of the first term references and the other time takes the position of the second term references. Based on the views of these scholars, notions of the instability and oscillation are what this study focuses on. Moreover, identifying hierarchical notions and their gender implication is also an area that this study focuses on. That is, an examination is made to see whether the positions of female characters are in both spaces of the categories such as subject/object, agent/victim, weak/ resistant and independent/dependent.

3.2.2 Deconstructing a Woman's Body

The purpose of this section is to explore the views of scholars with regard to the discourse of woman's body. In the context of this study, deconstructing woman's body is a discourse that studies how the woman's body is fragmented, for what purpose, and by whom; how such processes may obscure, valorize, or alter constructions of womanhood and/or the social worth of women bodies; and the victimization vs the agential powers and activist concerns of women in reference to their bodies.

Woman's body may be explained in terms of anatomical, physiological and mental functions. Based on these functions a person is understood as a living being. Nevertheless, in discourses such as literary texts, woman's body may be depicted as a sight of the aesthetics of comportment and/or decoration. It can be depicted as a fragment where some parts of the body are selected for idealization and objectification (Kesselman, McNaind and Schridewind, 1999).

Feminist critics, contend that literary texts, especially texts written by men authors deconstruct woman's body for several reasons. Some of them use woman's body as a metaphor for a nation, others use fragments of woman's bodies as object of gaze and still others use as a center of idealization of some parts of woman's body (Kristeva, 1981; Butler, 1993; Bordo, 1993 and Elam, 1994). Some feminist critics hold the view that the discourse of the body provides a significant site for the formation of subjectivity. Below, we shall discuss notions related to woman's body and its implication.

Some feminist critics explicate discourse of the body as 'socially constructed' one. These critics focus on the social and cultural practices in the construction of body. Foucault (1977: p. 25) contends that "The body is directly involved in a political field; power relations are an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry our tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs."

Furthremore, in Africa the discourse of the body is related to using body as a means of survival with regard to women. Although it does not seem to be a practice which is limited to only African women, that of African women is different in the sense that they enter this life for it is a means of survival (Nnaemeka, 1997). For women who enter to such practice, it is a choice between two evils- abject poverty or ostracisation from the society as a result of the practice of prostitution. Because survival is more urgent than ostrasization, women, more specifically African women enters to such practice. Most African feminist critics have shown that prostitution is not only a woman's issue but also part of the degradation of the moral values of patriarchal society (Ogundiipe-Leslie, 1984; Nnaemeka, 1997). Such practices are also recurrent in creative writings of Ethiopian writers. For example, Tekliu Tesfalidet (2008) in his MA study has found out that female characters are depicted as prostitutes. Creative writings in

Afan Oromo are not exceptional to this practice. Hence, in this study, an examination is made if female characters use their body as a means of survival in times of abject poverty.

The other aspect of body as a social/cultural construction, as Naomi Wolf (1990) calls in her book by that title, is 'beauty myth'. Notions of beauty and its effect are described by (Bordo, 1993; Kumar, 1994; Mills, 1995; Kristeva, in Oliver, 1997; Kesselman, McNaind and Schridewind, 1999 and Nettels,1999). It is one of the themes that are perpetuated. Nietzsche writes a controvertial view that "women's chief concern is appearance and beauty" (in Kesselman, McNaind and Schridewind, 1999). There are debates on this quotation by feminist scholars. Some feminists label him anti-feminist whereas others who argue that he is commenting on the usual practice of his time, that is, that women were trying to fit themselves into the notions of beauty of their period do not object to his view (Hekman, 1990). Therefore, although the standards of beauty vary from culture to culture, in most cultures there is a belief that woman must possess the best quality, "beauty" in order to be successful and attractive to a man. It also is the central measure of woman's worth. Such a notion of woman is one of the recurring themes in literary texts.

A growing body of evidence confirms that beauty is a gender related trait. At every age, appearance is emphasized and valued more highly in female than in males. Women are more critically judged for attractiveness and more severely rejected when they lack it. A woman's beauty is constantly anticipated, encouraged, sought, and rewarded in a wide range of situations, including the romantic arena (Kesselman, McNaind and Schridewind, 1999).

The effect the "beauty myth" has on female's construction of 'selfhood' is quite complex. The attitude they develop about beauty, towards their body and sexuality begins developing early in

life. The unrealistic expectations created by the society that objectifies women can restrict their power of choice and agency. Because it is linked with femininity, the influence of body image on self-concept is great for females than for males. A woman is more likely than a man to equate herself with what she looks like, or what she thinks she looks like or what she believes others think she looks like. The point is not why a woman appreciates her body, however, if she is obsessed with only the beauty of her external physical appearance, the other side of human quality, effectiveness is repressed. The repression of the latter may contribute negatively to the overall effectiveness of a woman. Bordo (1993:22) comments that women's "overriding concern is ... to be desired, loved". Studies show that women's self-concepts are correlated with their own perception of their attractiveness, whereas men's self-concepts are related more closely to perceptions of their effectiveness (Bordo, 1993 and Kesselman, McNaind and Schridewind, 1999).

Feminist critics such as (Elam, 1994; Mills, 1995 and Nettels, 1999), hold a view that in textual constructions, women characters are not free of objectification. Especially, texts written by male authors are highly suspected. In texts written by male authors, woman characters are depicted as texts to be written and read, and instruments to be shaped. In some texts of male authors, women characters are simply raw materials to be fashioned. Still in other texts, women characters are depicted as a fragment- not with a complete human body.

Mills (1995), in her book **The Feminist Stylistics**, analyzed in detail how women characters are portrayed in piecemeal using lexical references. As her analysis shows, fragmentation is an element which comes into play when women are described as compared to men. Regarding the effects of fragmenting woman's body, Mills (1995: pp.171-172) has the following to say:

First the body is depersonalized, objectified, reduced to its parts. Second, the female protagonist is not represented as a unified conscious physical being, the scene can not be focalized from her perspective-effectively, her experience is written out of the text. Fragmentation of the female is therefore associated with male focalization.-the female represented as an object, a collection of objects, for the male gaze.

Mills contends that fragmenting woman's body has got two effects. That is, a woman is 'depersonalized', 'objectified' and/or reduced to anatomical parts. The woman described does not stand as her own "self" with her whole being. Rather, she is fragmented to piecemeal, to different body parts as though the body parts stand by their own. In such cases her role is to serve as an object of gaze.

Mills further notes that there are critics who defend the 'anatomical representation' of a woman's body. For example, as Mills (1995: 172) comments, "Derek Attridge in *Peculiar Language* (1988) what he terms as 'organic representation in texts results in 'erotic arousal': 'Sexuality thrives on the separation of the body into independent parts, whereas a sexually repressive morality insists on the wholeness and singleness of body and mind and soul'. Mills adamantly argues against this in that it "totally ignores the gender inequalities of such representation". Mills has given an example in which such notion of the representation of a woman's body is perpetuating in different genres. That is, representation of women "fragmented into anatomical elements occur far more frequently than do such representation of men- this according to her is...true of romance, love poetry, amongst other genres" (Mills, 1995:172). Since a novel is a creative writing where notions of romance are recurrent, it can be deduced that inequality in representations of a body of a man and a woman is at work. Although there are arguments that favour representation of parts of woman's body on the accounts of arousal of romantic love, feminist critics such as Mills argue against for the

recurrence of the body parts in a given text promotes gender inequality. Hence, according to critics such as Mills, gendered representation is at work where a woman's body is represented as object of gaze. Therefore, an examination of gender imbalance in the depiction of a body in a given text is worth examination.

Hence, it is imperative to closely examine literary works such as a novel as to how a woman's body is described as an object of gaze to see how the ideology, to use Humm's terms, of the "sexism of representations" are working. To unravel gender hierarchy, as feminist deconstructionist such as Mills suggest, one needs to read against the grain of the text. A critical examination of a text focusing on the physical appearance of a male and a female characters could unravel to what degree a body of a female character is used as a center of gaze. To this end, the circulation of gaze among the authorial narrator and different male characters in the selected texts is what is focused on in this study based on Mill's model of the description of the physical appearance of male and female characters' bodies. Such aspects are worth investigating in texts of male authors. Therefore, the researcher attempts to critically investigate how the texts fall under the influence of the perpetuation of the beauty myth in their attempt to avoid the perpetuation itself and how female characters are depicted to be fragments in the selected Oromo novels.

3.2.3 Deconstructing Subject/object

The term "subject," as Regenia Gagnier (1991: p. 8) writes, can have different meanings in different contexts. For instance, he defines the subject as:

First, the subject is a subject to itself, an "I," however difficult or even impossible it may be for others to understand this "I" from its own viewpoint, within its own experience. Simultaneously, the subject is a subject to, and of,

others; in fact, it is often an “Other” to others, which also affects its sense of its own subjectivity. . . . Third, the subject is also a subject of knowledge, most familiarly perhaps of the discourse of social institutions that circumscribe its terms of being. Fourth, the subject is a body that is separate (except in the case of pregnant women) from other human bodies; and the body, and therefore the subject, is closely dependent upon its physical environment.

The above quotation defines the subject as “self conscious”, “Other”, “discourse” and “corporeal”. This shows to what extent the notion of subject is wide ranging. From the four categories of subject, the focus of this study is on the first two notions of the subject. If ‘I’ as a subject is considered, it is ‘difficult or even impossible it may be for others to understand this ‘I’. René Descartes (1968: p. 169), ends his sixth “Meditation” with the humble admission that “the life of man is very often subject to error” because one’s perspective is always partial, imperfect, or, in other words, human.” Moreover, these limitations include, of course, our ability to know in any full or reliable way our “selves.” This has an implication for characters in the novel in that their identity is complex which can merely be labeled to a certain category, for example, weak or strong, nonknowledgeable or knowledgeable, and many other negative stereotypes.

The other concept which is paired with subject in the oppositional category is ‘object’. Williams (1983: p. 309) defines that in its earliest English senses, ‘object’ is implied as an opposing point in an argument (as an ‘objection’), or an obstacle, or something seen or observed, or a purpose. According to poststructuralists, as Buchanan (2010) defines, it is a thing which may be a person, body part, symbol, image or idea, through which the drive seeks to attain its aim, namely its satisfaction. According to Buchanan’s view, if a person is subjected or labeled by others in a way which is either different or contrary to the way s/he perceives himself/herself, s/he is considered as an object (Other). Therefore, it is possible to imply that a person can

assume an object position as in object of oppression, object of sexual harassment, object of gaze and many others. According to Kristeva (1981) and Butler (1993) a subject can be an object to her/himself when s/he is in conflict with “self” where a dichotomy self/other prevails.

Subject/object dichotomy is one of the binary oppositions that exist in western trend of thought. The modernist view of subject/object binary opposition, for example, dictates that the subject and object are associated to a knower and the known respectively. The former, as many feminists argue, is usually associated with man whereas the latter is associated with woman. Such epistemological view is interrogated by poststructuralists. Poststructuralists argue that the knower who claims to know the known (the woman), let alone knowing he could even not fully know the ‘I’ i.e. the “self” (Melucci, 1996: p. 3). Therefore, the knowledge constructed, with the subjectivity of the ‘self’ about subjectivity of the ‘Other’ is a knowledge that is filled with subjectivities. According to the feminist deconstructionists view, the woman is constructed based on such subjectivities. The role of a critic is to identify such gaps and show to what degree the woman’s subjectivity is constructed by the subject (i.e. man) who in turn is subjective (Hekman, 1990).

Furthermore, there is shift of position of the entities in the binary oppositions for they do not hold static. For example, it seems difficult to conclude that a man is always at the subject position and a woman is always at that of an object position. This according to feminist deconstructionists is that, at times, a woman may take the subject position (sometimes within a patriarchal gender hierarchy) another time an object position. Under some circumstances, in a situation she is in, a woman may be determined to break a given *status quo* and take a subject position or constricted by what Kristeva calls phenomena such as (history, culture, economy, etc)

and can assume object position. Judith Butler explains more about the concept of subject/object as that one is born into a world in which certain limitations become the possibility of one's subjecthood. However, these limitations are not there as structurally static features on self. They are subject to renewal, and one performs (mainly unconsciously or implicitly) that renewal in the repeated acts of her/his person. Even though one's agency is conditioned by those limitations, his/her agency can also alter those limitations to some degree. According to her, this does not mean that one will get over the limitations-there is always a limitation of some kind or another. She suggests that the whole scene has to be understood as more dynamic than it generally is, which is why she contends that concepts such as gender identities established as a fixed category (for example, man/woman) are flexible. Hence, the first term sequences such as man, subject etc, and the second term sequences such as woman, object etc, are not fixed Wright (in Jefferson and Robey, 1986; Butler, 1993 and Bordo, 1993).

Furthermore, Butler (2000b: p: 49), like Kristeva, relates the subjectivity of a person to her/his psychic life. She notes how oppositional categories such as the "I" and the "Other" work in relation to social and psychic spaces. Relating her own psychic life of power to her Judaic background, she says: "The relation to myself that takes place is psychic and is complicated and does not necessarily replicate my relation to the Other; the I who takes myself to the task is not the same as the Other who takes me to the task. I may do it more severely; I may do it in ways that the Other never would." Here, Butler presents two oppositional categories, the 'I' and the 'Other'. From her explanation, it can be implied that the two categories may work differently, perhaps in an oppositional way. From this it is possible to imply the conflicting or contradictory notion of a subject because of the dynamics of the two notions.

For Butler, there is a cause and effect relationship between the social and the psychic lives of a subject. Butler (1997: p.54) writes that:

The psyche is formed by the social, it has historically contingent origins. The posited structures might result from a certain historical society. For her, part of what it means to be a subject is to be born into the world in which norms are acting on you from the very beginning. The norms include regulation of the subject from the outset: you are born in a hospital (or somewhere else), you are given a name, you are ordered in that particular way; you are assigned a gender, and very often a race; you are inculcated quite quickly into a name therefore into the lineage; you are immediately submitted to a calculative logic-weight and height-which becomes the cause of trauma for the rest of your life.

Butler contends that every subject is constituted differently through her or his contact with multiple norms and other people. After a repeated practice, one internalizes normative values. For example, one may tend to accept femininity as natural after repeated acts of it in the social setting, which leads to psychic lives. These could make one live cultural norms as psychic realities in different ways in different situations (Butler, 1997).

There are scholars who do not give a 'structural formation' for the concept unconscious. For example the term *unconscious* works in Butler's text as a synonym for *opacity* (Butler, 1997: pp. 40, 41, 46, 63, 64, 66, 69, 80, 81, 84, 103), *non-narrativizable* (Butler, 1997: pp. 79, 83, 135), *unspeakable* (Butler, 1997: p. 135), *inarticulable* (Ibid, 60), *unknowingness* (Butler, 1997: p. 136), *irrecoverable* (Butler, 1997: p. 20), "my foreignness to myself" (Butler, 1997: p. 84), "failure to narrate fully" (Butler, 1997: p. 64), and "the limit to self-understanding" (Butler, 1997: p. 83). Unlike Freud and Lacan, Butler does not aim at building a topology of a human

psyche, but she attempts to describe the subject's impossibility of transparency, her difficulty of being a reflexive subject and narrating the formation of herself. Butler's strategy against "topologization" is keeping the descriptions in motion. That is, Butler refuses to theorize with the Lacanian topological model of the real and the symbolic. Instead, she follows Foucault by understanding reality as a multiple network of discourses and practices. As the meaning of an act is formed in the complicated network of different social practices, the change is not a result of some structural necessity. Still, the meaning of an act cannot be guaranteed beforehand or be fully controlled by the subjects, and the same act can have different consequences and meanings depending on the context. Consequently, there are no practices or acts that could totally refuse to participate, as there are various systems of meanings at work simultaneously.

Chris Weedon (2003: 80) also adds an insight that the notion of subjectivity is important for feminist deconstructionist reading. Citing Althusser's view of the "subject" she contends that the misrecognition of an individual arises from the category of "the subject" which is a 'constitutive of all ideologies'. She argues that literature is one specific site among many where the ideological construction of gender takes its place. According to her and other feminist deconstructionists, fictional texts offer texts as constructions not reflections of meaning. Hence, characters are constructions. This enables to make feminist deconstructionists shift in focus to the way in which fictional texts construct subject positions, mode of subjectivity and meaning. There is a contention by most feminist deconstructionists that the notion that fixes masculinity (as a subject, oppressor and active,) and femininity (as object, oppressed, passive) to a fixed category is rather a construction. This, according to them has to be deconstructed to show the fact that the boundary between the oppositional categories is tenacious. By 'tenacious' it means,

the boundary is not strong in a sense that one could never cross to the other oppositional category. For them, there is no “ultimate fixing of femininity, masculinity or unconscious...both the symbolic order and the unconscious are marked by difference, contradiction and pressures for conservation or for change.” (Ibid, p. 146). This is used in this study in that an examination is made if female characters in novels selected exercise their agency and hence take the subject position and at times fall under conditions of oppression such as patriarchal constructs and economy due to which they are subjected to oppression and hence take object position. The aim of the study is not solely to identify the position but to show the implication of instability in the life of female characters.

Furthermore, according to the law of western logic, as Murfin and Ray (2003: 93) write, texts say A not B or B not A. However, deconstructionists contend that “all works defy the laws of western logic, the laws of opposition. Texts not only say A not B or B not A. Rather, they could also say A not A or B not B. Moreover, explaining the difference from within, as quoted in Elam (1994: p. 31), June Jordan puts:

If I, a black woman poet, and writer, a professor of English at a State University, if I am oppressed then we need another word to describe a woman in a refugee camp in Palestine or the mother of six in a rural village in Nicaragua or any counterpart inside South Africa.

From the view noted by Jordan, one can imply that a white woman from middle class in the United States of America may take the subject position and that of a black servant serving that woman may take the object position (for the latter might be brutally oppressed by the former one). This in one way or the other can be reflected in other societies such as in African. For example, a female character may be exploited by another female character (house wife/servant relationship where the female in the second term reference is an object of oppression). Given

such notion of discrepancy, it is unfair to argue that “women” are not oppressed by other women. Here, the oppositional category that fixes all women to object position is rather a construction. That is why deconstructionists argue that the center is not static. That is, even in one of the dichotomies, there are series of deferrals to the extent that one could not determine the end (Elam, 1994).

In this study, based on Kristeva’s (1981), Hekman’s (1990), Butler’s (1990, 1993, 2005), Weedon’s (2003) view of subject/object, it is argued that the subject “self” is subjective. This subjectivity of ‘self’ has an implication for an author, more specifically a novelist. Hence, a narrator focalizer and a character focalizer are subjective too when serving as a mouth speech of authors. So, it is argued that the female character narrated or focalized is not free of gendered representation. Hence, in this study it is attempted to show the gendered representation of a female character as represented by narrators, narrator focalizer and characters focalizer in the selected novels. By doing so, the study attempts to examine how female character oscillates in the continuum between the oppositional category subject/object.

3.2.4 Deconstructing Institutional Motherhood

The subject of motherhood has received little scholarly attention until recently, when the second wave feminism began to challenge some of the biologically determinist assumptions about it. Regarding this, Andrienne Rich (1977: p. 11) has the following to say:

The one unifying, incontrovertible experience shared by all women and men is that months-long period we spent unfolding inside a woman’s body ...most of us know both love and disappointment, power and tenderness, in the person of a woman... Yet we know more about the air we breathe, the seas we travel, than about the nature and meaning of motherhood.

However the notion of motherhood is marginalized in patriarchal discourses, feminist approaches ranging from Kate Millett's location of the family and mothers within it as the chief site of oppression of women (1977) to Adrienne Rich's celebratory vision of motherhood, freed from patriarchal constraints (1977), challenges assumptions about motherhood, including its idealization within culture. The discourse of motherhood contains within it both transformative and repressive potential. For a feminist critic, it is interesting to study the ways in which the idealization of motherhood has been deployed at different historical paradigms to reaffirm the patriarchal framework or to question its dominance from a resisting perspective.

The issue of motherhood, as Chakravarty (2008) writes, is valorized in feminist literary theory in the mid-1970s in spite of a continuing critique of the socially proscribed role of the mother. Feminist theoreticians who are influential in this area are Adrienne Rich, Nancy Chodorow, Juliet Mitchell, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray and several others. For example, Adrienne Rich (1977: p. xv) differentiates between "two meanings of motherhood, one superimposed over the other: the potential relationship of any woman, to her powers of reproduction and the children; and the institution, which aims at ensuring that potential –and all women- shall remain under male control". Here, Rich notes two notions of motherhood. The first one is that which arises from lived experience that which a woman is beneficiary of. The second one is that which patriarchal institution manipulates. She also notes that motherhood is a notion which creates, for a mother and daughter, an atmosphere of both "mutuality and ...painful estrangement" (Rich, 1977: p. 226). Rich also discusses the contradictory notion of the feelings experienced in relation to a mother-"power and tenderness" (Rich, 1977: p: 21). In exploring

how mothers feel, Rich (Ibid: p. 21) goes on to describe this positive/negative (ambivalence) as felt by mothers-as as well as about them: “My children cause me the most exquisite suffering of which I have any experience. It is the suffering of ambivalence: the murderous alteration between bitter resentment and raw edged nerves and blissful gratification”. Here, she experiences contradictory feelings, usually categorized as the opposition of love and hate. The ambivalence she experienced is more complicated. Rich also focuses on mother-daughter empathy. Therefore, her view of motherhood as both “mutuality” and “estrangement”, “bitter resentment” and “blissful gratification” are a spaces which needs to be examined in critical discourses.

Julia Kristeva also writes on the role of a woman in the continuity of a species to continue her role in reproduction. In her famous article: **Women’s Time**, she begins her argument of a woman’s role in reproduction, quoting the famous phrase by James Joyce: “Father’s time, mother’s species”. This is to argue that women play a central role in the continuation of species.

After giving a brief conception of ‘cyclical and linear’ time, she classifies feminist movement in to three generations: of which the second generation feminists once again embrace the cyclical time by romanticizing “motherhood” which the first generation feminists leave aside. Their romanticization has to do with separatism, establishing a knowledge and practice excluding male domain of thought. However, Kristeva argues against this by saying: “This tendency has its extreme, in the refusal of the paternal function by...single mothers can be seen one of the most violent ...and one of the most fervent divinization of maternal power-all of which but trouble the entire legal and moral order” (Kristeva, [tran. by Jordine and Blake,] 1981: p. 30). She also notes that this generation took the notion of maternity to the extent of considering it as a religion. Kristeva did not deny the possibility of fulfillment in having a child

or bringing the child to this world. However, she recommended the coming generation, which she called the third generation to be conscious of the ambiguous space in the notion of motherhood. The tendency developed by the second generation women, as Kristeva and other feminists believed, could lead to the possibility of establishing another evil to fight the existing evil. For the second generation feminists neglect to be mothers in heterosexual socio-cultural framework. Contrary to their views, Kristeva recommends the third generation feminist notion that accepts motherhood with all its contradictory position for the continuation of a species of human beings. The notion of 'contradiction' makes both Rich (1977) and Kristeva (1981) share a similar view on the issue of motherhood.

It is based on the aforementioned moral order that Kristeva recommended the third generation feminism to focus both on the production and the reproduction. Regarding the third generation feminism, Kristeva (1981:: p. 31) had the following to say:

The arrival of a child ...leads a mother into the labyrinth of an experience that, without the child, she would only rarely encounter: love for the other. Not for herself, nor for the identical being, and still less for another person with whom "I" fuses (love or sexual passion). But the slow, difficult and delightful apprenticeship in attractiveness, gentleness, forgetting oneself; the ability to succeed in this path without masochism and without annihilating one's affective, intellectual, and professional personality-such would seem to be the stakes to be won through guiltless maternity. It then becomes a creation in the strong sense of the term.

One can examine the complexity which exists in birthing. On the one hand, it seems painful to passively accept by 'forgetting oneself' and by developing 'guiltless' moral ground in the middle of the symbolic order filled with "egocentrism". This seems to be what Kristeva proposes for the third generation feminists so that human species continues regardless of the 'anguish and suffering' in motherhood. Most contemporary postmodern feminists such as

Benjamin (1990), Hekman (1990) and Chakravarty (2008) and many others echo her notion of motherhood.

Motherhood is one of the issues that African feminists underscored. Juliana Mukuchi Nfah-Abbenyi, in her article “**Gender, Feminist Theory, and Post-Colonial (Women’s) Writing**”, in Oyewumi (2005: p. 266) noted that motherhood is the theme that runs through the writing of many African women writers, and they question whether women are merely forced mothers and/or sexual objects. She, citing Emecheta and Ba, showed how the presence and absence of children can have a devastating effect and/or empowering effect on women’s lives. When discussing the specificity of motherhood in African feminist context, she argued that “...the critique of motherhood (that women are forced mothers)..., despite its emphasis on women and their rights over their bodies, can be problematical to most African women simply because motherhood and family historically represented different experiences and social practices to Western and African women”. Similarly, one of the three varieties of victimhood that Huma Ibrahim, in her article, “Ontological Victimhood” in the book entitled **The Politics of (M)othering**, is “Institutional motherhood”. This type of victimhood promotes the ideology of childbearing and childrearing in such a way that it serves only the interest of man where too many children are favored at the expense of mothers (Nnaemeka, 1997: p. 138). On the contrary, as to the empowering impact of motherhood to African women’s lives, Nfah-Abbenyi, noted that, “Whereas many Western women may view multiple childbirth as both oppressive and restrictive, (to their work, careers, economic well-being, et cetera), most African women find empowerment in their children”. They use their status as mothers to challenge some of the demands their culture places on them. As cited in Nfah-Abbenyi, Emecheta and Ba, for example, illustrated three things that stood in favour of African woman. Two of them included

her status as a mother and her status as a mother of sons, since her sons were the direct heirs to the family property Oyewumi (2005: pp. 266-7). From the views aroused so far it is possible to note that motherhood in Africa, from African feminist context, is constricting and /or empowering.

What makes the life of the African mother more complicated is when institutional motherhood is interrelated to other institutions such as marriage. In a patriarchal society, marriage (especially for the girl) is practiced according to the interest and choice of the father and the mother who have internalized patriarchy. If she refuses, what awaits her is exile due to which she suffers from homelessness. In the African context, Nfah Abenyi (1997: p. 39), contends that:

...pregnancy legitimizes marriage. Where pregnancy and reproduction make a woman a woman, and a man a man, motherhood domesticates a woman. Motherhood is so ingrained in women's psyche that the alternative to the loss of a child is the loss of self, of gender and of identity. Such gender relationships that are structured in a society for the interest of man make a woman suffer very much to prove her womanhood.

Therefore, most African feminists argue that family, marriage and patriarchal notion of motherhood (together with the values embodied in it such as childbearing, childrearing, and the joy of motherhood) are institutions that create a complex web that victimizes an African woman.

Though in some situations, when it is patriarchally constructed, motherhood is oppressive, most African feminists give due emphasis to it. As Humm (1994) notes, in fictional representation of African women, fertility is an important constituent. It gives African women both a sense of identity and a social status. Humm compares the western position of motherhood and that of

African feminists quoting Steady's view that "The importance of motherhood and the evaluation of the child bearing capacity by African women is probably the most fundamental difference between the African woman and her Western counterpart (Humm,1994: p. 198).

The reality in Ethiopia is not far from the experience of African women. On the one hand, having a child empowers her to survive in patriarchally appropriated socio-historical paradigms. On the other hand, the sacrificial role she plays demands her body, her time and her money, mostly in situations when she is a widow. A similar experience can work for Oromo woman. For example, Kuwe, as seen in the introductory part of this study, pointed out that the contribution of Oromo women is "devalued and unrecognized" (1998: 155). One of the basic roles marginalized as she contends is the reproductive role that millions of Oromo women played as socializing agents of Oromo people.

To sum up, in recent feminist trends, the problem of defining motherhood has become more complicated. The institutionalization of motherhood that centers the interest of patriarchal value, is a notion which has to do with hegemonic impulse behind patriarchal discursive formulations. On the one hand, there is a moral issue that should center on the continuation of species. On the other hand, there is tendency to obsessively exploit a woman's body for child bearing. For example, some women die because of bearing many children. Because of the prevalence of these notions of motherhood, Chakravarty (2008: p. 39) proposes two alternatives for a feminist study in relation to motherhood. The first one is resistance to the patriarchal construction of "institutional motherhood", "involving the dismantling of the stereotypes". The second one is, "the ambivalence of the maternal idea, while rendering it resistant to easy definition of analysis, also contains the possibility of reactivation in an emancipator framework and offers a particularly productive area for the exploration of a new theories of subjectivity". Rich and

Kristeva also complement Chakaravarty's view in that the former argues that motherhood as an experience is both "mutuality" and "estrangement"; "bitter resentment" and "blissful gratification"; and the latter argues that motherhood needs to be accepted with all its contradiction by the third generation feminists. What is more, according to most African feminists motherhood has both "devastating and empowering effects" on women's life. In this study, motherhood is used as both empowering and constricting. Hence, in this study, the subjectivity of motherhood, as an "ambiguous space", to borrow Chakravarty's term, has been focused on as a framework of analysis.

3.2.5 Deconstructing Knowledge

In western philosophy, women are deemed incapable of philosophy, which is to say of rational thought. Toril Moi, in her article "Patriarchal Thought and the Drive for Knowledge," (in Teresa Brennan, 1989), quotes Hegel's view of woman as:

Women may be capable of education, but they are not made for the more advanced sciences, for philosophy and certain forms of artistic production which require universality. Women may have ideas, taste, and elegance, but they do not have the ideal. The difference between men and women is like that between animals and plants; men correspond to animals, while women correspond to plants because they are more of a placid unfolding, the principle of which is the unity of feeling. When women hold the helm of government, the State is at once in jeopardy, because women regulate their actions not by the demands of universality, but by arbitrary inclinations and opinions.

According to Hegel, there are areas of education that women are incapable of performing. These areas include hard sciences, "philosophy" and "certain forms of art". Hegel's view of women's education also implies that the level of comprehension of women cannot go beyond their locality, not "universalistic". Arguing against this, Lois Tyson (2006) contends that

patriarchal system of thought perpetuates the sexism of education by labeling women that they are incapable of hard sciences such as engineering, physics and mathematics.

The notion of knowledge for African people, like the experiences of some Far East Asian countries such as India, as noted in Richards and Chew (2010) is rooted in orality. Oral literature forms an integral part of the community's daily life. It often, reflects the fears, anxieties, visions, aspirations and fantasies in the community's collective unconscious. African oral traditions not only carry knowledge and experience which are constructive but also carry ideologies which are constrictive and oppressive that are hierarchical and/or oppositional. For instance, in view of knowledge, in oral traditions of some societies, women are labeled to be irrational, nonknowledgeable and uneducated whereas men are rational, knowledgeable and educated. This, in turn can also be echoed by systems of production such as literary texts. However, according to feminist deconstructionists, the oppositional system of thought that assigns the gender category into first and second term sequences, if critically examined can be deconstructed by evidence from the text itself where women show their lived experience as knowledge as a base for their rationalization.

What is inculcated in the oral tradition of most African societies is that women are not knowledgeable. However, African feminist critics such as Nneameka (1997) write that African women share their knowledge through stories. So, be it literary/oral, be it told by man/woman, in both terms of categories, knowledge can be transferred. So, if a woman defends herself using lived experience, transfers wisdom using oral genre and resist male domination using her lived experience that can be a knowledge.

Florence Stratton (1994) is a postcolonial critic who studied the novels of African women writers such as Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Bâ. According to her, one of the themes of some African female writers is women and education. Women characters are depicted in the novels while aspiring for formal education, or while terminating their education, or being discouraged not to pursue their education. In her study, African women are more likely relegated to “irrational” and “emotional” images. However, the question worth mentioning is, if edification is the sole standard of measurement for a person to be rational, logical and influential. Stratton, based on her studies of the African women writers argues that one can learn through her own life experience based on which she can resist, defend, subvert beliefs, ideologies and even the sexism of education through life experience and/or defeated or victimized by the notions (Stratton, 1994 : pp. 8, 75, 88).

3.3 Conclusion

So far, attempts have been made to develop the theoretical framework to be used in this study. Feminist deconstructionist utilize decentering or destabilizing strategies to examine critically the representation of women in literary texts to unravel the fact that the binary opposition is a false construct. That is, feminist deconstructionist theory is useful to feminist criticism in helping one to see the ways in which patriarchal ideology is often based on the false opposition of categories because sometimes the oppositions is not fixed. In this study, feminist deconstructionist is used as an approach for it enables us to find the ways in which a literary work implicitly reinforces or debunks the patriarchal ideology. Hence, the activity of feminist deconstructionist is to unravel contradictions, continuous conflict and uncertainties in a given text.

Feminist deconstructionist literary approach is used to identify attempts made by the text to keep its unity and coherence and how the text deconstructs itself by evidence from the marginal elements in terms of notions such as woman's body, subject/object, motherhood as institution/experience and knowledge. Catherine Belsey's (1983), Butler (1990, 1993, 2005), Ruthven's (1994), Nnameaka (1997) and Chris Weedon (2003) models will be used as a framework of analysis. Moreover, how a woman's body is the center of subjectivity for it is deconstructed for several purposes will be studied based on Sara Mills (1995) model of stylistic analysis. Based on the theoretical framework developed analysis is made in the subsequent two chapters. Hence, in the next chapter, the first two novels *Hawwii* and *Kuusaa Gadoo* are analyzed from feminist deconstructionist approach.

CHAPTER FOUR

FEMINIST DECONSTRUCTIONIST READING OF *HAWWII* AND *KUUSAA GADOO*

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the background of the study, literature review and theoretical framework, the approach employed in the analysis of the texts selected is deconstructionist critical approach. More specifically, feminist deconstructionist reading has been used. The approach is used to show how female characters are depicted in a contradictory ways in relation to themes such as institutional motherhood, subject/object dichotomy and knowledge. Feminist deconstruction is also used to show how a woman's body is depicted as a fragment in the texts under discussion. That is, it enables one to know how a woman's body becomes the center of objectification in view of notions such as "beauty myth". Before going into the discussion of these issues the synopsis of the novel has been given.

Synopsis of *Hawwii*

The novel *Hawwii* (Desire), (hereafter *Hawwii*), is about a female character Hawwii (the protagonist, here after Hawwii) who was born in *Nakamte* town in Western Ethiopia. Hawwii was born two years after Lati (the male major character in the novel) with whom she spent her childhood life for they were neighbors and from whom she was rarely separated and whom she loved later on. They began their schooling in the same year and continued up to the secondary education. Meanwhile, Hawwii's family decided to give her in marriage to a seventy-three-years old man without her consent while she was attending her secondary education. She rejected the proposed marriage and escaped to *Finfinnee* (Addis Ababa) to live with Dalasa

who was Lati's relative. Unfortunately, she did not get the whereabouts of Dalasa. Hence, she moved from house to house to survive facing sexual harassment and an attempt of rape. After three years, she was fortunate to join him and began to live with him. However, Amare, who had been Lati's colleague while he had been in Sweden and who was Dalasa's colleague after he came back, was captivated by her beauty and told her that he loved her. When Hawwii refused his request, he intentionally fabricated a report that she had love affair with someone in the city and told Lati's relative the same. The latter insulted her and sent Lati a message that she was not loyal to him. Because it was through Amare that Hawwii sent and received a letter to and from Lati, Amare received letters from both lovers and burnt them so that they could never communicate. This created a barrier between both lovers as a result of which Hawwii developed a suspicion towards her lover. The colleague used his cunning that made Hawwii believe that her lover married a white woman. Then she attempted to commit suicide. Meanwhile, completing his medical education, Lati came from abroad the very morning she attempted to commit the suicide. He arrived at the home of his relative where Hawwii was living, and went to her room. He knocked at the door but she did not respond. Though he did it several times, there was no response from her. Then, they broke the door and saw her lying on the floor. They took her to a hospital where the story ended.

4.2 Feminist Deconstructionist Reading of *Hawwii*

In this section, how both male and female characters are attempted to be described in a similar way is analyzed. After that, when both are separately described (in another episode), how a female character becomes an object of gaze is described. Then how the socio-cultural and economic phenomena force the female character (Hawwii) to oscillate between the oppositional category subject/object is examined. By oscillation it means when the female character at times

attempts to exercise her agency and when the other time she assumes an object position because of the social, cultural and economic forces. An examination of the instability of the position of the female character is not merely to locate her position but to unravel those forces (patriarchal constructs) that make her oscillate in the oppositional category. The valorization of institutional motherhood and the ways in which it is disrupted to show that motherhood is an ambiguous space has been closely examined. Finally, how the attempt is made by the text to establish both Hawwii and Lati on equal footing in terms of the theme of education and how it is deconstructed by evidence from the text itself in that the woman character is marginalized in her achievement in education has been shown.

4.2.1 Binary Opposition

In the novel *Hawwii* there is a tendency to show a similarity between both characters Hawwii and Lati. This analysis is based on Ruthven's view of structural parity and semantic disparity. That is, based on Ferdinand de Saussour's egalitarian notion of binary oppositions Ruthven, has shown a similarity between subjects. He goes on noting that the similarity may not work when it comes to semantic disparity (kindly see the sub-section "binary opposition" under the theoretical framework). Based on this framework, when both characters are examined, they (Hawwii and Lati) are similar when seen from the context of their families. For example, both are from a poor family background (Esayas, pp. 7-11). They are also similar in that, both families get them after longing very much for a child for a long period (pp. 11, 16). Hawwii is the only child that her family gets after they entertain a desire to have a child for a long time. So is Lati (p. 16). As for their education, both get an equal opportunity to begin their education in the same year (p. 28). They are also equally described (p. 30). At the age of adolescence both Hawwii and Lati, develop love towards each other (P. 62, 68). The narrative not only

centers on both characters but also ends when both are in the same room (p. 218). This is how the text attempts to depict both characters as similar (Ruthven, 1994:50).

As seen above, there are attempts made by the text depict both characters in a similar footing. However, the effort made has been deconstructed at several levels. First, it is Lati who is born first, and Hawwii is born two years later. The order seems to be an allusion to the Biblical view that says it is not good for a man to be alone. On the other hand, in most Oromo oral traditions, a baby boy is favoured to be born first and then a baby girl to follow. This is depicted in songs of a ritual ceremony for goddess *maaram* which is discussed in detail under the sub-section “deconstructing institutional motherhood”. This depicts that the text is influenced by religious convention and the prevalent preference for a son. This shows the disparity between both sexes. From such disparities, we can infer that religious and cultural conventions provide a ground outside the text for influencing interpretation. In the next sub-sections, how woman’s body is described as a fragment is analyzed. To this end, in the next section, the description of body of both protagonists Hawwii and Lati has been critically examined.

4.2.2 Deconstructing a Woman’s Body

Sara Mill’s (1995) model of analysis of the physical appearance of characters is used to closely examine the body of characters in *Hawwii*. In the analysis of the body of characters, it is cognizant that one of the alternative readings could be acknowledging that description of woman’s body in a way that it arouses sexual desire to reinforce the theme of romantic love as what Attridge, quoted in Mills (1995: 172) argues for ‘erotic arousal’ (kindly refer to the sub-section ‘Deconstructing a Woman’s Body’ under the theoretical framework). However, as Mills argues against Attridge’s view, in the analysis of the characters body, an attempt is made

to support the former's view and argue that the recurrence of the depiction of a woman's body from narrator's and male character's perspectives perpetuate gendered representations of female characters. It is in this view that an analysis of male and female body are made in this study. The purpose of this section, therefore, is an examination of how both Hawwii and Lati at times are described similarly and the other time differently where in the latter case the female is described as object of gaze. One of the ways to identify gendered way of representing woman's body which Mills suggests is focusing on the body parts of both male and female characters. According to her, if the "anatomical elements" (to borrow Mills phrase) are not proportional between both gender, gendered representation is at work. It is based on her model that the description of the body parts of both characters is examined. To this end, the anatomical elements used in describing both male and female characters have been closely examined. Following that, inference has been made regarding the gendered representation depicted in the construction of a woman's body.

In the novel the physical appearance of both characters (Hawwii and Lati) are described two times. The first description is when both are described similarly. The second description is when they are described separately where the latter will be examined after the analysis of the first description. The following one is when both are described in a similar way. Here is an instance:

Tokkoffaa, bifti isaanii wal fakkaata. Hawwiin hojjaan ishee akka dheerachuu ta'ee dhaabbata gaarii qabdi. Latiinis diimaa dheeraa miidhagaadha. Walumaa galatti, lamaanuu qajeelinni funyaan isaanii, iji, haphinni hidhii, kuulli nyaaraa isaanii hadhoo garaa tokkoo bahan isaan fakkeessa (p: 30).

[For one thing, both physically resembled each other. Hawwii was tall and had a good appearance. Lati too was tall and was handsome. In general,

their noses, their eyes, the thinness of their lips, the thickness of their eyebrows, made them as though they were from the same womb].

In the above description, both male and female characters are described in a similar way that both are beautiful. That is, 'both resemble each other' and both are 'tall'. Moreover, their 'nose', 'eyes', 'lips' and 'eye brows' look as if they are from the 'same womb'. The point is not why both are beautiful. Because they are protagonists in the text the description of both characters is important. However, had the description of the physical appearance is over here, one might have implied that there has been no gendered description of a body as both are described in a similar way. The gendered representation, therefore, is at work when both characters are separately described ones again. The other factor that leads one to observe gendered representation is the roles of a narrator focalizer and male character focalizer. This will be closely analyzed as follows.

As the narrative proceeds, there is a disparity in description of both characters. First, Lati is described through the focalization of the narrator and Hawwii, through the focalization of the character (Lati). The narrator focalizer describes Lati's physical appearance as: "Dhagni guutuu dhaabbanni isaa fi bifti isaa bareedaa ta'ee amala qabeessa kan ta'e Latii kan barbaadan ijoollee dubaraa baay'ee waan ta'eef Hawwiin hinaaffaan ishee marachaa jira." (p: 39). [Many girls want to create friendship with Lati, for his body is graceful and for his appearance and personality are good and for he is handsome; this indeed makes Hawwii envious]. On the other hand, Hawwii is described through character focalizer (Lati) as: "Battalaan lapheen isaa Giwwu! Giwwu! jechuutti ka'e. Taa'aa ishee siree irraa, mudhii qal'atee dheerate, guntuta akka gaanfaa dibichaa, gudeeda argee isa dargagooti itti maraatan dhukkuba isaan dhukkubsatantu isatti darbe." (p: 40). [His heart immediately began to bang. The disease which other boys were suffering from was transmitted to him after he gazed at her buttock, at her waist that was thin

and long, at her breasts that were like a calf's newly growing horn, at her thighs that looked like a ripe orange]. In order to say whether the description of the physical appearance of either the boy or the girl is gendered or not, one needs to examine the lexical items used.

The male character's beauty, as lexical items "grace", 'appearance' and 'handsome' refer to, is not specific to certain parts of his body rather it refers to his body and mind (embodiment). For example, the lexical term 'personality' refers to the internal beauty. Here, both his internal and external parts (body, soul and mind), what Attridge (1988) phrases "the wholeness of a body and mind and soul" is described. This shows that he is described in his entirety. On the contrary, the female character is identified by her physical features such as buttocks, waist, breasts, and thighs. In addition, elements from the natural world –'orange' and 'newly growing horn' are compared to the parts of her body. Her body is depicted to be a fragment composed of a number of separate objects, each of which are considered beautiful in their own right. This implies that those parts of the female character's body assume the qualities of the elements to which they are compared - that is, natural, mild, soft and consumable. Moreover, she is described as she carries 'erotic energy', which is transmittable like a disease.

Of course, many girls are attracted to Lati and he is handsome and has good personality. As male characters get attracted to Hawwii, female characters also get attracted to Latii too. The difference is evident when both are externally described. That is, the anatomical element of the male character is referred to in general terms only once- 'body'. Moreover, his body is compared with no object of any natural world. Instead, he is described both internally and externally. When the lexical items of both characters are compared, no reference to specific anatomical element is made about the male character whereas four specific anatomical elements are referred to describe the woman character. What makes the description of the

female character gendered as compared to the male one is four anatomical elements are used to describe her external parts of her body where as no anatomical element is used to describe the physical appearance of the male character except the lexical element 'body' is referred to. On the other hand, his internal beauty is described where as hers is not.

Although Hawwii is jealous of other females getting attracted to Lati, the latter's body is not compared to other natural objects that give wait to erotic feeling. That is, what makes the erotic mood more intensified is the similes and metaphors used to give further weight to the parts of the female's body focalized such as buttocks, breasts and thighs are compared with 'disease', breasts once again compared with 'newly growing horn of a calf', thighs also once again is compared with 'ripe orange'.

One may argue that she too is jealous of other females getting attracted to Lati because he is handsome. Though she feels jealous because he is handsome, in the description of his beauty, that is, when he separately is described, there is no single body part mentioned that entices an erotic energy in Hawwii nor does the focalization is shifted towards her so that she expresses her feeling by her own other than the narrators comment which rather show the latter's excessive manipulation of an information with regard to the former. That is, enough space is not given to her so that she can express her internal feeling as that of Lati, which she could have done as a youngster. The very absence of her own comment in the erotic communication between the narrator focalizer and character focalizer shows gendered representation. Hence, the lexical evidences (buttocks, waist, breasts and thighs where no single body part of the male character is described)), the mood, the figurative languages (simile and metaphor) the female character described with show the gendered description of the female character's. When both characters are compared, Lati, the male character, is portrayed wholistically whereas Hawwii is

reduced to fragments. Hence, gender inequality is at work when the description of both characters is examined.

In addition, the patriarchal norm, which is inculcated in oral texts, also reinforces what is unraveled so far-the sexist stereotype in the literary text. For example, in an oral poem Mr. Ayana rehearses for Hawwii, an anatomical element, breasts, is used in reference to woman's body. The part of the body is referred as that which falls and that which erects: "Kan dargaggeessi itti gamadu guntutni ishii akka gaafaa yoo dhaabatedha" (p. 96). [What a young man values is the breasts that are erect like a horn". According to him, the woman's breast that has fallen is not attractive. On the contrary, that which is erect is the source of pleasure for a young man. The elder's (Mr. Ayana) view emanates from nowhere, but the sexist stereotype deep rooted in the culture. The character focalizer's gaze, the natural objects the body parts of a woman is compared to, the oral allusion and the elder's comment perpetuate the gendered representation.

Therefore, on the one hand, both male and female characters are described similarly, as seen in the first extract in this sub-section presented above. On the other hand, the gazing of the character focalizer, the natural objects the female character's body parts are compared to and the oral allusion of the elder show that Hawwii is depicted as object of gaze. In doing so, the gendered representation further problematizes the representation of women. That is, one finds it difficult to get a complete image of Hawwii as what is introduced to as is selected body parts.

To conclude, Hawwii is recurrently depicted as an object of gaze by men characters such as Lati (p: 40), the elderly man (p: 96), Chala (p: 122), Hailu (p: 134), and Amare (p: 173). It is as if gaze is circulating as energy or tossed around like a ball among male characters. Therefore,

though the text attempts to describe both characters in a similar way in the first example, this is not maintained in the second description when both characters are described separately. Hence, there is an inconsistency in the description of both characters. What is implied from the inconsistency is that the description of the female character when she is described separately is gendered. Moreover, the recurrence of the gazing of her body by different male characters (Lati, Chala, Hailu and Amare) also reinforces the gendered representation of the female characters body.

4.2.3 Deconstructing Subject/object

This sub-section begins with analysis of the title of the novel *Hawwii*, which refer to ‘desire’ in English. The word ‘Hawwii’ may refer to a content (novel), a subject (female protagonist), an object (where the female character is an object of gaze, an object of chastity, object of marriage by force, etc), or an abjection. How the word refers to each one of the notions is analyzed in detail using evidences from the text. After that, the text’s ideological position, that is, the attempt the text makes to show Hawwii as an object of chastity is examined. Moreover, how the marginal elements disrupt the text’s ideological position in which Hawwii exercises her agency by resisting sexual, patriarchal and racial impositions are critically analyzed. Abjection is another notion in which one observes the instability between the subject/object categories in the novel. This notion has shown that Hawwii at times is in the borderline between the subject and object.

In the novel, Hawwii is depicted as chaste- which is a cultural construction (pp. 136, 170). For example, that she is innocent, that she is loyal, that she loves Lati and that she is highly obsessed to offer her virginity to him (otherwise, if somebody deflowers her she prefers death

than carries such “a taboo”) and that she thinks she cannot live without him show that she makes efforts to be chaste (p:126, 179). She developed a gendered identity, the stereotypical role of being chaste, the idealized value that a woman needs to receive all the challenges and courageously pass through them and eventually attain the romantic love (p: 156). This is what the protagonist attempts to maintain dominantly in the narrative. Secondly, she sometimes tries to repress her sexual desire, which in turn valorizes her passivity (p: 156-158). These evidences indicate that Hawwii is depicted as chaste and passive. This, in turn, shows that Hawwii exhibits to borrow Butlers phrase “gendered identity”, a behavior which she acquires from socio-cultural phenomenon which is an Other (object) that has been developed in Hawwii. This is the text’s ideological position. However, whether the text maintains its unity by limiting her to object position is analyzed as follows.

However, the text attempts the character maintain the object position, it has become deconstructed when Hawwii is depicted to take the subject position. It is important to show the states in which she takes the subject position.

In the novel, there are instances which depict Hawwii exercising her agency and take subject position. In her early childhood, she usually takes leading role that shows that she is attempting to exercise her agency. She is assertive in initiating other children (all of whom are male) to play children’s games. For example, in one of the episodes, she initiates the children, to go to the center of the town to buy a candy (pp: 21-23). Moreover, when her parents decide to give her to the seventy-three years old man, who is married, she keeps on refusing and eventually, speaks to her mother that she can never marry a person who is not her choice. When her mother has become so adamant, Hawwii gets violent and confronts her mother. The episode is described as follows:

Saalfii tokko malee kan isheetti dhaga'ame itti dubbatte. Ni maraate haati ishee gadi ishee qabuufis humna ishee ol itti ta'e. Duratti iyyuu beekaa reebamteef malee aadde Dinsiriin dandeessee hinqabduun turte. Hawwiin nimaraate, lafa irra gangalatte (p. 59).

[Without any respect, she (*Hawwii*) aggressively spoke to her (*Hawwii's mother*). Though the mother tried to calm her down, she got mad and turned beyond the power of her mother. Of course, she used to tolerate her mother's battering; otherwise, Mrs. Dinsiri would not be able to manage her physically. Hawwii was infuriated and rolled on the ground (*italics mine*)].

Here, the mother-daughter relationship of the cherished cultural order is disrupted. Hawwii is no more passive. The lexical and phrasal evidences: "without any respect", "aggressively", "mad" (2 times), show the characteristics of a "bitch" (the norm established by patriarchy). Hawwii, whom the text's convention attempts to portray as coy, which is the characteristic of chastity, is disrupted and she at times is depicted as resistant. Though, most of the time, Hawwii attempts to conform to the norm, preferring silence, when her mother guides her according to the cultural code of conduct, it does not stay fixed with her. As a result, she resists marriage by force and leaves her parents' home and goes to Lati's parents' home and then to her Godmother's home. Finally, she escapes marriage (by force) traveling to the capital city (Addis Ababa). The effort her parents make to keep the cultural order is disrupted by Hawwii when she exercises her "agency": "...namni tokko illee enyummaa ishee otoo hinargiin gidduu isaanii kuttee gara boroo maasii bunaa bakka shaanxaa ishee keesse gadi quphante. (p: 77). [...when she was sure that no one could see her, she walked in between them and went to the backyard where she had keep her bag]. Those she "walks in between' are the people who are busy preparing food and drinks for her wedding ceremony. The people represent those who are in favour of the cultural code and Hawwii's violating the cultural code, represents rebelliousness and deviance. Her "walking in between them" and escaping signifies her

crossing the object position that her family and the culture reserved for and assuming the subject position.

Another situation that depicts Hawwii's sense of determination is her plan to kill the old man if all the attempts she has been making to escape the marriage fails. This is depicted as:

Garuu yaada tokkotu dhufeef. Innis calluma jettee heerumtee erga deemtee booda galgaluma sana yoo gaafa sanas dadhabde guyyoota muraasa bubbultee jaarsicha morma isaa huutee ukkkaamsitee ajjeestee deebistee iyyuun akka waan jaarsi harkatti gaggabee du'ee fakkeessuu akka dandeessu yaada isheetti murteeffatte. Gaafa yaada kana argattu, akka waan ba'aan tokko dudda ishee irraa bu'eetti qaama isheetti dhagahame. (pp. 71-72)

[However, an idea came to her mind. That is, she decided to simply accept the marriage and to hung and to kill the old man if she can, on the same night, or if not in the coming few days and then shout loudly pretending that he was dead after being fainted. When this idea came to her mind, she thought as though a heavy load has been taken off from her shoulder.]

Lexical evidences such as “hung” and “kill” are words that show aggression. In patriarchal system of thought, this type of behavior is attributed to men. However, Hawwii is attempting to break away from psychological prison by building emotional walls of resistance by shifting from what Bell Hooks (1984) calls, the margin (object) position to the center (subject) position. Here, she is depicted as crossing the border of the object position in exercising her agency by getting rid of her enemy through violence which is reserved for masculinity. Therefore, Hawwii is not a female character who passively accepts what is imposed on her, rather resists it with determination and deconstructed the masculine/feminine boundary.

Furthermore, in her stay in the capital city, Hawwii strongly opposes assigning speaking Amharic to the notion of a civilized person and the stereotype that associates speaking a broken

Amharic as a sign of the “uncivilized”. This is when the taxi driver together with travelers laughs at her when she speaks a broken Amharic. The following is the reaction of Hawwii to their laughter:

Amma kan akka kanaatti anatti kofaltan Ammariffa akka Amaaraatti dubbachuu Dhabuu kootiin mitii? Isiniif afaan abba keessaniiti. Utuu isinitu afaan Oromoo caccabsitanii dubbattan ta’ee ani isinitti hin kolfu. Sababiin isaas afaan abbaa keessanii akka hintaane waan ani beekuuf. Garuu amma afaan Amaariffaa wallaaluun koo qaama namummaa koo keessaa hir’uu akkan ani qabutti na lakkaa’uun keessan of tuulummaa Waaqa hinsodaannedha. Afaan halagaatti ani hinkomatamu. Finfinneen biyya abbaa kooti... Lafti isin itti gooftaa taatan kun keenya (p: 130).

[“Are you laughing because I have spoken a broken Amharic? For you it is your mother tongue. Had you spoken a broken Afan Oromo I would have never laughed at you for I knew that it was not your mother tongue. The fact that you consider me as though I am physically disabled simply because of my broken Amharic shows your arrogance. For me, there is no reason why I feel ashamed. I should never be blamed for not correctly speaking somebody’s language...Finfinne is my fatherland. The land on which you have become a master of has been ours.]

Hawwii is a newcomer to the capital city. She even has never gone out alone to the city since she has arrived at Addis Ababa. One wonders from where a girl who has lived a very short period in the city gets such courage to strongly react to people whom she never knows. Despite the fact that she is viewed as an Other, she strongly resists the marginalization and affirms her agency. She does not completely quit about the margin that defines her in binary opposition civilized/uncivilized and self/other but resist them in her struggle to build strong and changing subject for herself. The personal pronoun “ani” in *Afan Oromo* which is equal to the English word “I” recurrently appears in the extract (5 times, the recurrence of the word is counted in the source language). This shows that Hawwii is claiming the subject position. Her reaction depicts the degree to which she is resistant to discrimination and marginalization.

The other notion in which one observes the instability between the subject/object categories is a abject state. In the text, the boundary between the subject and object position has become deconstructed by abject moments. It is important to show the abject moments to see how the boundary between the subject/object is tenaciously demarcated.

For Hawwii, the novel's, perhaps, most shocking abject moment occurs when she hears sad news that her parents are determined to give her (through marriage) to an old man, named Hadji Yusuf. When she hears the news, she is shocked very much. This is because she is crashed between the two forces. First, she has never thought of separation from Lati. Second, the challenges from her family to force her to abide to the cultural convention (the convention that dictates that a daughter should obey her parents' choice as to whom to marry) has become apparent. The moment she hears that news, she becomes 'nervous', 'shocked as though struck by a lightning', 'her body is only a corpse that is hardened as 'dry wood', 'she falls', 'she has no words to utter', 'because of high fever, the sweat on her body runs like a stream of water' (p: 52-53). From these evidences it can be inferred that Hawwii is in abject state. With such feelings, she goes home supported by Lati.

Meanwhile, her mother wonders what has happened to her. By the time she hears the voice of her mother, the narrator reports Hawwii's feelings as follows:

"Sagaleen haadha ishee akka sagalee bineensaa ishee sodaachise. Sagalee diinaa ta'ee itti dhagahame. Ishee jibbiise. Ishee sodaachise. Haadha ishee itti fakkaachuu didde. "Gabgaabbaa, horiif yoon kana na gurgurachuuf qabdi hin fudhatiin haftii?-budaan kun!" (p: 157).

[Her mother's voice scared her as the voice of a beast. She felt that it is the voice of an enemy. She hated it. It seemed to her as if she were not her mother. She murmured: "Perhaps, this greedy woman, might have collected some money to exchange me!- this wicked woman!"].

The lexical elements: ‘beast’, ‘enemy’ and ‘wicked’ signify an image of horror. What is more horrifying is that this image is given to her mother. One wonders if a mother deserves such an image. The mother ought to be the one who shows empathy with her daughter. However, the mother who internalized patriarchy becomes an object of horror to Hawwii and becomes a cause for the latter to develop the state of abjection.

Hawwii at times attempts to repress the abject situation she is by going back in her thought to her past experience. That is she attempts to take a refuge under a past event which is pleasing.

This is portrayed in the following extract:

Guyyaan isaa Masqala ture. Hawwiin yoggaa biyya turte guyyaa akka kanaa warra ishee fi Latii faa wajjin bakka tokkotti damaranii: “...Hiyyoolee daree...” jechuudhaan ganamaan ka’anii abidda Masqalaatti naanna’anii, hincotee, qocqocaatti cuubbatanii cuffachaa farsoodhaan qoma irraa gadi buufachaa, gammachuudfhaan kan ayyaaneffatan sun fuula ishee deura dhufe. (p: 97).

[It was the date of *Maskal* ceremony. It forced Hawwii to detour and to remember those happy days when she had been at her hometown together with her family including Lati’s family that they had built the *damara*, sang a song saying “... ‘Hiyole darie’... woke up in the morning, circled the damara, ate *hanchote* with grind pepper, and drank *farso*] (italics mine).

Among Oromo (especially Matcha Oromo), *Masqala* is one of the major ceremony celebrated. On that day, as described in the extract, special food and drinks are served. Groups of families enjoy the food and drink together. Of course, it is while she is in that small bedroom that she has rented that Hawwii goes back in memory to her past life. It seems appealing to compare the space and time she is in (the present) and the context of the cultural celebration (the past).

Being in the bedroom she has rented, she goes back to her joyful childhood experience by recalling the events of the past. The spatial situation of the present is abject. For example, the bedroom she has rented is very dirty “Qulqullinni sirichaa akkuma qarshii isaati. Ijaan arguuf kan nama sodaachisu (p: 154). [The filthiness of the bedrooms is proportional to its cost. It frightens one to look at it]. The bed is filled with bedbugs, fleas, lice. The room is dusty. It is parted from the next room by chipwood. Every night, next to her bedroom, on both sides, men with bar ladies are busy, at times fighting, screaming, with violent sexual intercourse until she feels in terror that the cheapwood may fall on her. This makes her sleepless and engulfed with horror the whole night (p. 155).

It is from such abject state that she goes back to her experience. On that day, her past joyful experience that she spends at her parent’s home, eating delicious cultural food, drinking local drinks, singing cultural songs, above all the food that her mother prepares comes to her mind. She temporarily returns to a former psychological state, which is not just imagined but re-lived. Here, she returns to her pleasant past experience. Her thoughts are carried away from the abject present difficulty in recalling back her earlier experience in order to avoid the unpleasant realities of her present life.

However, the pleasant situation is temporary because the power of “now” exerts its force on her so that the present state immediately engulfs her. This is depicted in the scene when she goes to the *Maskal* square (where an Orthodox religious festival is celebrated) to forget the unpleasant situation she is currently in. Though she is in the middle of the congregation singing and dancing, she wonders what she is doing in the middle of the people whose lives are filled with joy. This is portrayed as:

Hawwiin yoggaa kana ilaaltu, ‘Isaan hoo guyyaa ayyaanaa guddaa kana gammachuu isaanii muldhisachuuf akkas utaalani sirbu animmoo rakkattun gaddaaf uumamte gammachuu namaa gidduu maal naaf haagodhuuf jedheen dhufe?’ jettee akka nama otoo hinaffeeramiin mana cidhaa kajeellaa dhaqeetti of jajjabeessitee ...(p:158).

[When Hawwii observes the spectacle, she wonders, ‘They dance and bump like this to express their joy, but me, a destitute, created for disgrace, what for am I standing in the middle of these people?’].

She feels that she is the ‘destitute’ in the middle of those who are joyful. The state of abjection, that is temporarily repressed comes out and disrupts the current situation she is in. When she is engulfed by the conditions that scare her, ‘destitute’ and “disgrace”, the abject state further gets intensifies.

There is another episode in which Hawwii regresses to horrible situations. This is depicted in a scene where Hailu captures her and takes her to a bedroom where he attempts to rape her. As a girl brought up in a patriarchal norm, she values virginity highly. However, she is going to lose it to the person she never knows. It is while she is on this state that she goes to the other unpleasant past by regression:

Yoona Hawwiin abdi kutatte. Ni dunuunfatte. Ulfina durbummaa ishee eeggattee jaalalleen ishee Latiin yoo deebi’u, ulfinaana galfata guddaa kana itti kennitee jaalala dhugaa isaaf qabdu mirkaneessuuf kan yaadde abjuu ta’ee itti mulate. Jaalallee ishee hawwii guddaadhaan eegduuf kahuuf jecha haadhaafi abbaa ishee kan rakkatanii ishee guddisan cidha qopheessan gufachiiftee, qaanessitee, gadda guddaa irratti gattee, jalaa milixxee, Finfinnee dhufuun ishee faayidaa dhabuu isaa hubatte. Kun yakka dhiifama hinqabne ta’uun isaa itti dhagahame. Warra ishee irratti yakka kana hundaa raawwattee, kara deemaa nama hinbeekne harkatti ulfina durbummaa ishee gatuusheef gaddite. (pp: 136-137).

[This time Hawwii lost her hope. She closed her eyes. Her source of respect which she planned to give as a gift to Lati as a special offering when he comes became only a dream. She took as criminal acts the attempts she had made to keep her virginity by running from her family,

and refusing the wedding ceremony they organized. She thought that she brought shame to her family, who brought her up and paid many sacrifices by infringing on their happiness. She realized that all attempts she made became futile. She thought it to be a crime that has no excuse. Thinking that she did all these crimes to her family, the fact that she loses her virginity through the person whom she did not know made her disgraced.

As shown in the extract, the present unpleasant incident forced Hawwii to regress to the past experience. This becomes a cause for insecure or unstable sense of self to be relived in Hawwii. When she closes her eyes, Hawwii also is accessed to the “love ethos”, chastity that she tries to abide to. In patriarchal society, when virginity is attached to female identity, by the time a violent man deflowers a female, its effect, more often victimizes the female. For fear of the trauma of the social blame and lack of respect and dignity from her would be partner and her parents, she accepts this cultural representation and accepts it as part of her identity which at times is disrupted. The same situation happens to Hawwii. By the time Hailu attempts to rape her, she thought as if she is robbed of her identity and self worth. As Butler contends, it is because of a normative construction when occurrence that affects virginity comes one’s constructed identity is fractured. That is why, Hawwii betrays herself and narcissistically questions, about her self-worth as lexical evidences from the extract: “lost her hope”, “took as criminal act” and “disgraced” show.

Hawwii is depicted as a depressed person. While her friends are singing and dancing (at a marriage ceremony that takes place two weeks or more before the date of her marriage), she limited herself to her bedroom and indulged in depression. When they frequently come to her bedroom to see if she feels happy and when they show her the dowry and bride clothes, she shows no interest for no object can satisfy the depressed Hawwii.

As the story of the novel goes forward, more abject moments are evident in the novel in relation to the protagonist, Hawwii. In the course of Amare's continuous cunning plan to break the relationship between her and Lati, she writes a letter to the latter that she is ready to welcome him and then depart. The following is the letter she writes to him:

Garuu ati koottuuti ijaan si ilaalee бага nagaan dhufte jedhee anis murtii mataa koo atis niitii kee faranjii wajjin yeroo isa dhumaaf gargar addan deemna. Asiiyis bahi ija kee arguu hin barbaadu yoo kan jettu taates asii deemee deebi'ee dhufee akka ani si dubbisuuf guyyaa dhufu qofaa Dalasaatti naaf dhaami. Innis dhaamsa kee natti himuuf yoo fedhii qaba ta'e (p. 195).

[But, let you come back so that I see you with my naked eyes, welcome you and take my own decision as you will live with your wife where we never see each other anymore. Or, if you do not want to see me here (at Dalasa's home) for I can leave this place and come back to welcome you only on the date when you come, send me a message through Dalasa the date on which you will come, provided that he is willing to tell me].

In the above passage, she appears to be courageous and passionate enough to welcome Lati. She even suspects Dalasa that he may not tell her when Lati comes. One may appreciate her courage for Lati does not deserve such reception (from her perspective who concluded that he has already married) from his true lover who has gone through several trials to be chaste. The chastity, indeed, is the outcome of the social order; the world of "regulation and control". Her attempt to receive him together with his wife is the social convention that dictates the virtues of a heroine. One may wonder why she becomes so passionate to this extent and hence may conclude that her love for him is one of self-sacrifice.

However, as the story progresses, when Dalasa tells her the date on which Lati would come, the whole situations are abruptly changed. Her response to the message contradicts with what she writes to Lati in the above extract. That is, when she hears the report that Lati will come the next day, because she already has heard a fabricated report that Lati married a white woman,

she decides not to welcome with a flower in her hands, which signifies the love she has for him. Rather, she decides to offer him her corpse which is rather abject (a corpse is something that evokes a state of horror for the one who sees it): “Akkasii? Hawwiin niitii isaa wajjin Latiin yoggaa dhufu eegdee ijaan argitee gubachuurra utuu hin argiin lubbuu ishii of keessaa baastee reefi ishee akka isaaniin simatu gochuu qabdi. Eeyyen kanuma!” (p. 199). [“Is that the case? Rather than waiting for his coming and being consumed by the fire of jealousy, Hawwii had better commit suicide so that her corpse would welcome them. Yes, that’s it!”] The corpse, as Kristeva writes is an object that inflicts abject state. It reminds a person who sees it his/her eventual death. In the extract, it is depicted when she asks and replies herself: “Is that really the case?...Yes, that’s it!” Initially, her intention is to welcome the married couple and wish them a good married life. However, she abruptly changes her mind and decides to offer them her corpses. The corpse in this case is an abject. As Kristeva (Oliver, 1997: p. 232) puts it, “The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject”. Had she denied her individualistic urges (such as not to miss Lati) she ought to have welcomed the couple. However, for her, this is trying something an impossibility. As a person who loves Lati obsessively, she could not have courage to do so. That is why, though she initially promises to welcome them, because the power she can never explain from within (unconscious) what Butler calls “unspeakable”, “unnamable” and “my foreignness to myself” overwhelms her, she decides to contaminate Lati’s and his wife’s wedded life by offering them her corpse-which is abject. One wonders why she abruptly changes her mind in this way. It is in these contradictory situations that the abject state comes to surface, that is, her offering them her corpse. That is, the change of mind seems to show that she develops deep hatred towards their relationship. Secondly, since she comes to realize that all attempts she makes so far

(chastity, the desire to be loved) have been not working-all the social and cultural codes could not control the force that comes as a result of state of abjection, she hates herself and hence wants to expel it. This is also depicted in the final letter that Hawwii writes to Lati. A letter is the only mechanism through which both lovers communicate. The repressed core issues come out through letters. This makes Hawwii to re-live for she shifts the senses of 'abandonment', 'isolation' and 'low self-esteem' into her lover through letter as:

Latii kun anaaf boona! Siif garuu qaaniidha. Bara dargaggummaa koo, bara hiriyyaa koo wajjin kolfee xabadhee itti gamadu rakkinaan, dhiphinaan fi gaddan dabarsen jira. Anis si eegee akka ijoollee dubra jaalallee isaanii wajjin gamadanii si wajjin gammaduuf kan ani hawwiin si eegaa ture hawwiin koo dhugaa ta'uu hindandeenye. Haadhaafi abbaa koo biyya dhalatanii guddatanii dullooman keessatti isaan qaanessaa uffata gaddaa isaan uffachiisee kan isaan anaan nama gara biraaf nakennuuf qophaa'an didee seenaa magaala Naqamtee keessatti mul'atees dhagahamees hinbeekne guyyaa gaafa cidha koo otoo sirbamu gammachuu haadhaaf abbaa koo jaalala keef jedheen gaddatti jijjiire. Yakka dhiifama hin qabne hojjedheen jira. Cubbuu isaaniitu na qabe. Abaarsa isaanii malee eebbi isaanii ana bira hinturre. Magaalaa Finfinnee keessattis hamma xalayaa kan siif barreessetti rakkinaaf qorumsa narra gahe jabeenyaan qabsoodhaan keessa bahuuf tattaafiin ani godhe na boonsa. (p. 203).

[Lati, this is a pride for me! However, it is an embarrassment for you. I spent my young age in pain, tension, destitution, rather than with joy, happiness, and laughter. My dream I have waited for you to enjoy love with you, like the girls of my age, could never be realized. I was a cause for the embarrassment of my parents in the place where they were born, grew and became old. I caused them to wear awesome clothing. Because of your love, I resisted their giving me to somebody; I escaped on the date of my marriage and changed the joyful day of my parents to sorrow- an act never heard of and happened before in Nakamte town. I committed an unforgivable crime. I suffered from the sin I committed. What remained with me was not their blessing rather it was their curse. Until I wrote this letter to you, I was proud of the challenges I went through, in the city of Finfinne (*Addis Ababa.*] (Italics mine).

This extract is the plot summary of the novel. As depicted in the extract, the desire for joy, happiness, erotic love, and togetherness are issues repressed in her. By the time she realizes that

these expectation could never be achieved, the gendered identity (all the social and cultural codes) she has acquired could not save her for they are construction. By the time her gender identity is fractured, forces such as ‘loneliness’, ‘pain’, ‘tension’ and ‘destitution’ engulf her. When she realizes that her dream to live with Lati a happy and joyful life is over, those painful experiences such as ‘separation’ and ‘destitution’ engulfs her. Sandwiched between these two force, a state of flux also engulfs her. Hence, it is this state which is an abject state.

In fact, in the letter she writes to Late before this last message (as seen above), she promises to welcome both him and his wife. However, she fails to do so and rather decide to commit suicide. The reason seems to be that she could not tolerate to accept that Lati has married someone. That is, all the attempts she has made to build a strong ego (to welcome him as a person who married someone) is disrupted due to the fact that it is revealed to her that she lost the only person whom she thought would enable her forget her wounds such as abandonment and low self-esteem. All she is left with is nothingness. Here, she is depicted to be in abject state. It is this state that has led her to the object (death). That is why she recurrently uses expressions that are abject such as “married to a husband”, “join the truth”, “dust” as depicted in the following extract:

“Ani amma bakka dhugaan deeme malee dhirsatti hin heerumne... Waaqayyo biyyoo irraa nu uume waan ta’eef biyyootti debi’een jira... Dhagaa boraafadheen biyyoo haammadhee ciiseen jira... Lubbuu koo tursuuf ijibbaata guddaa godhaan ture... Amma garuu ani iddoo dhugaa deemeen jira”. (pp. 203-204).

[The only place I am going to is not to get married to a husband, but to join the truth (*death*)... Because God created us from dust, I am now returning to dust... I am here, to rest on a stone and embrace a dust... All the attempts I made to live were only attempts... But, now, I am going to join the truth]. (Italics mine)

Here, she is an abject in between the subject Hawwii and the object death. She finally accepts that death is her eventual husband: “Hin geesse yeroon Hawwiin dhirsa dhugaa isa bara baraan wallin jirattutti kennamtu.”[Time has come when Hawwii is given to a true husband that lasts forever]. By holding a poison in one hand, she narcissistically rehearses:

“Yaa addunyaa nan si taajjabe.
Si abdadheen abdi si irraa dhabe
Kanfani si jibbe sinjibbe
Meeqaaf fayyaa laatee meeqa dhukkubsite?
Meeqaaf hirriba laatte meeqammoo dhowwate?
Yaa addunyaa nan si taajjabe.
Si abdadheen abdi si irraa dhabe
Kanfani si jibbe sinjibbe (p. 204).

[Alas, the world, shame unto you,
I never ever got hope from you,
Hence, I hated and hated you.
How many did you give health to and how many did you denied?
How many slept and how many are sleepless?
Alas, the world, shame unto you
I never ever got hope from you,
Hence, I hated and hated you].

Here she is in abject state. Kristeva writes that for such a person, the world is meaningless. For her, because she loves Lati very much, losing him is losing everything that is found in the world. For her the meaning of life is life with Lati, sense of togetherness with him and re-unity with him. But, what she has realized is that these things can never be attained by her. Hence, she “hated” the world. The word ‘hate’ (4 times) has recurrently comes in the poem.

In conclusion, the corpse (which is abject) especially exemplifies Kristeva's concept, the breakdown of the distinction between subject/object, the distinction which is that is crucial for the establishment of identity. What one is confronted with when s/he experiences the trauma of seeing a human corpse (particularly the corpse of a friend or family member) is her/his own eventual death made obviously real. Hawwii knows that a corpse is distasteful and horrible. It is something that one cannot dare see it late alone wish to be it. However, Hawwii ironically, decides to be a corpse which she hates. Deciding to be become what she hates, she wants to contaminate their weeded life with her own corpse. As Kristeva (Oliver, 1997: p. 232) puts it, "The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject". Hence, Hawwii though that she has lost Lati. Hence, she lost any interest to anything in the world. Towards the end of the narrative, memory of this past comes to her mind. All attempts she makes to guard her wounds such as 'loneliness', 'pain', 'tension' and 'destitution', are futile. She oscillates between the past and the present for she is engulfed by abjection. She is ultimately determined to marry the "true husband", death.

So far, an attempt has been made to show the text's ideological position, the attempt the text makes to show Hawwii as object of chastity. It has also been shown that Hawwii exercised her agency by resisting sexual, patriarchal and racial impositions. When critically examined, both the subject/object positions are not maintained and, hence, the character is depicted to oscillate between the oppositional categories. Moreover, the abject state has shown the breakdown of the distinction between subject/object that is crucial for the establishment of identity. Hawwii could not maintain that position and hence, depicted as "an orphan" in the world. She is depicted as a character that oscillates between the subject and object position.

4.2.4 Deconstructing Institutional Motherhood

The convention of “institutional motherhood” established in the text is that a mother needs to bear a male child who is favoured by the patriarchal tradition. If not, since it is better than not having, she should give birth to a girl child. Otherwise, her worth as a social being is under question. This is depicted in the novel *Hawwii* as one of the sub-themes of the novel. An attempt is made below to analyze this sub-theme and show how it is deconstructed by evidence from the text itself.

In the Oromo world view, for woman to be barren is to be cursed. One wonders why it is a curse. Having a child is related to a return to regenerating and reproducing one’s own. Therefore, it is so deep-rooted in the psyche of Oromo women that being barren is a curse. The people curse them saying “Ija ijoolleetti si hinfidiin”[Let your eyes never see a child!]. The lexical term “never see” has an extra meaning other than mere seeing. That is to see oneself in one’s own child as the saying in Oromo goes “Ija kootiinan ija koo arge” [I saw my eyes with my own eyes]. The first ‘eyes’ refer to the child but it is metaphorical in the sense that it is the self not the other (child) who is referred to. Therefore, given such a deep-rooted psychological state in Oromo worldview, there might be a force of energy (desire for eternity) as a result of which, as critics such as Kristeva contend, parents have a strong wish to have a child, for having it is having eternity.

Likewise, the desire to have a child is one of the sub-themes in the novel *Hawwii*. At the beginning of the novel, two families- Mrs. Bashatu’s and Mrs. Dinsiri’s families are introduced. These families share something in common. Both families are barren before they get a child in their old age. Before they beget a child, they discuss the issue every time they meet for coffee.

However, some try to guard their “lack” by a projection such as that they are poor even unable to feed themselves. Others take a refuge under tomorrow in the proverb they use: “...bulu cooma” (p. 11) [...the next day comes with “a fatty meat”], which means the next day is prosperous. The metaphor, “a fat meat”, in the proverb shows their optimism. In Oromo culture fat meat is highly valued. It is the diet of a rich family. Therefore, the phrase metaphorically shows optimism. It depicts that their wish to have a child is not over. This desire forces them to take a refuge under tomorrow. Mrs. Bashatu complements this using a proverb “Kan qocaaf kaa’e allaattiin hinfudhatu” (p.11). [An eagle cannot take what is reserved for a tortoise].

To see the extent in which it is ingrained in the psyche of a woman it is possible to see the reaction of Mrs. Dinsiri to Mrs. Bashatu’s child. This is depicted in the following extract from the novel.

Aadde Bashatuun maqaaf deesse malee mucaan yoo ofirratti fincaayee bobba’es kan irraa haxooftee itti uwistu addee Dinsiriidha. Haati Latii yoo mucaa ishee yaadde mee fidi aadde dinsirii koo nan hoosisa jechuudhaan malaan harkaa fuuti. “Amma mee yaa Bashaatu beela’e yoom siiin jedhe.” jettee itti aarti. Gaaf tokko tokkommoo yeroo aadde Bashaatuun harkaa fudhattu guyyaa guutuu boo’aa ooltee ittiin ooddi. “Ati maal na goote maaramiitu walnucaashise” jechuudhaan qeeqxi...Latiinis yeroo aadde Dinsirii argu jaalala irraa kan ka’e akka haadha isaatti harka isaa afarsee itti fiiga. Yeroo kana aadde Dinsiriin ol fudhattee, dhungattee fi baattee yogгаа wajjin xabattu baay’ee nama raja. “Ani maal si godhuu?Goofaa koo? Si liqimsuu? Yee?” yeroo ittiin jettu, innis ‘Ye...Yee...Hee! Hee!’ jechaa gorora isaa yeroo ilkaan ishee fulduree lamaan gidduu gadi baasee kolfu nama marara. (p. 16)..

[Mrs Bashatu’s role to take care of the child was just nominal, for who cleaned both his faeces and urine and dressed him was Mrs. Dinsiri. If Lati’s mother wanted to carry the child, she collected him from Mrs. Dinsiri with a pretext that she would feed him with milk from her breasts. Otherwise, Mrs. Dinsiri would never let her take the child. She expressed her contempt saying “Bashatu, when did he say that he is hungry?” Sometimes when Mrs. Bashatu took the child away, she was weeping the whole day. And she complained saying, “There is nothing wrong with you, it is ‘goddess maaram’ who made me ill-fated.”... When Lati saw Mrs.

Dinsiri, because of his love for her, just like his mother, he rushed towards her waving both hands. One wondered when Mrs. Dinsiri grabbed, carried and kissed him. One could be astonished when she asked him saying, “What do I do to you, my darling? Shall I swallow you? Yee...?”, when he dropped his mucus in between his only two front tooth and responded, “Ye...Ye...Hee...!Hee...!].

By repressing her state of barrenness using the defense mechanism (denial), she makes herself busy taking care of the child. She knows that the child belongs to Mrs. Bashatu. But she does not want to accept that. That is she denies her bareness and Mrs. Bashatu’s fertility. Therefore, to repress the sense of bareness, she tries to guard using denial. The more she takes care of the child denying that the child does not belong to Mr. Bashatu, the more she gets relieved by transferring her lack on the former. The act of transferring is depicted in a way that she gives a maximum care to the child: “Mrs. Bashatu’s role to take care of the child was just nominal for who cleans both his faeces and urine and dresses him is Mrs. Dinsiri.” The more she possesses the child, the more she feels that she has a child and that Mr. Bashatu is bare. Hence, she transfers her bareness to Mrs. Bashatu. “... just like his mother he rushed towards her... ‘Rushing’ and sense of getting attracted to a mother is not out of one momentary encounter for the child, it rather is after series of motherly care that Mrs. Dinsiri has given him that shows such senses love. It is by doing so that she transfers her lack of child to Mrs. Bashatu.

An important point is that, when Mrs. Bashatu takes the child with the pretext that she would feed him with milk from her breast, what is repressed in Mrs. Dinsiri comes out and disrupts the defense she attempted to be guarded by. The core issue, barrenness engulfs her and she projects her lack to ‘goddess *maaram*’ as: “Sometimes when Mrs. Bashatu took the child away, she was crying the whole day. She complains saying, “There was nothing wrong with you, and it was ‘goddess *maaram*’ who made me ill-fated.” Mrs. Dinsiri oscillates between the core issue (barrenness) and multiple defenses (transference, projection and denial.

Why it is deep-rooted in women's psyche as such is important for analysis. Lack of a child is a trauma for these families. When cursed they are traumatized (p. 8). When asked where their children are, they project it on to their destiny "...anaaf Bashaatuun yaaddoo kanaan rafnee hirribni nu fudhatee hinbeeku." (p. 13) [...I and Bashatu had never slept, but, we were very thoughtful about our situation"]. This statement shows that they are highly depressed by lack of a child. Mrs. Dinsiri reflects her grief of barrenness on the birth ceremony when Mrs. Bashatu has given birth to a child:

Yaa maaram hundaaf giiftii rakkoo kiyya naaf hiiki
Yookaan ilma naa kenni Beekaattan moggaafadha
Yookaan durba naa kenni Beektuuttan moggaafadha
Yookan du'a naa kenni waa'ee koon obbaafadha.(p. 15)

[*Maaram*, goddess of all, solve my dilemma
Either give me a boy child I name him Beka
Or give me a girl child I name her Bektu
Or 'Give me a death' I get relieved]

Before she sings the song of prayer, she attempts to distance herself from people and situations that are liable to make her anxious by steering up what is repressed in the unconscious before she is invited to the song of prayer, by making herself busy in the kitchen and serving food to the guests (p. 14). However, her attempt to guard her painful experience does not last long and when she joins the chorus to sing a song of the birth ceremony the painful experience is relived.

Unfortunately, she has been given a chance to address her problem for the custom dictates that a barren woman addresses her grief to the commonly believed goddess *maaram*. It is here that what she attempts to repress comes out. It seems important to examine the three lexical words

that Mrs. Dinsiri mentioned as a choice: 'boy child', 'girl child' or 'death'. A woman wishes to have a boy child as a primary choice because the existing patriarchal system values it. If the first option is denied, she is ready to accept the second one. Of course, it is the sexist stereotype that prevails in the society that relegates having a baby girl to the secondary position. For feminists, especially, third generation feminists, if a mother desires to have a child, she desires to have it without being gender specific. Gender specifications are the product of patriarchal values (Oliver, 1997: p. 367). The last chance is, since not having one of the two is equated to nothingness, Mrs. Dinsiri chooses "death". Because if one has no child to support him/her in his old age one's life is destined to misery and death.

In the choices the woman makes, we can see the complex agency/victimhood, subject/object and culture/nature binaries. As indicated above, the patriarchal system values having "a baby boy" as a primary choice. When the lives of both characters (Lati and Hawwii) are compared, it is the former who is in the safest side for the tradition favours him. However, Hawwii is an Other in the eyes of this tradition. That can be the reason why the woman in her rehearsal begs a "boy child". She rehearses this because she knows what follows after having a baby girl.

The other important point is why Mrs. Dinsiri addresses her prayer to *maaram* so that she gives her the second choice (a baby girl). Mrs. Dinsiri wants to escape the blame that the tradition imposed upon her of giving birth to a boy child. Although initially she appears to desire a child of any sex, when the position she takes after getting a baby girl is examined, it is found to be problematic. When she gets the baby girl, she decides to exchange her for economic and social value. The scenario in which she rehearses the poem shows that it is not her intention to do so. However, being trapped by another patriarchal trope, she is determined to exchange her daughter for those values.

The consequence of exchanging her daughter, the liability she paid all along her life for bearing a “baby girl” and the advantage of the values of institutional motherhood, from patriarchal perspectives in creating a difference between women themselves can be seen in the following scene. At the beginning of the novel, the text attempts to depict Mrs. Dinsiri and Mrs. Bashatu equally. For example, both are married; both are leading poor family life; both are barren and have a very strong desire to have a child but after sometime they get one child each, the children of both women get access to education.

When both women are examined from the point of view of deconstructive model ‘the B not B’ as explicated by Murfin and Ray (2003), they are not equal as the text attempts them to be equal. Hawwii, the protagonist, who is Mrs Dinsiri’s daughter, drops her education and escapes marriage by force. Then, Mrs. Dinsiri does not know the where- about of her child. Even if she gets a child, paradoxically, she lost her. This arises, as Ruthven (1994: p. 25) comments, from the complex interlocking of economy and patriarchy. On the one hand, Mrs. Dinsiri wants to get a benefit from the old man who is rich. On the other hand, she wants to be respected for her daughter would be married to a person who has a large fortune, the marriage ceremony that she thought would be the first of its kind and would add a social prestige for her. However, ironically, she is denied all the expectations, including her child- the only daughter. After losing her only child, all she is left with is conflict, perplexity, guilt and disease: “Haati Hawwii ega gaafa sanaa dhukkubsattee mana wal’aansa fayyaa ciistee, waldhaanamtee baatee kana booda dhukkubsattuu taate.” (p. 17) [Hawwi’s mother, beginning from that date on wards, was hospitalized and though treated and left hospital, she remained a patient.]. This is after Hawwii escaped marriage by force. This, indeed, depicts the ambiguous space of motherhood and the oppressive nature of institutional motherhood.

Although there are notions such as love, care and sympathy, they are disrupted by the social order. For example, though Mrs. Dinsiri has affection for Lati, she later on hates him. This is because, after he has grown up, he falls in love with her daughter (Hawwii). Mrs. Dinsiri, after she discovered his attachment in love with her daughter, she shifted her attitude towards him. When her attitude of early mothering is compared with that of events after the children are fully grown up, there is a dramatic shift. It is here that an economy as a force influences the woman. Moreover, social force also influences her to change her attitude towards him. That is, she wants her daughter to get married to a rich person so that she comes out of poverty and has a social respect. Therefore, Mrs. Dinsiri is not a simple stereotype but a woman who exhibits different characteristics in different contexts. As the narrative proceeds, notions that she develops initially such as love, care and sympathy are threatened by patriarchal values. Though threatened, it does not mean that she is totally devoid of those affects. Hence, Mrs. Dinsiri is “subject in process” to use Kristeva’s concept; who oscillates between the ‘semiotic and the symbolic’. On the one hand, she is endowed with “preservative love” that arises from labour and gestation period which Kristeva associates to the ‘semiotic’ and the social and economic urges which the patriarchal ideology values over the semiotic ones (Hekman, 1990). From this we can imply that the position a female takes as a human being is a complex space. This makes the notion of motherhood, from the contemporary feminist perspective, an ambiguous space.

On the contrary, Mrs. Bashatu, who has given birth to a boy child, is fortunate in several ways. First, her child successfully completes his secondary education. Then, he gets a sponsorship to pursue his medical study in Sweden. Here, during those times, it is rare to have a child who is going to be a medical doctor. Mrs. Bashatu seems to enjoy her hope and hence gets satisfaction in giving birth to a boy child. The existing patriarchal value kept her in an advantageous

position. It seems not difficult to infer the economic and social status the woman would enjoy after her child completes his education and serves as a medical doctor in 1950s and 1960s. This shows the fact that in a patriarchal society, some women are at an advantageous position where others are economically and socially oppressed. Mrs. Dinsiri is depicted to be oppressed by patriarchal values such as social and economic forces which are masculine values. Though, patriarchal value works as a mastermind, some women get an advantage from that and others are suppressed by those women who internalized patriarchy. Hence, hierarchy is at work. There is patriarchal ideology at the top and then there are women who internalized patriarchy next to that (in the middle) and there are oppressed women at the bottom where disparity is observable within the same sex. This depicts that 'binaries' are not static i.e. the binary oppositions that keep the woman always in the second term reference, cannot work for all women. That is, when a mother who bears a son enjoys supported by him in which case her social and economic statuses are changed due to which she exercised her agency, the other female (Mrs. Dinsiri) not only fail to get the economy and the social respect, but also lost her only daughter when the latter is persecuted to Addis Ababa. Therefore, though the text attempts to portray both woman characters equally, it is deconstructed because both women are depicted to be not equal. That is, in a patriarchally oriented family, all women are not equally advantageous. This indeed questions the ultimate power of patriarchy in the society that it is to the advantage of men.

No matter how the text attempts to keep its unity by valorizing traditional, passive, victimized motherhood, in the novel, evidences from the marginal elements such as the aforementioned oral poems, portray that being a mother is but an ambiguous space which no longer could be codifiable in terms of traditional or idealized societal norms or "institutional motherhood". Andeirich Rich (1977: p. 226) asserts the centrality of mother-daughter relationship: "This

catharsis ... distorted, misused- is the great unwritten story [...]. The materials are here for the deepest mutuality and the most painful estrangement”. So far, how is motherhood depicted as an ambiguous space has been analyzed. In the subsequent section, how the text deconstructs itself by evidences from the marginal elements such as gender preference and achievement in education have been analyzed.

4.2.5 Deconstructing Knowledge

In this sub-section the contradictory notion of the representation of knowledge with regard to Hawwii and Lati and its implication to the gendered representation are critically examined.

Lati and Hawwii begin their education in the same year. When they begin, they join the same grade. Though both characters pursue their education in the same year and join the same grade, while they are in grade 1B (what is now called KG1 [kindergarten one]), Lati gets a double pass to 1A (KG2). The authorial narrator describes the event as “Utuu akka kanaan barumsa isaanii hordofanii Latiin barumsa isaatti jabaab sababii ta’eef, 1B keessa samisteerii tokko baratee kutaa 1A tti dabarsani. Kanumaan Hawwii wajjin walcaalani.” (p. 29). [While they were pursuing their education, because Lati is so brilliant, he got a double pass from 1B and joined 1A. Here was where he performed better than Hawwii]. The point is not why Lati is more brilliant than Hawwii. It is apparent that this could happen when same or opposite sexes are competing in education. However, the narrator describes Hawwii’s performance in the same page as: “Kutaa tokkoo gara isa itti aanutti ka dabartu, 1ffaa, 2ffaa ykn 3ffaa taateetu (p. 29). [When she passed from a class to the other, her rank was first, second or third]. Here it seems important to compare her performance to Lati’s. Logically, Lati gets a double pass, perhaps, because he stands first in the class. If so, why was Hawwii denied a double pass when she stood

first at least, in one of the grades? The text either consciously or unconsciously marginalizes Hawwii's intelligence or portrays disparity between the two characters.

Furthermore, there is another semantic disparity as far as their exposure to education is concerned. For example, Lati has been consistently encouraged and advised by his family to work hard for his education. He is told that if he completes his school, he will go abroad to study medicine. He, then, completes his secondary education and goes to Sweden to study medicine as per the plan. While studying medical science, Lati is enjoying a comfortable life there. In contrast to this, Hawwii is forced to discontinue her education to marry an old man. Opposing such a marriage by force, she escapes to Addis Ababa. There, she encounters several challenges such as act of rape, homelessness and sexual harassment. Finally, she attempts to commit suicide. The story ends when she receives medical treatment. A famous feminist literary critic Ruthven (1994: p. 41) explains that a structural parity is disrupted as follows:

If it is true that binary terms tend to be locked together not in horizontal 'complementarity' (equal and opposite) but in vertical hierarchy (superior and inferior), then 'complementarity' is unmasked as a myth which conceals the fact that one of such pairs is always favoured at the expense of the other".

What could be inferred from the above evidence is that Hawwii is made to wait the success of Lati. Because Lati's future educational success is foregrounded, Hawwii's exposure to education has not been given a space. This, indeed, is a gendered representation of education.

So far, attempts made by the text to establish its coherence by fixing the structural parity between male and female characters (the protagonists) have been analyzed. Then, how the text fixes its unity in relation to the description of the body of both characters by describing their physical appearance and, on the contrary, how the text deconstructs itself by depicting the

female character erotically and fragmenting her body piecemeal has been shown. Though the text tries to maintain its unity by creating a fixed boundary between the subject and the object, the text itself reveals that the boundary is not fixed. Female characters at times are neither a subject nor an object but in a state of abject. The institutional motherhood valorized by the text is disrupted and motherhood becomes an ambiguous space. Finally, disparity in terms of education where the female character (Hawwii) is marginalized in her achievement in education is analyzed.

From the feminist deconstructionist reading made so far, it is shown that the language of “an ideology” could not create coherence. This becomes apparent because the inconsistency between the diverse elements such as inconsistency in the description of the female characters body (Hawwii), her oscillation in the oppositional category subject/object position and the contradiction between depicting her talent and the text’s inability to justify why she is denied double pass indicate how the ideological project in literary texts works and how subjective it is. The contradiction from within depicts the complex series of repression such as chastity, loneliness, unsecured sense of self in the subject. It is revealed that the subjects, dominantly, women characters in the novel, are but the centers of contention between the “core issues” such as barrenness, loneliness and unsecured sense of self repressed in the unconscious and defenses such as projection, denial and chastity built around the core issues to keep the social order in its fixed position.

4.3 Feminist Deconstructionist Reading of *Kuusaa Gadoo*

Feminist deconstructionist approach has been employed for the analyses of the major female character and other thematically important women characters in the next sub-sections. It has

been used to examine the depiction of a woman's body as a fragment, the disruption of subject/object dichotomy and the ambivalent notion of motherhood to show the undecidability of meaning. In the last sub-section, how the female protagonist exercises her lived experience to win the male protagonist in the court of law, which deconstructs the patriarchal notion of knowledge is closely examined. Before going to identify a binary opposition and an analysis of the text using the oppositional categories, the synopsis of the novel is presented.

Synopsis of *Kuusaa Gadoo*

The story of the novel *Kuusaa Gadoo* centers on a male character, Dachasa, who is the protagonist in the novel. Its plot begins with Dachasa suffering from love for one of the city girls, Genet, who is pursuing her higher education at Sidist Kilo campus (the main campus of Addis Ababa University). After several attempts, he fortunately begins a love relationship with her. Meanwhile, the focus shifts to one of the villages called Bokodji, in Arsi (South East of Ethiopia), where Dachasa begins his career as health professional and gets married to one of the major characters in the novel, Yadashi. She marries him to escape marriage by force. After that, she gives birth to a son. Then, Dachasa completes his secondary education. It is after this that Dachasa joins Addis Ababa University for his first degree.

While he is enjoying both his education and love with Genet (in the campus), the story once again takes the reader to Bokodgi where Yadashi is living and bringing up the child. Meanwhile, Asfaw seduces her and she embarks on an extra marital relationship with him. Asfaw suspects that Guta (Dachasa's elder brother) told Dachasa what is going on between him and Yadashi. For this reason, he sends him to jail. When Dachasa hears the news that his brother is sent to jail, he becomes furious and decides to go back home and check whether the information is true or not. Unfortunately, the information is proved true and Dachasa goes back

to his education. He then cuts the relationship he has with his wife. On the other hand, Yadashi, who is ignored by her family for she refuses to marry the man of their choice, is also ostracized by Dachasa's relatives and the society for she has entered extra marital relationship with Asfaw. On top of that, she gives birth to a child for the latter. All these debilitating effects make her lead a challenging life with her two children, one from Dachasa and the other from Asfaw.

As the story unfolds, Dachasa completes his education and gets employed in one of the offices in Addis Ababa and continues his love relationship with Genet. Meanwhile, Asfaw, who has been supporting Yadashi and her children, is jailed due to corruption. This, indeed, makes the life of Yadashi and her children miserable and she is forced to begin the life of prostitution. Then, Yadashi is advised by one who is a plaintiff (her customer when she is leading a life of prostitution) to accuse Dachasa so that parts of his salary is given to the children (though one of the children belongs to Asfaw) with a pretext that both children belong to him. Yadashi wins the court case and begins to subsidize herself and Asfaw's child (for the other child joins his father Dachasa) with the money deducted from Dachasa's salary. Dachasa who is highly infuriated by all the evils done to him, decides to kill Asfaw thinking that he is behind all these evils. After that, leaving his only son who joined him in Addis Ababa (a metropolitan city) where the child has no one, Dachasa goes to Bokodji and kills Asfaw in ambush where the story of the novel ends.

4.3.1 The Binary Opposition

The purpose of this section is to identify the binary opposition established in the novel *Kuusaa Gadoo* in terms of the depiction of male and female characters. Most trends of thought and expression are in terms of oppositional categories. That is, something is white but not black

Moreover, it is important to examine the role of an omniscient narrator in perpetuating patriarchal values. For instance, when Asfaw begins to go with Yadashi, the narrator focalizer, before introducing the way they begin the relationship, comments that she is made to forget Dachasa. “Namoota Yaadashiin akka Dachaasaa irraanfattu godhan keechaa tokkoffaan Asfaw Haayileeti. Mana niitii dhirsa qabduutiif karaa cufame akkuma arganitti itti hinseenaaniif”. (p: 31). [Asfaw Haile is one of the people who made Yadashii forget Dachasa. One cannot enter to a married woman’s house as it is so to cross a way fenced]. It is important to analyze the voice in this sentence to see how relegating a female character to a passive position, is induced in the structure of the language. The subject of this sentence is “Asfaw Haile” and the object who is “made to forget...” is Yadashi. This structure designates that Yadashi is an object whereas Asfaw is a subject. The proverb, “It is abominable to enter a married woman’s house as it is so to cross a way fenced” used by the narrator gives weight to the passive image the female character is given. It can be inferred that the proverb is gendered in its reference to only one of the sexes i.e. woman. What is depicted in the proverb is that, as it is possible to go on a ‘way’ that is not ‘fenced’; it is also possible to enter a “woman’s” house so long as she is not a married one. This in turn implies that there is nothing wrong if a man goes to another woman. Here, it is possible to see how the narrator focalizer manipulates the narrative and perpetuates the patriarchal value.

On the other hand, in the novel, an attempt is made to portray Dachasa as active and a moral agent, who does not accept betrayal and who has familial affiliation. As depicted in the novel, Asfaw, is an antagonist who betrayed Dachasa by taking away his wife. In addition, Asfaw is a corrupt person who humiliated the people of Bokodji town. So, Dachasa might be forced by

these cumulative grievances to kill Asfaw. This is the convention that the text attempts to establish.

When it comes to familial responsibility, the character focalizer Dachasa feels restless when he thinks about the social respect that his wife needs to have, “...kabajaa niitii tiyyaa *guddina kootiin wajjini, har’a ciniinnadhee, odoo qananii hin yaadiin baradhu ...*” (p: 30). [...respect for my wife is related to my upgrading, it will be realized when I upgrade my education overcoming every challenge, forgetting about luxurious life, ...]. As can be seen from the extract, Dachasa is depicted to be a husband who is committed to improving the life of his wife.

When Dachasa’s life is examined from the point of view of his responsibility for his child, the text attempts to depict him as a father responsible for the growth and future of his child. His attempt to take responsibility of his child like his wife is depicted as follows:

Waayee kana fakkaatuun oggaa lamaan dura Dachaasaan”Guddinni ilma kiyyaa... guddina kootiin wajjini, har’a ciniinnadhee, odoo qananii hin yaadiin baradhu malee boru ilma kiyya bakkee guddaan ga’uu dhiisii barandaa buluu bira dabarsuudhaa hindanda’u” jedheetu Addis Ababaa Unvarsitii kan gale. (p. 30).

[It is having this in mind that Dachasa thought: “The prospect of my child ...will be realized when I, upgrade my education overcoming every challenge and forgetting luxurious life. Otherwise, let alone enable my child reach a higher position, I cannot even enable him to go that far but a street life].

The above extract depicts the responsibility that a father takes for the prospects of his child. For family is the first world in which children’s base is established, one’s own child’s success in one way or the other depends on the responsibility taken and roles played by the family. Exposures children have for schooling and follow ups undertaken to show them directions in their attempt to experiment and experience while interacting with environment contributes for

the success of children. As depicted in the extract, Dachasa contemplates about the ‘prospect’ of and ‘higher position’ for his child. The text attempts to depict that Dachasa is a morally strong character who is highly concerned about his family at home and particularly about his child. One of the main reasons why he strives to improve his education is to build a ladder upon which his child could easily climb in life in the future. As the narrative proceeds, Dachasa is shown to maintain this position when he joins Addis Ababa University: “Dachaasaan rakkoo mataa isaa keecha naanna’aa ture gadi fuudhee, waa’ee mana isaa itti himnaan...” (p: 14). [When Dachasa told every detail about his home (*his family*) that revolves as a challenge in his mind...] (italics mine). The phrase ‘his home’ shows the attachment he has with his family, though he lives at distance from them. He told every detail about his family to his friends. It depicts the fact that he does not forget the responsibility that he needs to discharge regarding his family. This is one of the valorizations in the narrative to portray the moral strength of Dachasa in view of his familial affiliation.

All across the narrative, the text attempted to portray Dachasa as a responsible, autonomous, active, brilliant and so coherent in every aspect. On the contrary, Yadashi is depicted to be irresponsible, dependent, passive and nonknowledgeable.

4.3.2 Deconstructing a Woman’s Body

Feminist literary critics suspect that literary texts by male authors construct woman’s body as a fragmented object. According to them it is one of the themes that deconstructs what is constructed- a construction which perpetuates a distorted image of woman’s body. They contend that in novels by male authors, selected parts of woman’s body are objects of gaze, places of sexuality and desire (Showalter, 1981; Ruthven, 1994; Humm, 1994; Elam, 1994;

Guerin *et al*, 1999). Under this sub-section, description of the physical appearance of both woman and man major characters are analyzed to examine the gendered aspects reflected in the text.

The description of the body of the protagonist, Yadashi, is limited to only one anatomical part. When seen through the focalization of Dachasa, what is seen to him is only “the breasts erected.” This episode is described when Yadashi, for the first time, meets him seeking medical treatment as:

Dhullaan guntuta ishii gidduutti ba’ee itti hammaate fayyuufii didnaan Yaadashiin yaallachuudhaa mana fayyaa Boqojjii obboleecha ishii quxusuu wajjin dhufte. Dhibee ishii ilaallachiisuuf uffata qoma irraa yoo saaqqattee Dachasaatti siiqxu, Dachasaan guntutni ishii waan akka eebootti isa waraanu itti fakkaatee, wanni jedhee ishii dubbisu jalaa badee”Guntutee guntunni eeboo yeroo baay’ee nama harka hin buutu”jedheen (p. 58).

[Because her body, in-between her breasts was swollen and made her restless, Yadashii went to Bokodji health center with her brother who was the last child in the family. When she uncovered the cloth on her chest to show the place which was swollen and came close to Dachasa, as though her breasts were going to pierce him as a spear, he could not get words to speak to her and said to himself, “A teenager whose breasts are spears, you rarely are grabbed.”].

According to this extract, Yadashi is depicted in a sexist way. First, she is depicted that she goes to the clinic with the brother who is a child. This is to create a condition that both Yadani and Dachasa exchange some erotic speeches that could enable the plot of the text developed in a desired direction. Secondly, the place of the swollen body seems to be chosen consciously to trigger an erotic desire in Dachasa and enable him to initiate a dialogue which, in turn, will enable the plot revolve around both characters. The problem is not the development of the plot based on the two major female and male characters; but it is the disparity between both sexes that is gendered. Yadashi is depicted through one anatomical organ- breasts. That organ is

compared with an object 'spear': 'her breasts are going to pierce him as spears' and 'whose breasts are a spear'. The recurrence of the object 'spear' (2 times) by which she is described shows that the narrator focalizer is obsessed with the anatomical body of the female character. On top of that, she is designated by the character focalizer, Dachasa, as '*guntutee*' which is a metonym to describe a teenage girl. The word "guntutee" is derived from "guntuta" that refers to breasts of a teenage girl. This shows the sexist stereotype that designates the female character with only one anatomical organ. On top of that, the word signifies that the girl is unused and hence it is an organ that triggers erotic feeling in men. The negative impact it has in the formation of self for the female character is not difficult to guess. Here, it seems that both the narrator and male character perpetuate a similar sexist ideology.

In contrast to this, Dachasa's physical appearance is described as:

"Kanaaf fakkaata kan ishiin Dachaasaa hojjetaa mootummaa argannaan odoo oolchitee hinbulchiin dafttee jala lixxe. Odoo duubaa wanti ishii muddu kun jirachuu ilee baatee Dachaasaa dhaabni isaa tolee kennate agartee barbaacha isaa hubannaan irraa hafuu hindandeessu."(p. 60)

[It might be because Dachasa is a government employee that she immediately takes a refuge under him. Even if the issue of forced marriage may not urge her to cling to Dachasa, she can never withstand but be captivated by his good appearance].

Here, Dachasa is described in terms of his appearance and job. Both lexical items 'job' and 'appearance' are terms that refer to the whole view of him. She is described by one anatomical element, metonymically and also as an object that carries an erotic energy and hence to be "grabbed". But, he is described wholistically. From such depiction, it is difficult to create a woman as a complete human being. She is rather depicted as a fragment for voyeuristic consumption of male readers. This fragmentation of a woman character's body shows the stereotypical representation of woman characters.

The gendered representation is also shown in the description of the physical appearance of another woman character (Genet) with whom Dachasa falls in love while he is studying for his undergraduate degree. She is focalized by the narrator focalizer as follows:

Gannat teechoo ishii gidduu galeecha guddatee gaanii ga'e yookaan xiqqaatee dhadhaa sumunii ga'e hinjedhamne kan itti gaafatamaa mana piropogaadaatiif dammaqsa jaalalaati jehdamu kan yoo achii hojjaa isaatiitti ka'ee bitaa mirgaa ha'amee dhiiga dhiiraa danfisu, barcumaa mana macaafaa Kenedii kan keechi golboo haammachiistee "Maaltu sitti dhagahamalaata?" jettee waan inni godhu dhaggeeffatte. (p. 7).

[Genet, embraces her buttocks to the chair of Kennedy library, which is so wide to fit into. It is an organ which is neither very big like a big jar nor very small like tennis ball. It is usually called the head of propaganda of love when it starts its duty turning right and left to make men's blood boil. Her action seems to ask him: "What do you feel?"].

As depicted in the extract, this type of description is erotic. Here, Genet's physical appearance is described only through one anatomical element—the buttocks. That organ is described in such a way that it triggers erotic desire. According to the description, though the organ is neither big nor small, the way it is described is sexist. That is, it is described based on the objects the organ is compared with, that is, 'big jar', and 'tennis ball'. On the one hand, the description has an implication that both the "big" and the "small" ones are not attractive for the one who gazes. On the other hand, though the "medium" one is attractive it is in a way that it attracts he who gazes at the organ. Otherwise, nothing is said about the organ in terms of the purpose it serves as an anatomical organ. On top of that, the narrator focalizer reports that it is "usually called the head of propaganda of love". This description is misogynic in that it reduces the anatomical organ of a woman character to the level of a metaphor that works for the promotion of information centering on a certain objective. What it means is apparent, that is, the organ is portrayed not in its own anatomical and/or physiological function but as an object which Genet uses for seduction. What is more Genet has given no comment regarding her body.

From the description of both Yadashi and Genet, we can see how woman characters' bodies are presented as object of gaze. The characters are depicted not as complete human beings but parts of their body are described as fragments. Moreover, they are either the narrator focalizer or the character focalizers who describe and comment on the body of the female characters. As to the female characters described, they have no say to their body as it is perceived from themselves. This is what Mills calls gendered representation (Mills, 1995: p. 172). From this, it is possible to infer the degree to which representation could distort the image of a female character.

4.3.3 Deconstructing the Subject/object

The purpose of this section is to show how the boundary built between subject and object is not fixed and can easily be disrupted by evidences from the text. Several evidences are extracted from the text to show the instability of the oppositional categories.

Though the novel attempts to depict Yadashi, the major character, stereotypically as object, there are evidences from the text itself that deconstruct this category. For example, the narrator comments that she is depicted to be an object made to forget her husband (p: 31). However, immediately in the next page the narrator comments that she is such a morally strong woman that she even does not take a tip, for it is linked to devaluing one's own self worth. "Gurshaa fudhachuun ulfina ofii gurgurachuudha jetti" (p: 32). [She says, "Taking a tip is equated to bargaining one's own pride". If she is such a strong person, why she is an object "made to forget" her husband is self-contradictory. As the narrative progresses, it is depicted that she enters into such illicit sexual partnership for she has no choice. She has no one to help her to bring up her child. When she approaches customers, the patriarchal tradition betrays her that

she breaks convention as depicted in the proverb. No one is ready to support her. However, everybody especially, Dachasa's relatives ridicule her. What is vivid is that she becomes an object of ridicule because she is poor. Regarding this, Tyson (1999:96) remarks "woman... whose economic situation forced her into hard labor and made her the victim of sexual predators was defined as unwomanly and therefore unworthy of protection from those who exploited her". It is the interlocking of economic problem and patriarchal tradition that forces her to take such a self-contradictory position. Added to this, the authorial narrator does not betray Dachasa (p: 1) and Asfaw for their immoral acts rather transfers their moral decays to the poor Yadashi. This depicts the gendered representation that implicitly perpetuates patriarchal values. She carries not only the social and the economic burden but also the moral condemnation which ironically is due to the moral decaying of the patriarchal society for which the society is responsible.

Thus, Yadashi's position is self-contradictory. It seems that she is torn between self-respect and economic expectations. On the one hand, she has a firm ground on matters of self worth as shown above. She tries to keep herself strong and firm. However, this sense of selfhood is repressed as the other need, the need for survival (economy) takes over that position. She does not have the courage to refuse the tips that Asfaw gives her because he is the only person, who attracts many customers and who takes a local drink from her house. If she refuses, she loses all those customers. She does not want to miss this opportunity because losing them is not having money to feed herself and her child. This need becomes dominant and she eventually yields to Asfaw's seduction. As deconstructive literary criticism explicates, it is not only A not B but also the B not B that is at work in the construction of subjectivity. This is to mean that one can contradict herself/himself for what is going on in the subject having the structure of "infinite

deferral". Hence, the subject is depicted to be unstable. Her attempts to be morally strong and courageous are disrupted by economic, social and patriarchal forces. These forces make her take an ambivalent position.

The other instance in which the stereotypical representation does not remain static is her forethought. Yadashi is depicted as wise and farsighted in the text. This is because she is able to predict challenges that are awaiting her. For one thing, she knows how to handle the crushing power of the patriarchal force. In the course of her relationship with Asfaw, it happens that she conceives. Here, she is on the crossroads to determine the fate of the foetus. Because she is highly perplexed, she discusses the matter with Asfaw who replies that after the baby is born, he can give it to his brother. He then asks her if she agrees to the plan. Though she does not agree to his plan, she does not want to confront him directly, and thought: "Waa laman dhaba" (p: 56). [I may lose both at a time]. At that moment, because the child has already been conceived, the condition is irreversible for Yadashi. With this condition, if she enters to unnecessary debates with Asfaw, there is no advantage in that. Therefore, she does not want to do so. She prefers silence. This shows that she is well aware of the extent to which she could approach men in matters such as giving birth to a child. The debate is about a life in the embryo. She knows how much the matter is not of his concern. His position as depicted in the text goes as far as giving the child to someone else. That is why she prefers silence. This is the point at which male's stand and that of female's stand are different. The sense of feeling she has when carrying "a body in the body", gestation, labor and care are areas left for mothers. As a mother of one child, Yadashi has gone through it. Hence, she knows to what extent the mother-child empathy is deep in a mother. That is why she does not want to continue talking about the fetus with Asfaw. Nevertheless, she prefers to think about it and to decide alone.

There is another instance in which Yadashi is shown to be farsighted. This is depicted when she hears from the woman sorcerer who hesitated to tell her the challenges ahead of her: “Yaadaan biyya mara waliin geechee, ijaan labooba sumsumman sadeen jidduu afaan jabanaa seenuuf roqomu bira dabartee waan baay’ee argitee jirti. (p. 57). [Her eyes penetrating in between the flames that ran up to the neck of a pot on the fire, reached everywhere in thought and saw challenges that awaited her]. She is aware of the power of patriarchy and becomes quite thoughtful about it. One of the challenges is giving birth to a child of an illegitimate father. Especially its consequence from the point of view of Dachasa, if he knows the matter, for the historical allusion about his brother Guta shows that their paternal family is so harsh when their right is violated, she is thoughtful of the danger that awaits her (pp. 32-34). The other challenge is insult and ostracization by Dachasa’s relatives. The third one is, to be an object of ridicule by the society. It is because she is farsighted that these challenges are revealed to her before they happen according to the order of the story. Though she knows that Asfaw is not the right person for partnership, because things have gone beyond her control, she decides to go with him and stick to the lesser evil.

As the story proceeds and things get complicated, when she examines that she is sandwiched between the two male powers (Dachasa and Asfaw), she does not want to combat both directly. She uses the legal advice of the third person (an attorney) to defeat Dachasa. She wins over Dachasa in the court and receives money so that she brings up the two children she has given birth to. Though the authorial narrator sympathizes with Dachasa for she is depicted to break the moral code of the society (that she is infidel by her post-marital relationship with Asfaw), she has no option other than doing this when Dachasa completely ignores her after he hears rumors from his relatives that she has sexual relationship with Asfaw. By doing so, she breaks

the love ethos established as a norm. Secondly, once she is indulged in a complex life situation because of the interlocking of patriarchal and economic forces, she continues to live with Asfaw breaking the social codes that dictate that a married woman ought not to go with somebody. Though she has been ostracized by the society, she gives priority to survival and continues facing so many challenges.

Furthermore, there are notion that depicts that Yadashi is not a simple sexual object rather the one who seeks a lover by her own choice. For one thing she rejects Tufa, the boy her family has chosen for her. Then she begins love with Dachasa. By doing so she breaks the cultural code that dictates that a daughter should marry to a husband of their choice. One of the evidences is to examine the metaphorical significance of the setting of the first date of Dachasa'a and Yadashi's meeting. She meets him for the first time where he is working as a health officer. She goes there because the area in between her breasts is swollen, as seen in the sub- section "Deconstructing a Woman's Body" (4.3.3). The introduction begins when he guesses the meaning of her name "Yadashi" which he says is "as she likes it". He asks whether she follows her own ways as her name indicates, "as she likes". She immediately responds that it not only works for her alone but also for those who choose the ways she chooses. He then requests her whether he can also be one of those people. She replies saying that he can be one of them, for he is going to give her medication for her wound (KG, P: 56-57).

Given that Yadashi is from a conservative family, from where she brings such courage to express her interest towards him is worth mentioning. The clinic where Yadashi meets Dachasa for the first time is a metaphor, from where she seeks a person whom she wants to choose for love. The treatment he gives to her body is what is there on the plain surface. In the dialogue between them, it is the conversation that serves as a way to the main issue, which she is more

attracted to which is seeking love relationship. Therefore, the clinic and the treatment made for her body are symbols that show that she needs a person of her choice for love relationship. Here, the subject/object opposition, which is conceived to be fixed, does not work. However, their common denominator is love. Love, for Yadashi, a girl who is highly injured by the weapons of patriarchy, is to treat her wounds –abandonment, emotional attachment with a person of her choice. Here, she deconstructed the cultural code that dictates that a daughter could not choose a partner for love by her own.

Furthermore, there is another practice that Yadashi exercises in her relationship with Asfaw. While Yadashi is making an effort to fit into the standards of social expectations by engaging herself in activities such as preparing and selling local drinks to feed her family, she faces a challenge from Asfaw, who is depicted to be an antagonist in the novel. Asfaw seduces her with a pretext that he is bringing customers for her. Because of his consistent seduction, Yadashi totally forgets all her responsibilities and enters into a complex life situation when Asfaw pressurizes her that if she does not respect him, he will stop drinking from her home in which case all her customers will be lost. Here, the text's attempt is to show that a woman is dependent economically. However, when seen from another perspective, another force is at work, that is, the issue of sexuality. Her husband is in Addis Ababa. He rarely comes to Bokoji. He even has begun post- marital love relationship with Genet, though Yadashi does not know it. Under such situations, one cannot expect Dachasa visit Bokoji and makes love with his wife. As she is in her early adult age she can long for sexual desire. It is under such situations that she meets Asfaw. This seems to be depicted in the following extract:

Yaadashiin na dhukubsite jechuuf illee qalbii hinarganne. Dhukubsuu duwwaa otoo hinta'iin yaadni Yaadashii kan rara'ee yaada biraati irratti waan ta'eef, namni biraa jidduu isaaniitti argamee argu waan hin

dandeenyeef malee sukkuummaan Asfaaw xurii gudeeda ishiitii molommoleeti baasa ture. Haata'u malee "Qaaccaan sanbaleexuma, qaaccaan sanbaleexuma, garaan erga jaalatee fungaanis bareeduma" akka sirbiituun jettu kan Yaadashii qalbiin jaalalaan waan fudhatameef sukkuummaan xurii baasu hooksaa jaalalaa ta'eef" (p: 34).

[Yadashi even could not have got a conscience to be able to say that it is painful. However, had someone seen the way Asfaw touched her body in between her legs, it was just like pinching where he was busy squeezing her tights as though someone in a bathroom, was washing his/her body in which case Yadashi was concentrating not on the pain but went a long distance thinking about something else. It was as the saying goes, "(A sisal is a tall grass, a sisal is a tall grass), for one who loves an ugly person, he is but handsome," because Yadashi's conscience was engulfed by love, a warm up which was like squeezing became warm up out of love"].

To see how Yadashi exercises her sexual desire, it seems better to examine the proverbial allusions used in the extract. There are concepts compared in the proverb: pair of words 'sisal' and 'grass' with pair of words 'ugliness' and 'handsomeness' respectively. It is apparent that sisal is a grass. As sisal is a grass, Asfaw, though not a legitimate husband, but, like Dachasa, is a man. For the time being, Yadashi focuses not on other factors such as cultural codes.

On the other hand, the text attempts to depict Dachasa as a morally strong person, as seen under the section "binary opposition". However, some textual evidences deconstruct this. For example, several vices engulf Dachasa. First, he is unfaithful to his wife. Second, he does not fulfill his responsibility of, at least, taking care of his only son. As shall be seen hereafter, this shows to what degree the patriarchal programming that favours men is blind to logic it preaches that fulfilling the basic need of a family is a man's role only.

When the position of Dachasa is seen in relation to his love for both his wife and his child, his integrity and responsibility are not stable. One of the situations in which he shows that he loves his wife could be excusing her for the wrongs she does by advising her for the challenge is not more than hers and her son's. However, after he hears her infidelity, he does not take time, at

least, to openly discuss it with her. Rather, he is determined to break off relationship with her. The proverb he uses when he arrives at such decision is, “Ofiinuu duuti maaliif of huuti...?”(KG, p: 51). [When destined to die soon, why does she hang herself?]. If their love relationship is as it has been established in the text, he shall never wish death for his wife. Rather, he will have remembered his commitment “...respect for his wife” (Ibid, P: 57).

Furthermore, as the narrative proceeds, what is hidden in Dachasa is unraveled. Dachasa’s sense of responsibility that he plans, which is explored above, is questioned when the child joins him in Addis Ababa after he gets his degree and gets employed in one of the offices. Rather than paving the ground for the future of his child by facilitating ways through which he begins his education, Dachasa blames the child for the breakdown of the relationship between him and Genet (with whom he is enjoying an extra-marital relationship). In addition to an immoral act (the extra-marital relationship) that he is showing to his child, he also betrays his child. Sometimes, when he comes home (late in the night) he asks the child a question which he could not answer, and at times he insults and beats the child:

Hojii akkanaa kan jalqabe erga Gazzaaheny dhufee isa wajjin jiraachuu jalqabeeti. Kunis kan ta’eef Gazzaaheny jibbee odoo inta’iin abdiin isaa, Gannat kan itti mufattee badde eergasii waan ta’eef. Dhugee gaafa galus Gazzaahenyiin taa’iif ka’ii wallalchisa. “Dhirsii haadha teetii maal jedha? Dachaasaan nama akkamiiti siin jedha? Rakkoo keessaayin isin baasa jedhee? Ergasuu maal godhuuf as dhufte? Haati kee ofii akka feete sagal heerumteeti dhaqqii Dachaasaa eegi jettee si ergitee? jedheet waan mucaan beekke deebiisaa inkeninneef mara gaafata. Yoo inni callise, “Ana tuffatteeti deebisa naa kennuu diddaa?” jedheeti kaballaa itti awwaareessa. (p: 144).

[He began to develop such behaviour after Gezahegn joined him. This was not because he hated Gezahegn but because Genet who was his hope left him after Gezahegn came. When he comes home drunk in the night, he made the child restless. He asked him questions that the child could not answer: “What does your mother’s husband say? What type of person does he call me? Does he say he will take you out of poverty? If that is so,

why have you come here? Does your mother, who gets herself married nine times, send you to watch Dachasa? When the child kept silent he gave him a slap saying “Are you ignoring me because you disrespect me?”].

As depicted in the extract, Dachasa’s hope for love and life rests on his relationship with Genet. The narrator attempts to establish coherence by sympathizing with him that his misbehavior arises from Yadashi’s and Asfaw’s action of extra marital relationship for sense of jealousy influences him and makes him develop such an attitude towards his wife. He may develop such an attitude towards his wife breaking the love ethos. But, how does one hate one’s own child is a question worth mentioning. There is a gap between the narrator’s report and the character’s speech. The narrator comments that Dachasa does not hate his child-‘not because he hated Gezahegn’. Contrary to this, Dachasa asks the child why he comes and whether he is sent by his mother so that he watches everything on behalf of her. When Dachasa is posing a series of questions, it seems as though he sees the image of Yadashi in the child. On the contrary, the child joins him refusing to be with his mother. Even after the child joins him, Dachasa usually stays out late in the night. In the city where one rarely interacts with each other, the child stays at home, alone, till late in the night. The worst comes after the father arrives home and the child is asked questions which he could not answer. This interrogates Dachasa’s familial affiliation. This indeed deconstructs the text’s attempt to depict him as a morally strong character. Though the authorial narrator seems to sympathize with him that he does not hate his child, as the narrative proceeds he leaves the child in the city and goes back to Bokodji to kill his rival. As a proverb in *Afan Oromo*, goes “Namni mucaa qabu sodaattuudha.” “A person who has a child is a coward” a father and a mother tolerates everything for the safety of her/his child. That is, even if the situation is so urgent, if its consequence makes the children pay the liability, s/he does not attempt to take an action. However, the sense of irresponsibility that he shows when

he leaves the child alone in a metropolitan city depicts that he lacks a sense of moral integrity regarding familial affiliation. This is the concern of contemporary feminist literary critics when they examine the lives of male characters in novels, especially in those written by male authors.

Similarly, a behaviour that deconstructs his moral integrity is portrayed when Dachasa considers his son as a fool:

Gazzaahenyis akka waan nama jabaa ta'ee beekeetoo haadha irra tumsee Gannat jalaa ari'e itti fakkaate. Mataan isaa gaariifi yaraa addaan foo'uu dadhabee mucaa dhalattuu taa'ii fi ka'ii wallaalchise. "Gowwaan waan beeku dhiisii waan nyaate indhokfatu; ati gowwaadha kan waan ishiin si gaafatte mara itti himtu? Inbeeku injettu?" jedhaan yeroo Gannat yaadate mara. (p: 130).

[It appeared to Dachasa that Gezahegn was the main cause for Genet to break the love relationship with him and to disappear. For his mind failed to differentiate the right from the wrong, he made the child restless. He accused the child whenever he remembered Genet saying " A fool discloses not only what he knows but also what he eats; why are you such a fool to tell all the secrets when she asks you? Don't you say I do not know?]

This shows that a father, who once upon a time wishes his child to reach a higher position, accuses the same of not telling a lie. According to the culture of Oromo people, extra-marital infidelity is an immoral act. Dachasa commits such an act. Nowhere in the narrative does he feel guilty of his act. The closer he comes to Genet the less his sense of guilt becomes. This in turn leads him to the extent that 'he could not differentiate the right from the wrong'. For the fear of re-living of the sense of guilt, he transfers his weakness to the child and blames him.

Moreover, it seems shocking to see a father treating his own child like that. Once upon a time, he thought that all his efforts were for the bright future of his child (KG, p: 30). As for the child, he is innocent for several reasons. First, he is not responsible for the infidelity of his mother. Second, he even revolts against her infidelity and identifies himself with his father and

refuses to live with her. Third, he travels a long distance and joins his father in Addis Ababa. The child cannot be the cause for the breakdown of the relationship between Genet and his father. Rather, when morally seen, the father is responsible for extra-marital infidelity. Rather than accepting his weakness, the father projects his immoral act onto his child. The child should have been rewarded for traveling a long distance in search of his father. However, the reward is otherwise, i.e. punishment. Worst of all, he leaves the child alone in the metropolitan city and leaves for revenge (KG, p: 148). This indeed interrogates Dachasa's moral strength.

Another marginal element that shows Dachasa's lack of integrity is the situational irony depicted in the novel. When the reactions of Dachasa and Genet are examined, there are several instances that make them similar, despite the fact that, that of Yadashi is silenced. After he hears that his brother is jailed, Dachasa goes to Bokodji to find out the reason. On that day, before he goes to bed, several thoughts bother him. He is highly perplexed as to what to do to Yadashi. "Garaan isaa waan hedduu yaadeeti haata'u malee kutachuu dadhabe." (Ibid, p: 52). [He was engulfed by thoughts of revenge but could not get courage]. Similarly, after Genet discovered from Gezahegn that he is Dachasa's son, when she sees Dachasa coming home, "Gannat odoo humna qabaattee garaan ishii waan baay'ee yaadaa.(Ibid, P: 109)". [She was filled with revenge, but she thought that she was powerless], she furiously hated him. Secondly, what both characters utter to their interlocutor is similar. That is, Dachasa, sarcastically attacks Yadashi that he is fool only once when playing a game (that is an analogy to mean when he married her) and that he regrets very much for what he commits (Ibid, p: 55). In the same token, Genet says to Dachasa that it is her silliness that she trusts a man. Here, both speakers are not from the same gender but what happens to both is similar. Dachasa has betrayed Yadashi and Gennet, Yadashi has betrayed both Aberash and Dachasa, and Gennet has attempted to enjoy

sexual autonomy with the economics teacher and Dachasa simultaneously which shows that she uses her body as a source of power though at times she is described in a sexist way. Therefore, when the personality of Dachasa is examined, his moral strength is interrogated and that he is just an ordinary person with vices such as hatred and infidelity like Genet and Yadashi where gender difference does not make any distinction in this regard. Therefore, though the text attempts to keep its coherence, issues at the marginal elements depict that it is not coherent in its depiction of characters that are thematically important.

There is an instance which is worth examining about Dachasa. That is, when the reactions of Dachasa and Genet are examined with regard to the situation they encounter, there are several instances that make them similar, despite the fact that, that of Yadashi is silenced. After he hears that his brother is jailed, Dachasa goes to Bokodji to find out the reason. On that day, before he goes to bed, several thoughts bother him. He is highly perplexed as to what to do to Yadashi. “Garaan isaa waan hedduu yaadeeti haata’u malee kutachuu dadhabe.” (p: 52). [He was engulfed by thoughts of revenge but could not get courage]. Similarly, after Genet discovered from Gezahegn that he is Dachasa’s son, when she sees Dachasa coming home, “Gannat odoo humna qabaattee garaan ishii waan baay’ee yaadaa.(p: 109)”. [She was filled with revenge, but she thought that she was powerless], she furiously hated him. Secondly, what both characters utter to their interlocutor is similar. That is, Dachasa, sarcastically attacks Yadashi that he is fool only once when playing a game (that is an analogy to mean when he married her) and that he regrets very much for what he commits (p: 55). In the same token, Genet says to Dachasa that it is her silliness that she trusts a man. Here, both speakers are not from the same gender but what happens to both is similar. Dachasa has betrayed Yadashi and Gennet, Yadashi has betrayed both Aberash and Dachasa, and Gennet has attempted to enjoy

her sexual autonomy with the economics teacher and Dachasa simultaneously. Therefore, when the personality of Dachasa is examined, there seems to be nothing that qualifies him as a moral agent for it is depicted that he is just an ordinary person with vices such as hatred and infidelity like Genet and Yadashi where gender difference does not make any distinction in this regard.

So, though at times Yadashi is depicted to fit into stereotypes such as object of sex, passive, not farsighted, but the other time she is far sighted. Therefore, her position is self-contradictory. This is one of the reasons that depict Yadashi as a complex character rather than a simple stereotype. This indeed makes the character Yadashi a character who is not a simple stereotype but one with intricate subjecthood.

In sum, Dachasa, like Yadashi and Genet is a human being with virtues and vices. A notion that tags masculinity to qualities such as coherent and unitary, and femininity to qualities like passive, fluid and volatile does not hold static. As seen so far, Yadashi and Dachasa oscillate in the continuum between subject/object positions. So, the text deconstructs itself in the sense that the protagonist who is portrayed to be a hero, who is endowed with virtues such as integrity, coherence, self-sacrifice, has several vices such as selfishness, sense of irresponsibility and infidelity.

Therefore, there is a self-contradictory point in relation to the depiction of man and woman characters in the novel. The text echoes the stereotypical ways of depicting a woman by referring to proverbs that are gendered. So, it perpetuates a gendered representation by portraying that for men, even after they get married, they are not condemned if they go with other women when they are away from their home. This, indeed, as has been seen under the

review of related literature, (in sub-section “images of Oromo women”), is against the ethical and moral norms conception of Oromo worldview.

4.3.4 Deconstructing Institutional Motherhood

The purpose of this section is to examine the notion of motherhood in *Kuusaa Gadoo*. Motherhood, as discussed in the review and theoretical framework is a force field that either empowers or constricts women. An attempt is made to analyze the way the major character Yadashi and her mother are depicted in terms of motherhood.

There is a sense of motherhood in Yadashi that at times surpasses any social blame. According to some feminists, women’s experience is different from that of men in that maternal experience flows from qualities of women’s unique situation. This situation arises from women’s childbearing capacity. This capacity makes a woman to be the center of, to borrow Hekman’s phrase, “preservative love”. For feminists such as Hekman and Kristeva, an epistemology that transforms this world should come from women’s “preservative love”. They argue that such maternal thinking is related to peace and non-violence unlike paternal thinking which is related to war and military strategy. When Yadashi is seen from the point of view of the aforementioned feminist’s view, the power of love that she possesses forces her not to part with her child she is going to bear. “...dayeetan ormaa kenna?...du’uu naaf wayya” (p: 56). [...how do I give away my own child whom I give birth to?...I would rather die than do so.]. This sense of determination is depicted when Asfaw, after observing her perplexity about the issue, tells her that he will give the would be child to his brother so that he brings it up (p: 56). As the dialogue between them shows, the issue of how the child is brought up is not a big deal

for Asfaw. It is as simple as giving an object to someone. For Yadashi that is not the case. After too much perplexity, she is determined not to part with her child.

The same thing happens to her mother. Her mother initially appears to be rude and harsh to Yadashi after the latter married Dachasa. However, as the narrative proceeds, by the time the mother hears that Yadashi is seriously ill, she requests the father so that he pardons her. According to Oromo tradition, if a father or a mother curses a child, its effect is believed to be loss of life, disaster or destitution. The mother insists saying that she shall never live with him if he does not pardon the daughter. However, the heart of the father becomes as hard as stone. This shows the depiction of the difference between men and women when it comes to love for one's own child.

For Yadashi, no matter how the child, in the embryo, is conceived from the illegitimate father, she prefers to die than part with it. For her mother, too, even if she initially has shown a rude and resistant approach to her daughter, when she hears that Yadashi is on the verge of death, she is determined to part with her husband rather than see her daughter dead. From third generation feminist's perspective, limitations cannot stop females show their love to their own child (Hekman, 1990; Kristeva, [tran. by Jordine and Blake,] 1981). The question what would the society say has no room. How one develops such a sense of determination in such a conservative social order is a question worth consideration.

Though Yadashi has such determination, she dramatically shifts her mind and decides to abort the foetus. So, why does the woman who prefers to die than give away her child to someone else dramatically shifts to the act of killing the foetus? The polarity of thought and action within the individual shows the fact that the individual is sandwiched between two forces. That

is, on the one hand, motherhood with its virtues such as gestation, childbearing, love and affection is in the female. On the other hand, an attempt to abort the child, when morally seen, is an act of killing. Be it a foetus or a fully grown baby, life is the same in both cases in its strict sense. Therefore, Yadashi is oscillating between motherhood, as Kristeva contends, “a sacrificial role” and to ‘kill’ the foetus for fear of all the troubles that she receives as a result of giving birth to a child. This shows that the female character is a complex character rather than a simple stereotype. She is a character who can simply be labeled neither to an essentialist category nor to the category of institutional motherhood. Here, motherhood is depicted as an ambiguous space. Indeed, Yadashii, is the subject in process in whom contradictory situations are depicted. Her character can be examined from the point of view of plurality and multiplicity rather than from the institutional motherhood (Hekman, 1990).

4.3.5 Deconstructing Knowledge

Given the conventional depiction of Yadashi as object of poverty, object of sex and object of maternal ideal (institutional motherhood), and Dachasa as educated and hence, knowledgeable, it seems difficult to think that the former could stand before the court, defend herself and defeat the latter. However, she does so. This is depicted in the episode when the judge poses a couple of questions to Dachasa. The episode is that, Yadashi has accused Dachasa with a pretext that she has given birth to his second child. This is something unthinkable for Dachasa. The authorial narrator reports that he is exceptionally brilliant (p. 29). However, before the court he gives a silly response. This is depicted in the following conversation among the judge, Dachasa and Yadashi:

Gaaffiin itti aanu, “Yoo mucayyoon tun dhalattu ati eecha jirta?” kan jedhu. Dachasaanis gaaffiin kun isaaf kan tolu itti fakkaatet, “Ani barumsarran Addis Ababaa jira,” jedheen. “Jiddumaanillee Boqojjii dhaqxee bultee hinbeektu?” jennaan. Gaaffiin akkanaa naaf dhiyaata jedhee waan itti inyaadiiniif waan jedhu wallaalee, “Yoo dhugaadhaa na harka jirti maaltu dhara na dubbachiise,” jedhee yaadee, “Dhufuu dhufe garuu hojjaa isheen irra turte waanan beekuuf” jedheetu waan dubbatu wallaalee...” Wajjin inrafne,” jedheen. “Daanyichis qulqullummaa isaatiis ta’ee gowwummaa isaatii hubatee ijaan naheefii ittuma dhiise.” “Yaadashiin yoona imimmaan ishii dhangalaasaa “Insoba wajjumaan rafnee bulleeti adduma san garaatti na hafe”, jette. (p. 142).

[The next question was, “Where were you when this child was born?” Dachasa thought that the question was to his advantage and replied “I was in Addis Ababa pursuing my education”.

“Didn’t you spend a couple of nights in Bokodji?”

He did not respond to this question for a moment because he had not thought that such question would have been raised and thought, “Of course, what is true is in my heart, so why do I tell a lie” and then replied, “Yes, I came, but, because I did know what she had been doing.” He then could not utter a single word for a little while ... and replied, “I didn’t sleep with her”

“Sympathizing with him for his innocence or silliness, the judge suppressed his emotion and kept silent.”

Without wasting time, Yadashi, dropping her tears like summer rain, said, “He is telling a lie, we slept together (*had a sexual intercourse*), and the child was conceived” [emphasis mine].

In the novel, as discussed in the previous section, the text attempts to portray Dachasa as autonomous, active, brilliant and educated. On the contrary, Yadashi is depicted as uneducated.

That is why Dachasa refuses when one of the elders request the judge to settle it through elders (pp. 141-2). The irony is that he does not realize the gap between what is true and the discourse that validates a certain argument to be true. In fact, as the authorial narrator reports and reader knows, in the text, the child is not his and nor does he make sexual intercourse with his wife on the dates they shared the same bed. But under normal circumstances and when especially seen from legal point of view, what is presumed is that if the wife and husband sleep together, it is not controversial to interpret to whom the conceived child belongs (except the gene of the father and child is examined medically, which is unthinkable in the existing society).

What is important for feminists, especially feminist deconstructionist critics is the position of Yadashi who is depicted by the text as nonknowledgeable and shallow. As a proverb goes that though a woman knows, her knowledge cannot go beyond Igiru (p. 54). Following Dachasa's silly response, she uses her tears as a weapon (which is stereotypically represented as a sign of weakness) to defeat him. Here, she used an extra- linguistic element before the legal system where evidences and arguments are highly valid. Yadashi simultaneously used what Kristeva calls "semiotic energy": "Yadashi, dropping her tears like a summer rain (weeping)" and the symbolic (the law of the father) "He is telling a lie, we slept together (had a sexual intercourse); and then the child was conceived". She is active and wise to strengthen the scope of her defense in that if the first 'the weeping' does not work, she knows that Dachasa has already accepted that they slept together which she believes is sufficient, as an evidence to defeat him. Here, though it seems immoral (in the eyes of patriarchal moral code), she revenges him for his betrayal of her when she is striving to subsidize his education preparing and selling a local drink.

Therefore, the text's attempt to keep Dachasa active and intelligent is questioned when he appears before court and could not defend himself. The text attempts to depict Yadashi as passive, and not knowledgeable as it is shown in the novel, "Dubartiin hamma feete beektu beekumsi ishee gaadaa bahee darbee igiruu hingahu" (p: 54). [No matter how a woman knows, her knowledge does not go far beyond Igiru". Therefore, what the text establishes as a norm is that a Yadashi is not active and knowledgeable. However, there is, to borrow Barbara Johnson phrase a "loose stone" in the text that disrupts the notion of nonknowledgeability of a woman (such as the legal case seen above), shows self-contradiction in the text. Moreover, Genet is knowledgeable for she attended a university education in the area of business and employed as a professional after she gets her first degree. That is, the conventionally paired opposites such as educated/uneducated, knower/known, man/woman and agent/victim is deconstructed by the text. Consequently, it is depicted that the hierarchical position that holds the first term references on the upper position and the second term references at the lower position is not static. Dachasa rather assumes the second position in the dichotomy of agent/victim. However, Yadashi begins to earn her monthly income from his salary for both herself and her child (who is not Dachasa's). However, Dachasa is defeated in the court of justice and becomes the object of oppression in the justice system for the child does not belong to him.

From the discourse between Yadashi and Dachasa, it seems possible to infer that truth is not fixed rather it depends on interpretation. This is because, it is true that the child is not Dachasa's. It is also true that he does not make sexual intercourse with her on the night he sleeps with her. But what the law presumes is if a husband sleeps with his wife and the wife affirms that they make sexual intercourse and hence the child is conceived, what else can a court do except taking the testimony of the wife for granted, in a country where there is no

“genetic examination” ? Here, the court’s justification that the child belongs to Dachasa becomes “true” from the point of view of the legal (justice) system and hence, this is what the court accepted as true. This makes the notion of truth so subjective.

However, the position that Yadashi takes is not without ambiguity. How, Yadashi, who is morally strong to the extent that she does not dare take a tip from somebody, gets a determination to insist that the child is Dachasa’s where she knows that the child is Asfaw’s, is left contradictory. The authorial narrator comments: “Yaadashiifi Dachaasaan baay’uma wal jaalatu.” (p: 30). [Yadashi and Dachasa love each other very much]. What it means to ‘love...very much’ if one could not overcome all losses that come as a result of the one loved is worth questioning. Though the text attempts to depict the romantic love between the protagonists, the love ethos that is attempted to be maintained is deconstructed. So, Yadashi is a subject who takes multiple positions in different situations. This shows the textual indeterminacy.

As seen above, an attempt is made to fix the major characters into the binary opposition. However, though the norm of the text associates knowledge with masculinity, a critical examination of the text shows that Yadashi, who is a female character, defeats Dachasa with valid argument in the court of justice. She at times is also depicted to be active and farsighted. Therefore, whether Yadashi is an object of gaze just for voyeuristic consumption of male eroticism or whether she is a courageous woman who win the man character (Dachasa) by the rule of law or whether she is a female who plays a sacrificial role because of nature, for she prefers death to separation from the not-yet-born child is undecidable. This, indeed, makes the depiction of the major character Yadashi contradictory and undecidable. Its implication to the feminist deconstructionist reading is that the binary opposition is not fixed.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to analyze the texts *Hawwii* and *Kuusaa Gadoo* from the perspectives of feminist deconstructionist reading. In considering the representation of women within these texts, it has been discovered that there is no homogeneity, but there are overlaps. Certain shared features, such as dismantling institutional motherhood, conventional family and marriage stand out. In spite of deconstructing institutional motherhood, the texts find motherhood (maternity) as a vital space for envisaging the dynamics of female subjectivity. Though the ideology of motherhood is confining, the texts also reaffirm the importance of love, responsibility and care as a binding force for human species. Some women characters such as Mrs. Dinsiri oscillate between the rewards of giving birth and its subjugation after their daughters enter into the symbolic order. Others, such as Yadashi, use their children as a weapon to fight the patriarchal yoke. The female body, too, is depicted as a figure with multiple significations. Breasts are called *guntuta* (that which is erect) especially, when the girl is in her teenage. When they drop (fall) because of frequently feeding the baby, they are named as *caphee* to mean that it is not erect. In both cases, it is not the anatomical advantage of the part of the body that these names designate; it is that they rather refer to the place of sexuality or desire. In both novels, the erect breasts are compared with natural objects such as spear and horn of a calf. This indeed shows the fact that the female anatomical body is used as a place of sexuality or desire. The fragmentation of the body of female characters is an element that makes the body of women to have multiple significations.

In the next chapter the next two novels *Illaa* and *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* have been analyzed based on the two approaches. First, *Illaa*, the novel by Rahema Johar has been analyzed. After that

the novel *Dhoksa Jireenyaa* which is written by Abdi Fite has been critically examined from the perspective of the two approaches.

CHAPTER FIVE

FEMINIST DECONSTRUCTIONIST READING OF *ILLAA* AND *DHOKSAA*

JIREENYAA

5.1 Introduction

In chapter four, two novels have been analyzed from feminist deconstructionist approaches. In this chapter, the rest two novels are examined using the approach. First *Illaa* is analyzed following which the last novel *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* is analyzed. *Illaa* is the novel by a female writer Rahima Johar. It has a significant contribution in the study because an experience which may not be exploited from male authors may be explored. It also gives one a chance to compare the contents of the text written by a female author and that of a male author from the feminist perspective. The question whether a text by female authoress addresses issues of women better than that by male authors could be addressed based on the data interpreted from both sexes. The other novel is *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* by Abdi Fite. This novel is relatively recent as compared to the other selected novels which makes the study cover texts of recent accounts.

In this chapter, as stated above, the two novels have been analyzed from feminist deconstructionist approach. Thus, *Illaa*, has been closely examined in terms of how it attempts to establish the center, more specifically feminist agendas and how patriarchal system of representation triumphs over the attempts made to maintain its tradition. In *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* the binary opposition is identified and then how this center is deconstructed from the notions of woman's body, subject/object dichotomy, motherhood and knowledge have been critically dealt with.

Synopsis of *Illaa*

Illaa is the novel by a female authoress Rahima Johar. The main narrative of the novel revolves around a protagonist Chaltu a mother of two daughters. The narrative begins with a debate between Chaltu and her father on the issue of marriage. Unfortunately, her first husband, together with her first son, disappears after which she marries another man from whom she gets two daughters. However, the second husband dies. It is after such tragic life experience that her father urges her to marry a person who pretends as her brother-in-law who is rich enough to support both. Her father also wants her to get a baby boy who will support her when she gets old considering that the two daughters she has could not support her. However, Chaltu refuses the marriage proposal and is determined to live as a single mother and support her daughters with their education.

As per her plan, Chaltu juggles day and night as breadwinner and supports her daughters in the course of their education. While facing several challenges, she supports her daughters (Nanahi and Sartu) and they make it to grades eight and ten respectively. However, the second daughter falls in love with a boy named Kumsa whose family is rich. She, therefore shifts her attention from her education to romance. Sartu begins helping her mother who is suffering from debilitating evils- poverty and health problem. Meanwhile, Sartu contracts HIV/AIDS and dies. However, Nanahi completes her secondary education and joins Haramaya University. While she is pursuing her higher education, she also begins romantic relationship with Dr. Bonga. Few months before her graduation, she goes on a trip with Dr. Bonga to Harar town. Meanwhile, Chaltu, Nanahi's mother, is told that the son whom she has been looking for, for so long is Dr.

Bonsa. When Chaltu discovers that Dr. Bonsa and Nanahi, who went to Harar are a brother and a sister, she bursts into happiness and terror at a time. Kumsa does not waste time but makes a telephone call to Dr. Bonsa and tells him that he has found his mother. While Dr. Bonsa and Nanahi are rushing back to Dirre Dhawa they encounter a car accident which, results in Nanani's death. Eventually, Chaltu loses her two daughters tragically and is left with her son and her first husband.

5.2 Feminist Deconstructionist Reading of *Illaa*

The approach used in the analysis of the novel is feminist deconstructionist reading. First, the novel is analyzed from the perspective of feminist deconstructionist reading. To this end, the polarization of the relationship between man and woman is given. After that, how the text attempts to deviate from the usual way of depicting woman's body and how marginal elements from the text deconstruct themselves has been analyzed. Following that, the ways in which the female protagonist (Chaltu) attempts to find her own agency by creating her own subject position and where patriarchy and economic force interlock in victimizing her life due to which she becomes an object of systematic patriarchal oppression is analyzed in this part. What is more, the contradictory notions of motherhood and knowledge are also analyzed in this section.

5.2. 1 Binary Opposition

In *Illaa*, the female character named Chaltu, *haadha Adara* (Hadara's mother) is depicted battling with patriarchal yoke which regards a woman as a man's property based on the interest of paternal family. At the beginning of the novel, both her father and brother alternatively visit her and urge her to marry a man who pretends to be the brother of her late husband. The father and brother argue that the brother-in-law will take her out of poverty, loneliness and

homelessness. She has become homeless because the proposed husband has snatched her house for the tradition allows him to do so. Furthermore, the tradition also allows the brother-in-law to claim Chaltu as his wife.

Both her father and brother also argue that if she marries the person, she will give birth to a baby boy who will avenge the killer of her husband for her daughters are incapable of doing so. For her father and brother, marriage is an ultimate solution for a woman so that she could give birth to a son who takes revenge and who inherits her property. Her father has a firm conviction that, “Dhiiraafi dhalaan wal qixa miti” (Rahima, p: 11”. [A male and a female are not equal]; “Hoggaa kana ilmoo dhiiraa malee hoggaa dulloomte nama si tajaajilu hinqabdu...” (p: 12) [Unless you give birth to a baby boy, no one will take care of you when you get old]. Her father knows that Chaltu has two daughters. However, for him, they are not counted as children who are as capable as sons who could take care of a parent during an old age. Opposing this, Chaltu argues that marriage is not the only choice and that girls can take care of their family when the latter gets aged. The view that a woman alone cannot bring up children is something that Chaltu equivocally opposes, “Dandeettii dhalaa heerumuu qofa gootanii lafa keessanii jirtan. Isaan barachuu qaban heerumuun dura. Ilaalcha duubatti haffaa akkanaa kana dhagahuu hinfedhu abbaa” (p: 12). [You have concluded as if the destiny of a woman is marriage. However, before marriage they must learn. Father, I do not want to hear such an old-fashioned outlook].

Her brother Mume is another person who is blinded by the benefit he gets from the brother-in-law who is proposing to marry Chaltu. He pushes her so that she marries him. The debates that

go on depict Mume's thought: a baby girl is not a child, "...ilmaan ilmaan' jetta jedhan, atillee ilmaan dhaltee!" (p. 17) [...I heard that you obsessively say "my children', counting them as children". It is possible to infer from his speech that a girl child is not worthy of being a child. Her worth is if she is exchanged as an object for a man's interest. Kumsa also has a similar view regarding the role of a woman in the society, "Dhalaan karooraan dalaguu dhiisiiti yoom karoora baafattee beekti?" (p. 27). [A female never plans let alone do things in a planned manner." Kumsa is one of the male characters who believes that women are not able to plan for life let alone act on what they plan. They are rather created by Rabbi to please men (p. 27). The triangulation made by male characters (the father, the brother and Kumsa) has its roots in the oppressive patriarchal norm that dehumanizes a female child.

Chaltu opposes the views of these patriarchally oriented men. Chaltu calls such people "saree" (dogs) (p. 21). In Oromo society, the metaphor *saree* signifies a person who has no integrity or someone who is not worth human dignity. Therefore, her response to such views is, " 'Haati haadhuma, hundinuu isheef walqixa, dhiira ta'e dhalaa. Yaanni akkanaa kun fuula duraaf baduu qaba. Kan balleessus nama biraa osoo hinta'iin nuu dubartootuma' " (pp. 21-22). [‘A mother is nothing but a mother; for her, both male and female are the same. Such traditional outlook must be subverted. It is we, women, no one else, who subverts’]. For patriarchal men (Chaltu's father, brother and Kumsa), women are not considered human, and for Chaltu men who have such attitude are not worthy of humanity. Contrary to their view, Chaltu is a widow determined to bring up her daughters independently in the absence of a husband. This, as her father and brother have been arguing, is unthinkable in that society.

As shown above, the opposition between a man and a woman is highly polarized. In the running novel, Chaltu is depicted attempting to hold her position and fighting the status quo that destines of a woman only to marriage “Nama biraattillee hinherumu: isattis hinheerumu” (p. 19) [I neither marry him nor would I anyone else]. She is also determined that a woman can bring up her daughters, support them while they are pursuing their education and enable and encourage them participate in any sphere of life like their male children without getting married to someone else (p. 18). She is determined to put her plan into action, contrary to Kumsa’s belief (pp. 21, 27). The person who pretends as her brother-in-law has been trying to possess her through marriage; wants to realize a full security on her property he has already taken and has bargained with gangsters to murder her. Despite all these challenges, she brought up her daughters supporting them in their education where her elder daughter proves this, “...ati osoo hinta’iin ana kan waan dhalaan taate himuufii qabu...” [...it is not you who will show him who a woman is, rather it is me...]. Chaltu has brought up a more determined daughter to combat patriarchy. This is indeed the achievement of Chaltu who has built such assertiveness in her daughter. She considers this a real achievement. Therefore, as seen so far, the relationship between a man and a woman is polarized in the text. However, whether the polarization is maintained or disrupted is what this study attempts to examine in the subsequent subsections.

5.2. 2 Deconstructing Woman’s Body

In this section, an attempt is made to analyze how a woman’s body is depicted in *Illaa*. The analysis includes, how a woman’s body is represented in the novel and how the body is read as a text thereby helping one to make sense of the culture of the society.

The description of a woman's body in terms of physical appearance is not valorized in *Illaa*. The references made to a woman's body are not sexist and misogynic (for example, as a description in *Kuusaa Gadoo*) as is the case in the novels selected (especially novels by male author) for the study. In *Illaa* an attempt is made to describe a person both his/her internal and external features. For example, when Nanahi's physical appearance is addressed through the focalization of Dr. Bonsa, she is described in her entirety. This is depicted as follows: "Bareedina fuula isii haala fi amala isii unkaa fi sansakaa isii ammaas murannoodhaa fi ejjennoo isiin barnootarratti qabdu deebisee ofii isaatti hima." (p. 88) [He remembers and retells to himself, the beauty of her face, her characters, her shape and her integrity and her determination for her education]. Except for only two lexical elements 'face' and 'shape', the other lexical elements such as 'characters', 'integrity' and 'determination' appeal to the internal part of the female's embodiment. The female character is dominantly described internally.

The text even marginalizes the notion of the description of external body parts and valorizes the internal one. It deconstructs the standard of measurement of a woman's worth in relation to the external physical appearance. This is depicted in Nanahi's reaction to such beauty ideals.

"Dhagahi Saartuu, ana Rabbi naaf haadidu waan isin deemtaniin kana, ani fuula durattillee taanaan naman jaalladhutti malee hin heerumu. Bareeduma yoo taate irraa dhiqee hin-dhugu, wanti barbaadamu bareedina sammuu keessaa, kan namaafi ofiif yaadu." jetee.... (p. 81).

["Listen, Sartu, let God forbid what you are plotting against me; even in the future, I shall never marry anybody but whom I love. As for beauty, I shall never wash from his skin and drink it; what is important is the beauty of the mind, that is being full of care and sympathy for his lover," she said].

Nanahi is reacting to what her relatives, especially her uncle are planning to do. They are planning to give her to someone whom she does not know. The examination of Nanahi's personality reveals that she is a female character who does not readily yield in when it comes to choosing a life partner. Nanahi's standard of measurement is not physical appearance but the beauty of mind that exhibits character, 'care' and 'sympathy'. This, indeed, disrupts the beauty ideal constructed by the patriarchal ideology and its institutions. She is an ideal female character who is against the beauty ideal.

So far, an attempt is made to analyze how the text tries to deconstruct the notions of beauty myth. The text attempts to describe as Mills contend the 'body, soul and mind' i.e. both the external and internal parts of a woman. However, some attempts disrupt this notion of character description. For example, there are evidences that associates women's body to "asheeta" [full-grown] (p. 27), "haarofni" [fresh] (p. 31), "ijji bareedduun, fuulli bareedaan" [beautiful eyes and face] (p. 80) "afaan cirri"(p. 87) [a lip adorned with lipstick) " waan irra baatee deemtu" (p. 87) [hilly shoes], "(p. 87) "sarbaa" [calf] (p. 87). Though in the text an attempt is made to valorize internal beauty instead of the external one, these lexical elements, from the marginal position show that a woman has to be consumable as a "full-grown' person, "fresh", a "face that attracts a man", "beautiful eyes" and a "long neck". For example, Bonsa appreciates and encourages himself for he loves, "...mucayyoo bareedduu, magaala tan akka sattawwaa mormi ishee dheeratu..." (p. 88) [... beautiful girl who is chocolate in colour and whose neck is long as that of a giraffe [sattawwaa] ...". The lexical elements 'chocolate' and 'the neck of a giraffe' she is compared with are meant for an objectification of a woman. This shows that though the

text attempts to subvert stereotypes related to the beauty myth inculcated in the culture, the attempt is deconstructed because of the haunting of the stereotype.

Though there are limited contradictions in the depiction of the woman's body; that is, on the one hand, the text valorizes the description of a woman's body in its entirety and on the other hand, beauty ideal is implicitly depicted, the text attempts to avoid the perpetuation of a beauty myth.

What is implied from the description of a woman's body in *Illaa* is that the norm of a beauty myth, which is valorized and at times misogynic and the perpetuation of beauty myth as in the case of Abdi's *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* (kindly see the sub-section 'A Woman's Body' in the section Feminist Deconstructionist Reading of *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* is not valorized. This shows that there is a variation in the description of the external body parts of female characters between male and female authors. In the case of female authoress, emphasis is made both the internal and external description of women where as in the case of male authors more emphasis is given to the external description of the physical appearance of female characters. What is more, male characters texts are obsessed with selected external body parts of female characters body. In the case of female authoress, variation on emphasis on body parts between the description of male and female characters are not evident. However, in that of the male authors, there is a significant variation of the description of the bodies of female and male characters where the focus is only on certain parts of females body.

5.2. 3 Deconstructing the subject/object

In *Illaa* it is depicted that an important idea linked to finding one's own agency is creating one's own subject position. Chaltu is an example of this. She is depicted to be strong and assertive “ ‘Dhalaan barattee, bor nama taatee warra isee gargaaruu hin dandeessu eentu jedhe?’ ” (p. 21). [‘Who said a woman cannot educate herself and become a successful person and support her family?’. Chaltu is determined to assume the subject position that allows her to make herself visible in a society where women are otherwise invisible.

Chaltu, initially exercises her agency marrying a man of her choice. She does so resisting “harka isaanii darbee” (p. 132) [rejecting them] the power of her family, one of the oppressive patriarchal norms that limits the woman's power to choose her mate. She also supports the husband with the money that she earns (p. 131). Moreover, she resists the patriarchal view that relegates femininity and contends that her daughters are “Anaaf isaanuu dhiira caalu” (p. 17) [For me they are much better than a man is]. Furthermore, she is determined that she and other women are responsible to fight the patriarchal view that considers women worthless. She also motions the ways by which women should fight the patriarchal view as:

Akki itti balleessinu, duraan dursinee ijoollee shamarranii jabaatanii waan hundarratti hirmaachuu qabani. Nuti hawwan ammo, ijoolle shamarran keenyaafis akka dhiiraatti ilaalcha walqixaa gochuufii qabna. Barnootaan ta'e waan biraatiinis, wanti guddaan amman tana nurraa eegamu kana (p:18).

[As to how we subvert it, first of all we must empower girls to be courageous enough to take part in every sphere of life. We mothers treat in the same way we treat our boys be it education or other things. We should take care of this urgent issue].

The above extract shows that, Chaltu is a female character with pressing feminist issues such as the need to empower girls and give equal opportunity in education regardless of sex. That mothers need to discharge their responsibility to empower their daughters in every sphere of life is one of the feminist agendas. Given the conservative patriarchal tradition in the society, one appreciates the insights Chaltu has, an aspiration to change the life of women and create a working ground for women to exercise their agency. We can infer that Chaltu is an ideal woman who is an agent of change. Hence, she is a female character exercising her subject position.

She also has a firm stand that a woman can bring up her children alone, especially daughters whom the patriarchal tradition considers as unhelpful. What is more, she exercises her agency in choosing a man whom she loves. For example, when her daughters ask her how much she loves her first husband, she tells them that she loves him very much and that is why she has chosen him for marriage (pp. 133-134).

However, whether the text maintains its cohesion in depicting Chaltu as an agent who exercises her subject position is a question that needs to be addressed. As the narrative develops, Chaltu abruptly changes her mind regarding the education of her daughters which she has taken firmly.

As the narrative progresses, she accepts her second daughter's financial assistance by discouraging the elder daughter for she fails to assist her (Ibid, p. 68). On the contrary, she applauds her second daughter for she has subsidized her with the money that comes from her boy friend. Chaltu does not realize her own casualness (silliness) with regard to the

inappropriate means her daughter uses to subsidize the former with money. As seen under “binary opposition” and “institutional motherhood” (Section 5.2.2.1 and 5.2.2.4), she is a mother who is determined to support her daughters with their education. However, when life becomes so hard because of abject poverty, she abruptly shifts her mind and praises her second daughter when she brings money she collects from her lover. Chaltu is at a critical situation when the money comes and could not say no. This is where patriarchy and economic force interlock when it comes to the life of a woman in creating, to use Butler’s term a “psychic space” in women’s mind. It is the interlocking of the two that crushes her power.

Here, it is possible to observe the tension between psychical and economic realities. Economic deprivation necessitates psychological effects. Even when she receives the money, Chaltu is busy visiting the daughters’ uncle (who pretends to be the successor husband) who has owned her house just because the patriarchal order favours him. In her fighting with the two forces, she could not help but being defeated. Hence, she could not refuse what her child offers her. On the contrary, she blames the elder daughter for not bringing the money like her sister. Here, she has become powerless by the temporary benefit she gets from her daughter, forgets her responsibility to follow the status of her daughter with her education, and therefore fails to motivate her daughter to focus on her education as per her plan. The consequence is that her daughter begins to practice unsafe sex and then contracts an HIV/AIDS virus. The point is, as a mother she should have discharged her responsibility at least through advising her daughter to take care of herself regarding relationships with opposite sex or urge her daughter firmly stop involving in such practice in her early adolescence. However, she becomes an object of patriarchal oppression in that she could not realize from where the money comes. The money

comes from Kumsa who is well off economically and can do what ever he likes as the money has given him power. Hence, he has made many girls objects of his fetish sexual fulfilment for he has the money. This implies that if one has a money, he is powerful and the one who is powerful is inevitably a man like Kumsa who are fevioured by patriarchal ideology. The money not only blinds Saartuu but also her mother who fails to say no to the money that comes. Hence, the latter could not discharge her responsibility in guiding her daughter in the right direction, which she is not free of the blame for the mistake made by her child.

After she discovers that her daughter has contracted HIV/AIDS virus, she projected it on Rabbi in order to avoid guilt consciousness, “Osoo bu’aa keessan arguudhaaf ganamaa galgala asii fi achi jedhuu Rabbiin...” (p. 108). [While I have been toiling day and night and very keen to see the fruit of your success, Rabbi...!] The elder daughter does not take time but reacts to her mother’s projection, “Ummaa guyyan har’a miti kan akkana jedhan, har’aaf waan hunduu dhume, waan dhume gubbaa dhaabannee waan nutti fakkaate haasa’uu hinqabnu.” (p. 108). [Mom, today is not the right day to say that; it is already over we should not say whatever we like now based on bygone things]. She ought to blame either herself as she fails to follow up her daughter like she has done for so many years or she ought to blame her daughter who embarks on unsafe sexual practice before consulting her mother and against her elder sister’s warnings. Here, Chaltu projects her fault or the fault of her daughter on Rabbi.

Furthermore, though Chaltu at times exercises her agency (where she assumes the subject position) in choosing whom to marry (for example the first husband); she the other time submits herself to her families interest (where she becomes an object of the interest of her

family) and gets married to a husband of their choice (for example, the second husband). After the second husband dies, though she refuses to marry the husband of her father's proposal (the one who pretends as her brother-in-law) she is depicted to be a victim who under difficult life condition visits him if he sympathizes with her which he has never shown her (pp. 131-132). Therefore, Chaltu is the female character who oscillates between to borrow Butlers terms the "possibilities and limitations". So, at times, Chaltu exercise her agency (takes the subject position), and at other time she is a victim of patriarchal norms (takes an object position). The boundary between the subject/object position is so tenacious that the woman oscillates in the continuum.

5.2.4 Deconstructing Institutional Motherhood

Chaltu, the protagonist in *Illaa*, is a mother of two daughters. She is determined to support her daughters (Nanahi and Sartu) in their education. This commitment makes her follow the progress of her daughters and encourage them in their education (p. 21). This is not easy for her as she is fighting two battles; the first battle is the oppressive patriarchal stereotype that believes that a woman's only role is reproduction. Her father, an agent of patriarchal stereotype wants her to get married to the man who pretends to be her brother-in-law and gives birth to many children (p. 12). The father tries to convince her that he has many children whose name he rarely remembers. Such notion of institutional motherhood perpetuates what is depicted in Oromo proverb, "Dubartiin dhiira deessi malee haga dhiira hingeessu" [A woman gives birth to a man; but cannot be equal to a man]. This depicts the fact that she is an instrument created to fulfill the stereotypical role she is assigned to- to give birth to a baby boy who will be a successor. However, Chaltu adamantly rejects such stereotypical role saying

“Ilaalcha duubatti hafa akkana kana dhagahuu hinfedhu.” (p. 12)[I do not want to hear such outdated outlook]. Here, she is depicted as an ideal mother who disrupts the oppressive role of institutional motherhood.

The second battle is that her father is skeptical about Chaltu’s survival as a single mother. In his debate with her, he tells her his worries that she cannot live alone without a husband. As the narrative progresses, the same request comes from her brother (p. 17). This arises from a patriarchal assumption that a woman should get married to a man for security and safety (kindly read review of the related literature). Otherwise, her security is at stake. That is why the father asks her “Hanga yoomiitti akkanatti teessa?...” (p. 11)[Until when will you stay unmarried?]. This arises from a stereotypical assumption that a woman is dependent on a man. The request, rather than evoking a feeling of worry on Chaltu, instead it makes her burst into laughter. She resists his view that a single mother can lead her life and support her family. Hence, the position she takes disrupts the stereotypical assumption that a woman cannot survive as a single mother.

Thirdly, her father insists that she marries and gives birth to a baby boy contending that her daughters will be married to someone else leaving her all by herself. Her brother also argues that her daughters could not avenge their father’s killer for such acts are performed by men rather than women (p. 17). On the contrary, Chaltu rejects their view: “...isaanuu dhiira” (pp. 11, 17) [...they themselves are men]. The generic word ‘dhiira’ having an equal meaning in English ‘manly’ refers to a person of high quality in terms of performance and patriotism. In Oromo culture, someone who performs extraordinary deeds is given this title. This word,

derived from the word ‘man’, is set as a standard for both man and woman who perform heroic deeds. Although such patriarchal agenda valorizes masculine values, a woman is absent as a subject in her own right. That is, as the standard for achievement, success and courage is reserved for masculinity, the only way a woman is recognized is by attaining these sets of qualities established by patriarchy. Hence, according to such view, a woman has to act like a man for existence.

An important point in Chaltu’s response to the patriarchal agents (her father and brother) is that the domain reserved for a man can be occupied by a mother like her and her daughters. Her response depicts two feminist agendas. First, though the quality is conceived as territory exercised by a man, Chaltu has shown that that position is no more reserved for a man only; it can be occupied by a mother. It is with such determination that she insists on educating her daughters regardless of the challenges she is facing. Kumsa is a testimony to her courage as “Haati isaanii jabduudha, silaa argitee. Akka abbaallee, akka haadhaallee akka obboleessaallee taatee kan isaan guddifte isiidha. (p. 100). [I cannot tell you how strong their mother is. As you know, she brought them up as a father, a mother and a brother.] She attempts in taking of their place, not to assume it, but to show that it is occupiable. This is where the text departs from paternal mode of perpetuating its norms.

Towards the end of the narrative, she is overwhelmed because her first daughter completes her first degree and begins a romantic relationship with Dr. Bonsa. This is depicted when Kumsa, the husband of her late daughter, tells her that Nanahi (her first daughter) has gone to Harar for a courtship with Dr. Bonsa. She expresses her happiness as follows: “Yaa Rabii galata kee ...

yaa Rabbii galata kee... kan isiin bakka yaaddu san barnoota isii xumurtee, naamusa isii eeggattee nama jaallattu kanatti naaf heerumte....” (p. 211). [Oh my Rabbi thank you... Oh my Rabbi thank you...for she has completed her education, achieves what she has been dreaming of and becomes a disciplined girl who is engaged to someone she loves...” Such depiction of female character valorizes an ideal single mother, who has gone through difficulties to support her daughters in their education and who quenches her thirst given her daughter’s completion of her first degree with distinction. This notion of motherhood is what the text attempts to valorize.

Though the text valorizes Chaltu as an ideal mother who believes by motherhood as a choice, determined to live as a single mother, support her daughters economically and morally in their education and has shown mother-daughter empathy, these behaviours have not been maintained coherent as the narrative progresses in the text. The text is illusive in its depiction of Chaltu as a successful mother whose dream is categorically realized. For instance, as the narrative progresses, because of an interlocking of economy and patriarchy, she submits herself to the power of money that her second daughter brings from her sexual partner. The mother could not refuse the money and stick to her earlier commitment in following the progress of her daughter who begins to practice unsafe sexual intercourse in her early age because of which she contracts HIV/AIDS and dies early. The mother even applauds her daughter that though she is born second to Nanahi, she serves her mother first. “Naanahii dura dhaleetiin Sartuun dura naaf geese.” [I first gave birth to Nanahi but Sartu served me first] (p. 68). One wonders how a woman who once was very strong and determined to see the success of her daughters, all of a sudden changes her mind and appreciates a daughter who practices unsafe sex and subsidizes

her with the money she gets from her sexual partner. It is possible to observe Chaltu's fragility where her moral integrity is under question.

Worst of all, she discourages Nanahi when she devotes her time and energy to her education. One of the striking episodes is when Nanahi shows her mother her tenth grade result and the awards she receives from different groups. Her mother is not surprised by her achievement but scorns her saying, [Maal! Ani qarshiitu akka Sartuu koo keessaa dhangala'an see'e. Badhaasni kee waraqaa adii kana qofaa?] (p. 72). [What! I thought a lump sum of money would drop from inside the pages of your awarded papers and books like that of my Sartu. Is your award only pieces of white papers?] Nanahi is a daughter who needs a deep appreciation after this much effort and success especially by a mother who once was determined to support her daughters in their education. However, it has become otherwise. The question is, why is there such a change of behavior happen on a mother who used to encourage and support and was keen to see the success of her daughters? These contradictions show ambivalent notion of motherhood, and the ways by which understanding motherhood involves not so much getting rid of as making sense of these contradictions and oppositions. Hence, it is possible to observe that strengths and weakness and love and hate are potentially contained within motherhood. Julia Kristeva argues that one needs cultural understanding of the role of the maternal in female and especially of the negative feelings experienced by mothers, in order to understand: "the dark area that motherhood constitutes for women; one needs to listen more carefully than ever, to what mothers are saying, through their economic difficulties... through their discomforts, insomnias, joys, angers, desires, pains and pleasures" (1985: p. 179). Therefore, one can infer the ambivalent position Chaltu has taken, whether to take a strong, determined and passionate

position to see her goals achieved or assume fragile and submissive positions because of the crushing power of the interlocking of patriarchy and economy.

Moreover, though the text devotes almost all of its space valorizing the mother who goes through ups and downs to bring up her daughters in the absence of a father, in the end things dramatically turn out otherwise. The text deconstructs itself when Chaltu loses both daughters to death. Her elder daughter dies in car accident before she receives an award of her undergraduate degree, and the second daughter dies after she contracts HIV/AIDS.

Paradoxically, she is left with the husband who has disappeared for a long period of time and the son who, also has disappeared and whom she eventually meets after he becomes a doctor. However, this discourse (father, son, and mother) is not valorized in the text since the husband role in the beginning of the novel is only mention very occasionally and since the space given to him in the narrative is minimal; it eventually triumphs over the main discourse (the mother and daughters discourse) which is highly valorized and given a space in the running narrative.

Paradoxically towards the end of the narrative, Chaltu has found out herself under the mercy of her male child, Dr. Bonsa whom she discovers after looking for him for a long period since he has disappeared in his early childhood. What is more, she also finds her first husband who has disappeared for a long period. Hence, Chaltu, who has labored the rest of her life to see the achievement of her daughters loses them tragically and is left with her son and first husband. This indeed, contradicts with the depiction of Chaltu with regard to the theme of motherhood. She is a female character who oscillates between ideal mother and an institutional mother.

Besley writes that: “the hierarchy works above all by means of a privileged discourse which places as subordinate all the discourses” (Belsey, in Davis and Schleifer, 1994: p. 362).

5.2. 5 Deconstructing Knowledge

The purpose of this sub-section is to examine the notion of knowledge as depicted in *Illaa*. The notion of knowledge depicted in the novel is the protagonists’ efforts to educate her daughter which arises out of recognition of the role of education in exercising one’s agency. Secondly, the attempts the text makes to depict Nanahi as brilliant and active student and its disruption by the text itself when she is made to be successful assisted by Dr. Bonsa and Gemechis has been analyzed.

In the beginning of the novel, Chaltu is depicted as a female character with feminist agendas such as women’s self-reliance and independence to bring up their children. She is also determined to support her children in their education for she has a firm stand on female’s education. She persuades her father and resists her brother’s view in argument with regard to the issues of women. She also acts according to her plan. That is, though the text attempts to depict the protagonist to be assertive, strong, determined not to repeat what happened to her (that she dropped her education) girls, as the narrative develops, she appreciates her daughter who, leaving aside her education, helps her with money that she takes from her boyfriend. On the contrary, she discourages the other daughter who is determined to be active and strong in her education. Therefore, the intention made to depict unified and coherent text is deconstructed.

The dominant discourse of the text valorizes the effort a woman of two daughters makes to support them in their education. However, this effort is disrupted by the text itself when the woman demoralizes one of her children who is committed to education and appreciates the other who supports her with the money that she brings from her lover. The question worth considering here is how does a woman who, in the beginning of the narrative is determined to support girls' education more specifically her daughters', abruptly change her mind and stands against her daughter who is determined in her education. This is also a question that her daughter could not believe as depicted: "Naanahiin ajaa'ibamtee, "way ummaa atillee akkanumatti sijjiiiree maallaqni? Fedhiin barnootaaf ati qabdu sun aganumatti gabaabbatee?" (p. 60). [Naanahii, with surprise commented, "Sorry mom, has money changed your mind like this? How does the desire and dream you have for the education of your daughters cut short like this?].

The other evidence that deconstructs the valorization of female education is that, though an attempt is made to depict girls such as Nanahi, as determined and active in their education, the text still depicts her to be coached by men named Dr. Bonsa (who has been assisting her while she is attending her secondary education) and Gemechis (a man who is assisting her while she is attending her higher education). Apparently, the text depicts that Nanahi is brilliant, active and goal oriented in her education (p. 88). For example, she passes the national examination with great distinction and is awarded (p. 67). She also scores four points (4 CGPA) in Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Exam (EHEEE, 12th grade). However, there are marginal elements that disrupt this notion of feminist agenda. For one thing, the title of the man (Bonsa) is Dr. (a medical doctor). This in turn, perpetuates the stereotypical position that the

professional role is assumed by a man. For the other thing, Dr. Bensa is assisting Nanahi in subjects such as mathematics and physics which also perpetuates that females are not well off when it comes to hard sciences (pp. 88, 102). Nanahi also comments that had he not assisted her, she would not have been successful. Moreover, people like Kumsa also confirm that Dr. Bensa's has played a role in her achievement, "... gargaarsa ati isiif goote shoora guddaa qaba malee wayii akkanumatti dhufee duuba?" (p. 112) [...is it not the assistance you gave her which has got a significant contribution?]. After she enters higher institution, Gamachis also assist her especially in hard sciences. The implication here is that a man should be there for a woman to be successful. Hence, though Nanahi's talent and achievement is dominantly her own as she succeeded in General Secondary Education Certificate (10th grade), she is depicted to be dependent (Ibid, p. 67). This depicts the stereotypical role that assigns a man to hard sciences and that a woman is not well off at mathematics where she is made to wait for their assistance to achieve a good grade.

So far, the center established by the text has been identified. Following that, a critical examination has been made of how the text is deconstructed from the perspectives of woman's body, subjecting/object, motherhood and knowledge. In the subsequent section, feminist deconstruction of *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* is presented .

5.3 Feminist Deconstructionist Reading of *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa*

Dhoksaa Jireenyaa is the last but not the least novel selected for analysis using feminist deconstructionist reading. First, the binary opposition established between man and woman is traced. After that, how evidences identified under the sub-themes such as woman's body,

subject/object, motherhood and knowledge disrupt the binary opposition established are analyzed.

Synopsis of *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa*

The story of the novel *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* centers around Ayana Gutu and Marartu Hunde, male and female protagonists respectively. The story begins with Ayana employed as information technology officer in the Pentagon, Headquarters of the Department of American Defense. While serving there, he meets an Ethiopian female with whom he spends two years of romantic relationship. He usually suffers from guilt because he lost his wife Yadani when he was in Ethiopia. After working there for some time, he prefers to stay home and rarely meets his friends in the diaspora because of the guilt. While he is in such a state, he meets Marartu a female character. Fortunately, both get attracted to each other as they are interested in creative writing. For Ayana it is much more than this mutual interest. Marartu has all the features of Yadani. On their third meeting, Ayana tells Marartu the tragic death of Yadani. This part of a story is told in flashback: that Yadani was from poor family background; that she did not know her father and even her relatives; that they met at Addis Ababa University; that they got married after graduation; that Ayana forced her to go to his parent's home when she was seven months pregnant, where she was treated arrogantly by his mother because of her background which contrasted with Ayana's background. He goes on telling her that while Yadani was leaving his mother's room enraged by her insults, Yadani fell down and the fetus suffered complication. She was soon taken to Gimbie Adventist Hospital where she died. After the flashback, Marartu weeps and they call the story Ayana's secrete story .

On the other hand, Marartu tells Ayana that she was brought up in Addis Ababa. After she completed her secondary education, she joined Addis Ababa University to pursue her first degree. One day, while she was searching for a document from the house she was brought up in, she got a document that totally changed her life situation. From the document she knew that she was an orphan whose mother had died long time ago in The United States of America and whose father had been jailed because of the crime he had committed against her mother. After she discovered that she was an orphan, she dropped her education and went to The United States of America in search of her father. She tells him that she is not successful in getting her father. She tells Ayana that this is her secret life. After seeking for her father for a long period, Maratu gets him in a hospital where he is on the verge of death. Unfortunately, he dies before uttering a single word to his daughter. As a result, Marartu's ambition to get the where about of her mother's grave is left unanswered.

As the narrative develops, Ayana frequently mentions that Yadani and Maratu seem to be identical twins. More than anything else this forces Ayana get attracted to the latter. Marartu, on the other hand tells to Ayana that she is suffering from loneliness, identity crises and familial affiliation. Their intimacy develops into love. After that they get married.

A year after their marriage, Marartu falls victim to leukemia. She has been hospitalized several times but suffers a lot. On the verge of death, she is miraculously healed because she embraces protestant religion. Eventually, Ayan and Marartu get a baby boy named Kaku and that way the story comes to an end.

5.3.1 The Binary Opposition

Deconstruction argues that literary meaning is “constructed” through contrasts between binary oppositions such as man/woman, black/white, and many other oppositional categories. The focus of deconstructive criticism, therefore, is on those moments in literary texts when such oppositions are in contradiction. According to feminist deconstructionists, metaphors of “woman” and “difference” are used in texts phalocentrically to reinforce a masculine perspective. It argues that though metaphors are hierarchically ordered, hierarchical oppositions such as man/woman are unstable and could be deconstructed. In the novel *Dhoksa Jirenyaa* an attempt has been made to trace the binary opposition established between man and woman.

In the novel, men complain that although there are plenty women, no woman qualifies to be a wife. Women complain, too. The text valorizes the gap between men and women. For example, the attitude Imana and Ayana (male characters) have towards Magartu (the female character) who is Imana’s sister is viewed negatively. The text depicts that Magartu and her brother (Hika) are not aware of why they are brought to America. Moreover, both are sexually easy goers. However, gender disparity is observed when Magartu’s behavior is commented as a threat and is generalized for all women. No comment is given about Hika’s behavior though he also exhibits negative behaviours which Magartu is blamed for. Instead, Magartu is used as a benchmark for *Imana and Ayana* to generalize that all women are not fit to be wives, as shown in the following extract:

“Shamarran ati argitu kun hundi shamarran sitti hinfakkaatiin. Otoo jiraattees kan haadha manaa taatu hinjirtu... Shammarran guutteetti. Kan haadha manaa taatu waan jirtu natti hinfakkaatu. Hunduu attuudha. Yoggaa hunda jireenyi ishee qaawwaa waan itti fakkaatuuf isa duuchuuf

jecha tokko qabatee diidatti ammo kan biraa ilaalaa jiraatti. (Abdi, pp. 31-32).

[All the women you see are not women enough. There are a lot of them, though. All women that you see are not women in its true sense. If at all there is one, she cannot be a wife. All are unfaithful. As they always feel, their life is incomplete and they never stop looking at another man while they are still with someone else].

As depicted in the extract ‘all women’ are not trustworthy. A woman’s weakness is generalized as applying to all women. Imana believes that all women are shrewd (Ibid). Olike believes that all women are liars (p: 53). He further describes “...shamarri... homaa gatii tokko hin qabdu. Akka hoolaa albaatiin qabeeti. Hoolaan takka alba’uu qabde jennaan kan ishee eeggatu du’a qofa” (p: 32). [... women are worthless. They are like a dehydrated sheep. A dehydrated sheep waits for nothing but death. Women are just like that...Not one or two, but all]. Imana also supports his view citing proverbs that married men use to describe women as “meeqatu afaansaa ittiin ‘Dubartiin kennaa Waaqaati’ jedhe sana deebisee ‘Dubartiin seexana madaqxe dha’ jechuutti ka’e?”(p. 32) [How many men who once believed ‘A woman is a gift of God’ have begun to say ‘A woman is a devil domesticated’?]” For one thing, if a woman exhibits a good behaviour, she is viewed as a “gift’ not as a subject in herself. On the other hand, if she is untrustworthy, liar, shrewd, etc, she is given dubbed a ‘devil’”. Because both images emanate from the framework of patriarchal values, they are loaded by dehumanizing effects for women. This is how women are viewed by most male characters in the novel.

Similarly, most female characters in the novel also view male characters negatively. They contend that, “... dhiirri surree diratee diida kana yaa’u hundi ulaagaa abbaa manummaa kan guutu muraasa nuun jedhu.” (p: 32) [... almost all men seen out there can never be qualified

for a husband]. Robdu, one of the female characters, adamantly reacts against stereotypical view of Kumala towards women saying, "...dhiira waa'ee hinbaafne akka keetiifaatti herumuu manna jetteetu hafuu barbaade" (p: 51)[...she prefers to be single throughout her life simply because she would never want to get married to a worthless man like you]. Other than labeling men 'worthless', Robdu also attacks the oppressive culture that views that a single ('haftu') woman is single because she is rejected by men.

The other context is that, Ayana, Kumala and Robdu are having a conversation on the relationship between men and women. In the middle of their conversation, Robdu comments that "Dhiirris dhalaa komata. Dhalaan keenyas dhiira komatu malee kan gaarummaa walii haasa'u hinbeeku. Ebeluufi ebelu wal dhiisaniin guyyaa guyyaatti dhageetti nu duuchuuf jedha" (p: 49). [Except for putting blame on each other, women and men are never heard being positive in viewing each other. These days, we are fed up with the news that goes that Mr. X has left Mrs. Y and vice versa.]. When Robdu gives a general comment about the relationship between a man and a woman, she comments:

"Kunoo rakkinni isaa isa kana..." jettee harka walitti rukuttee taa'aa gam tokkoon xarapheezaa kompiitaraa sanatti hirkistee, "Shamarranis, dhiirri guutuu dha kan dhirsa ta'utu hinjiru malee jedhu. Isaan dhiirsaas kunoo akkana jettu. Otuu akkas akkas jettanii kan barbaaduufi kan barbaadamu wal jala darbaa, wal sodaachhaa, wal sobaa, wal gowwomsaa, wal dhoksaa, wal hataa akkas jechaa umriin adeemti, dhiiro. Biyya kanatti gaa'illi akka dirree waraanaatti sodaatama (p: 132).

"Here lies the problem..." said Robdu clapping both hands and continuing to comment, "Women say there are plenty of men but none of them qualify for a husband. You also say too. While you are blaming one other, fearing one another, lying to one another, fooling one another, cheating on one another, you miss each other". Marriage has been seen as a battlefield. Even those who get married to each other play prey and predator like a cat and rat.

As depicted in the extract, an attempt is made by the text to negatively polarize the relationship between men and women where men view women as potential threats and vice versa. However, such an attempt is made, evidences from marginal elements have shown that the polarization is not fixed.

5.3.2 Deconstructing Woman's Body

The purpose of this section is to analyze how female characters are represented as objects of gaze and the ways in which the representations are deconstructed by the text itself. The text, as material of production, perpetuates the beauty ideal more specifically in relation to women, making them objects of gaze.

As discussed in the theoretical framework, patriarchy is one of the oppressive ideologies. The agents of this oppressive ideology play their active role in oppressing the objects. It is apparent that women are the targets of this oppression. Amarti echoes this in *Dhoksa Jireegyaa* as, “Aadaa isa badaa miidhama dubartii irratti ijaarametu na gaadi’ee har’aan na ga’e” (p: 101) [It is this culture which is founded on the oppression of women that tied me and made me silent till today]. She utters this to Gamada whom she loved long time ago but could not have a courage to express her love. This shows that she is brought up in a culture that is constricting and its effect is so harsh that she has buried her feeling because she is a woman. This shows the extent to which the culture is oppressive with regard to women.

One of the discourses through which the patriarchal culture manifests its oppression is controlling a woman's body and making it the center of gaze. The text valorizes the beauty myth and hence, most female characters are described as beautiful. For example, Obse (p. 23), Amarti (p. 25), Solan (p. 83), Yadani (p. 161), Marartu (p. 80), Soyome (pp. 95-96), Anane (p. 79) and Rahel (p. 43) are described as beautiful female characters in the novel. Moreover, the beauty of these characters is described frequently. In the descriptions, selected anatomical parts of the women characters' bodies are focused on. The body parts described recurrently include breasts (pp. 64 [2], 77, 102- 103, 119)), buttocks, (pp. 43, 101, 102, 122-123,), lips (pp. 25, 65, 74, 80, 96), hair (pp. 43, 65, 74, 77, 80, 97, 137), eyes (pp. 67,80, 96, 99, 113, 127), tooth (pp. 67, 74, 80, 96), face (pp. 65, 96, 99), mouth (p. 65), the ribs of her chest (p. 65) and whist (pp. 74, 122). From these lexical evidences it is possible to infer that selected parts of women's body which are the center of erotic fetishism are recurrently used in the text. This shows that the text valorizes the idealization of selected anatomical parts of the women's bodies which are meant for voyeuristic consumption. From this we can infer that there is a standard of beauty established in the text that a woman is said to be beautiful if selected parts of her body are beautiful in a certain established manner. This is what Naomi calls "beauty myth".

For example, one can examine to what degree the above view is evident with regard to some of the female characters. To begin with Obse, she is described as follows:

"Boci qaama isheetii garuu isaan kana hundarra ija namaa seena. Keessumaa yoo isheen uffata qaama isheetti maxxanan uffattu, shamarrantu dhiira ta'uu hawwa. Baayyee itti inaafu. Qalbii nama hundumaatu faana kaata. Ijawwan dhiiraatu wajjin sigigaata. Miira dhiiraatu wajjin gidirfama. Onnee isaaniitu dhikkifata. Isheenis isa kan

waan beektuuf waa'ee godeettummaasheetii dagateetti. ..Oliiqaas kan qalbii fuudhe isa kana.” (p. 23)

[Her shape, more than any parts of her body attracts a beholder. Especially when she wears a tight, even women wish to be a man to get her. The heart of every man strides with her. The eyes of everyman moves with her. The desire of everyman moves stealthily with her. Their heart pounds. She also knows this. It is this that has stolen Olike's heart].

Obsee is stereotypically described by narrator focalizer. The narrator focalizer describes her focusing on her posture. Her shape is so fascinating that let alone men even women wish to be men to get her. For the narrator focalizer, what forces Olike get attracted to Obse is her shape. Therefore, according to the narrator focalizer Obse is depicted to be a female character whose body is a cause for the arousal of erotic fetishism.

Another female character whose selected parts of her body are described voyeuristically is Amarti.

“Immaanaan hubatee yoo Amartii ilaalu otuu hinbeekiin akka qalbiin isaa ishee faana sigigaachuu ta'e. Qaama bareedaa fi simboo onnee dhiira kotaasissee miira keessa dannabsuu qabdi. Funyaan ishee gabaabbatulle sinboon ishee nama harkisa. Hidhiin ishee haphii ta'ee akka qadaada qaruuraa geengoo dhiphoodha. Kan Immaanaa qalbii hate tokko isa hinta'iin hinhafu. Kennaa ganamaa ta'ee shamarran hidhii dhiphatan jaallata., Maddiin ishee gam lachanuun dhooqanii, magaalina sana irraatti miidhagina addaa haguugu” (p. 25).

[When Imana gazes at Amarti, his heart begins to creep with her. Amarti has an attractive body and a feature that attracts a man's heart and that entices a sexual desire. Her nose is short and her general feature attracts a man. What have stolen Imana's heart are her thin lips and her narrow and circular mouth shaped like a cylinder. He is destined to get attracted to women whose mouths are cylindrical. Her nipples add an extra weight to her beauty].

To examine to what degree Amarti's physical appearance is stereotypically described, it is important to focus on the anatomical parts of her body gazed at: "lips", 'nose", "mouth" and "nipples". Here, from the upper parts of her body, anatomical organs such as "ears" "forehead", "tongue", for example, are not used in the description. The question worth asking is why these are not body parts which are equally important as those which are described. No one denies their anatomical and physiological importance. These body parts are left out because they are not body parts which are chosen for voyeurism. So, what is at work in the description of "lips", 'nose", "mouth" and "nipples" is to entice an erotic fetishism in the character who is gazing at these parts of the female character's body. Moreover, in another episode the character focalizer, Imana, describes once again the physical appearance of Amarti gazing at two anatomical organs "mudhii" [*waist*] (p. 27), and "taa'aa" [buttocks] (p. 27). In the first description the body parts which are described in the second gazing are absent implying that these body parts are either passive or absent.

Furthermore, variable focalizers (in addition to Imana) alternate in gazing at Amarti's selected body parts. First, it is Immana who gazes at such parts of her body as 'thin lips' (p. 25), 'thin waist', which are the center of erotic fetishism (p. 25). As the narrative progresses, Amarti's body parts are objects of discussion for Immana and Ayana. Ayana, reminding Imana that he saw him when he is gazing at the part of her body 'buttocks' the other day, he comments on the way Immana gazes at the part of the body as "Al tokko yoggaa isheen kaatee deemtu, otuma haasoftuu iji taa'aa isheerra si bu'ee sesseqqaanuu irraa si baasuun fala ta'e bari" (p. 53). "On that day, when she stood up and you gazed at her, the ways your eyes were fixed on her buttocks was like a gum stuck to something in a way it could never be unfixed]. He then adds

that the body part is enticing sexual desire even in a man who is related to her in blood (Ibid, p. 53). Thirdly, the narrator focalizer also gazes at her and describes her body focusing on anatomical organs such as “guntuta” [breasts], “sarbaa” [tights] and “taa’a” [buttocks] (p. 101). Because of the recurrence of the two anatomical organs “mudhii” [waist] and “taa’aa” [buttocks], it seems that Amarti is nothing but two anatomical organs, waist and buttocks.

The other female character who is described stereotypically is Rahel. Her physical appearance is described as follows:

Uffata siree keessaan boci qaama ishee diidatti of saaxilanii mul’atu. Taa’aan ishee harka caalaa ija Zarihun harkise sun, gam tokkotti micciiramee ... dirri sun bareedina isheerratti bareedina biraa ida’eera. Qajjisni mataa isheetii siricharra faca’ee, walakkaan isaarra ammo raftteetti. Inni kaan ammo fuulasheerra faca’ee fuula ishee haguugeera. Yoggaa afuura baafattu, sochiin qaamasheetii marti waliin ol ka’ee deebi’a. Qaama isheetu rukutaa onnee ishee faana socho’a Malaaka siree fakkaatti (p. 43).

[The shape of her body is revealed through a bed time dress dropped loosely around her body. The buttocks that attracts Zerihun most... and the hips create another magnificent beauty. The most striking element in the portrait is the mane hair cascading down. Some parts of them spread over her face. When she breathes each part of her body rises and falls with each breath...She looks like an angel of bed].

She is described through the focalization of Zerihun. He is the one with whom she spends the night. He is gazing at her while she is sleeping. The general ‘qaama [body] and specific body parts, taa’aa [buttocks], “dirra” [hips] and “qajjisa mataa” [hair] are described. The description of her hair evokes wildness, a sense of the natural world, even as it shrouds her face. Moreover, she is compared to ‘malaaka’ [angel]. However, none has been said about the physical appearance of Zerihun with whom she spends the night. If at all, he is described only in terms of his quality of “womanizing” “Intala sana fakkaattu culuullee akka keetii, bofa akka Kiruubel

waliin maal godheen wal barsiisa.”(p. 220) [How can I introduce a beautiful girl like her to an eagle and a serpent like Kirubel]. He is described in terms of his swift and tricky nature where she is described in terms of evoking fetish desire in a male. Other male characters such as Olika are also described in terms of their sexual performance than their physical appearance “Bifa kee dagattullee akkamiin leenca teessisaa ishee bushaa ba’e dagattiree”(p. 220) [She can forget your physical appearance but how do you expect her to forget the lion (*his sexual organ*) that has made her sleepless (*italics added*)]. The metaphor “lion” refers to Olika’s genital organ. This implies that what is important for a man is not his beauty rather his capability in performing sex. The metaphorical way of describing male character’s anatomical organ is to show that it is a quality of manhood. This shows a disparity in the description of both genders.

Anane is also described based on the standard of beauty established by the text. The description of Anane is through the focalization of the narrator focalizer. The narrator focalizer describes her as:

Intala mudhiin dhommoqaa, qajjisi mataa isheetii wal maree akka muujjaa balbalarraa dalga galee dugda isheerra ciisu. Yoo hidhii ishee haphii san gargar saaqxee onneerraa kolfitu, looshaa ilkaan aannanii kan qalbii dhiiraa harcaaftu. Yoo bakka hojii sana keessa oliif gadi adeemtu sochii isheetu lafa bareecha. Alamayyoon kana argeetu of to’achuu dadhaba (p. 74).

A girl whose waist shrivels in a way she likes and whose hair shrouds over her shoulder like a savanna grass. When she stretches those thin lips and laughs from the bottom of her heart, those teeth which are as white as a snow evokes an erotic feeling in a man. When she moves here and there in the office, her movement is graceful. It is gazing at this that Alemayeh could not control his emotions.

The anatomical organs used to describe Anane includes “waist”, “hair”, “lips” and “tooth” (p.77-79). These anatomical organs, as commented by an narrator focalizer are consciously chosen in a way that they induce an erotic fetishism. On top of that, the selected body parts of Anane are described once again which includes “handhuura” [navel], “harmawwan” [breasts] (2 times) and “qajisa” [hair] (p. 75). When Anane is described twice in the text, nowhere has Alemayehu described. The recurrence of the description of the same female character implies that the male characters in the novel are obsessed with certain sets of anatomical organs of woman’s body which are the center of erotic fetishism. From this it is possible to infer to what degree the text perpetuates the “beauty myth”.

However, none has been said about the physical appearance of Alemayeh except his fetish behavior. The selected anatomical parts of Anane’s body are consciously chosen by the narrator focalizer in a way that entices sexual desire in Alemayehu. Moreover, the effect these anatomical parts creates in Alemayehu can also show the fetishization of the system of representation. Similarly, Marartu is described based on selected anatomical parts of her body. They include, “hidhii” [lips], “ilkaan” [tooth], “ijawwan” [eyes] and “bissii ijaa” [eye lash] (Ibid, p. 80). Moreover, Soyome is also described with the above anatomical organs (p. 95-96).

In the text there is a high prevalence of the description of selected anatomical parts of women’s body. It is perpetuated to the extent that after a name of a female character is introduced what immediately follows is an obsessive description of her selected anatomical organs. This is complemented by the fetish comments of the narrator focalizer. For example, when all the above women’s anatomical elements are described in different space and time by different

focalizers, no lexical evidence that shows the inner parts of the female characters are described in the places where the external body parts are described. This shows to what degree the text is obsessed with the manipulation of the body parts of the female characters described, specifically the external parts of female characters' body. On top of that, the focalization also played a significant role in presenting the women's body for voyeuristic consumption. Because, what is immediately followed after the women's body parts are described is the sexual desire it inflicts, "qalibii dhiiraa kaasee teessisa" (p. 77) [men's sexual desire moves up and down with her], "intala ilaalee hafe" (pp. 25, 80) [lost while staring at her], miirri keessa isaa akka qilleensa hamaa bubbisuutti ka'e" (p. 127) [his inner feeling begins to bluster as a blowing wind], in either the narrator focalizer or the male characters focalizer who are gazing at the body parts (pp. 64, 65, 67, 74, 77, 80).

It is possible to see one episode among many sexist comments given by the narrator focalizer. The gendered position of the narrator focalizer is depicted in a conversation between Soyome and Gamada. The topic of discussion is about how identity is maintained or fractured. The issue is so pressing that Gamada is speaking and Soyome is listening attentively. Meanwhile, the narrator focalizer interferes and describes Soyome voyeuristically as "Intala funyaan konkonaan kan bifti magaalaa, intala ilaalchaaf nama hawwattu" (p.172). [A girl who has straight nose, who has a chocolate colour and who is attractive for the beholder). ...]. The partiality by the narrator focalizer is observed from the very name given to both characters. The name given to the female character is 'Soyome' which refers to 'slim', 'straight' (the one that has an ideal woman's shape) whereas the name of the male character 'Gamada' refers to he who is happy. The naming of both characters is gendered when metaphorically seen. That of the females

name presupposes that she is 'slim', a physical appearance that entices men's erotic fetishism where as that of the male's name presupposes that he enjoys "happiness" perhaps in having such a beautiful (slim) female as Soyome. What is more, the thing is not why the narrator focalizer voyeuristically describes her for there are many instances of such kind in the novel, as discussed so far. But, the point is what urges the narrator focalizer shift to such issue where the topic they are debating on is so thought provoking. The partiality of the narrator focalizer becomes vivid when he shifts to the description of the male character as, "Akka Gammadaan fageessee egereesee yaade kanatti fageessitee yaduu battellee..."(p.172). [Thought she is not able to think as far and critical as Gammada]. The clause "think as far and critical" makes clear that there is a hierarchy of ability to think where the male character is far sighted that of the female is less. When the mood of the conversation is examined, the description of the female character is not important. The sexism of presentation (gaze) is so patriarchal and constricting that the female character is there to champion his outlook and logical reasoning, "...ilaalchaaf akkaataa ibsa gammadaa hedduu jaalatteetti... 'Dargaggeessa sammun raage' jette (p.172). [...she likes his outlook and logical expression... 'A young man with critical mind' she said to herself]. As his position is logical and as his argument is appealing, hers too is logical in that the latter argues that identity is not as such fixed. But, the narrator focalizer marginalizes her position and immediately after the male character finishes his argument she simply appears to shift the topic. In the conversation hierarchy is at work. The narrator focalizer is on the top, intruding in between the two characters as he likes and inserting an erotic fetishism on the body of the female character. Second, the male character controls the discourse (almost the page [20 lines]) out of which the female character uses only three sentences (2 sentences on the top of

the page and one sentence on the edge of the page) where seven sentences are used by the narrator focalizer only to valorize the male character's view and marginalize that of the female.

So far, attempts have been made to analyze how the text valorizes the description of sets of selected anatomical parts of the women's body. In the text, gazing is evident where the narrator focalizer valorizes the mind of the male character and on the contrary valorizes the commodification of the body of woman character. Next, an attempt is made to analyze how the text deconstructs the norm 'the beauty myth' established so far.

However the text attempts to establish a standard of beauty of woman's body, there are evidences that disrupt the standard. For example, Olike, the male character's description of Obse is one of the evidences that questions the cohesion of the standard of beauty established by the text. He describes Obse differently from the ways the female characters are described so far. The description focuses more on the internal beauty (the mind). He describes her as:

"Kun isaan ilaalcha fi amantaa akka keetii qaban qofaaf hojjeta. Miidhaginni dhala namaa bifaan qofaa miti. Isa kana siif ibsuuf halkan kunuu na hin ga'u. Yeroon sammuu akka keetii qabu sanan taa'a ishee argee jaalladhe, Obsee. Oolee bulee garuu, qalbiifi yaada ishee kan taa'aa ishee sana caalaa miidhagu ta'uu itti siiqeen hubadhe. Haa ta'u malee, miidhaginni ija isa ilaalurra jira. Akka ati ilaaltetti malee akka namni siif ilaaletti miti. Maaliif kana yaadde jedhee si hin komadhu. Sababiin isaa yeroon akka kee kanatti yaadaa ture baayyee fagoo hin turre" (p. 56).

[This works only for you and for those who have such a belief and an outlook like yours. The beauty of a human being is not limited only to the physical appearance. The whole night is not enough to explain this to you. It was when I was having the same attitude like yours that I was attracted to Obse's buttocks. But, when I gradually come closer to her, I have recognized that the beauty of her mind and thoughts are more than the organ I earlier got attracted to. Any ways, beauty is in the eyes of the

beholder. It is as you behold it not as someone beholds it for you. I don't mind for the fact that you have that idea in your mind. Because the time I was having an attitude like yours was not far of].

In this extract, Obse is described more in terms of internal beauty. What is valorized in this description is the quality of her 'mind' and her 'thoughts'. This disrupts the recurrent description of woman's body in the running novel for the description is highly preoccupied with the description of selected body parts from out side.

He uses the most widely used quotation 'Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder'. His comment shows that beauty is a 'belief' and/or an 'outlook' that can be constructed. Hence, it is possible to infer that the descriptions that are seen above about Obse are the result of what is inculcated in the society which is used as a standard of measurement. What is more, the outlook and belief that these characters are reflecting is not natural. It is something that one can get rid of and develop another notion of beauty. This shows the subjectivity of the beauty ideal. For example, Olika uses to share a similar belief and outlook with Zerihun before he comes to know the personality of Obse. This shows that though he uses to reflect the stereotypical notions of beauty ideals he has gradually understood that beauty is not limited to the external parts and he rejects it and has developed one which includes both the inside (the mental) and the outside (the corporeal). This indeed, deconstructs the convention of the beauty myth established by the text itself.

Which description of the woman's body is taken for granted is a question which is controversial. Every description valorizes its own agenda. What makes their description subjective is that there is no place in the narrative where female characters such as Obse

comment on their body. It has become a sight where others contest on. Therefore, as depicted in the successive descriptions, it is difficult to tell who Obse is. She is a fragment whom the authorial narrator, Olike and Zerihun describe in their cup of tea.

Moreover, the notion of beauty myth valorized in the text is deconstructed by Ayana's mother who interrogates beauty ethos established as standard of measurement for woman's worth only to reflect the other version of a stereotype. It is depicted when her friends applaud the physical beauty of Yadani. Mrs. Magartu, has shown her contempt that physical beauty is not the standard of measurement (p. 144). For her, the standard of beauty is not physical (corporeal) one, rather the family background, especially a family of higher economic and social status. Here, for her, the standard of measurement for a woman is her economic and social status (pp. 153-154).

Moreover, there is another loose stone in the novel that disrupts all the attempts the text makes to valorize "beauty myth". One of the female characters, comment that notions of beauty are rather constructions. It is depicted in the following extract:

Kanan asoosama keessaa hinjaalanne tokko ammo nama fokkiftuu keessatti hinargitu. Barreessitoonni hundinuu waa'ee nama miidhagduu barreessuu malee dhugaa jiru hordofanii hinbarreessan. Akka waan warri bifaan godeettii seenaa hinqabneetti yaadu ta'ee hinbeeku. Kanaafan hindubbisu." jette (p. 115).

[‘Why I hate reading a novel is because, you do not see an ugly female character in it. All novelists do not write what is actual but about a beautiful female. It seems as if the ugly ones do not have a life to be written about. That is why I do not want to read novels’ she said].

When some female characters are depicted to oppose the perpetuation of beauty ideal in novels, the text paradoxically perpetuates the stereotype as shown in the aforementioned descriptions of female characters such as Marartu, Yaadani, Rahel, Anane, Soyome, Obse, Amarti, to mention but a few. This, indeed, shows that the text deconstructs itself or that contradictory notions are depicted in the text.

5.3.3 Deconstructing Subject/object

This section deals with one of the female characters who takes the subject and object positions in the conditions of life she encounters. The focus has been made on Marartu who has gone through intricate life situations in the text.

Marartu, at times assumes subject position and at the other time an object position based on the challenges of life she faces. She takes the subject position when she writes about the story of a girl about whom she is told in Menelek Hospital. When she discovers the girl about whom she has written a story is herself, she calls the girl “nama biraa”(p. 233) [Other]. The story about the girl is written before Marartu discovers that it is about her. Therefore, when she is writing about the story of the girl, the contexts based on which she writes is different as it is the story of someone else. If she has written that story after she discovers that it is about herself, it at least, will never be the same as the story she has written before she discovers that it is about her, or it could have been another story. Therefore, Marartu has taken different positions based on the realities she has faced in different conditions of life as: subject (goota barreesse [who has written the story])-as orphan (seenaa ofii [my story])- as an object, the girl (seenaa nama biraa [an Other’s story]). Marartu in this extract is depicted as the same person

having three versions. Marartu as the girl (object) is the one whose story is written based on a true story. Marartu as an orphan (subject) is the one who used to live as a daughter of somebody but who later on discovered that she was an orphan and that her family were other else. The third Marartu (subject) is the one who has written the story of the object (a girl) which later on becomes the story of her and who discovers that she used to be an orphan. Here, many selves of the same self is depicted which makes that subject Marartu having series of subjectivities in the continuum subject/object dichotomy.

Furthermore, Marartu is used as an object so that Ayana loves back Yadani, his first lover. Ayana loves Yadani very much. This is depicted in his conversation with Marartu. He gets attracted to her the first day he has seen her because most of her features resemble Yadani. It is through Ebisa that he once again meets her. He could not believe the co-incident when he meets her once again. He tells her the tragic story of Yadani which he calls “Dhoksaa Jireenya” (The secret of Life). The story depicts that his life is highly entangled to his memory of Yadani. It is on the day they meet that he told Marartu that she resembles Yadani. In view of this context, Marartu is a pawn to be used by Ayana so that he loves back Yadani. Ayana is seeing Yadani in Marartu. For example, when he meets Marartu for the first time he is lost in thought. The authorial narrator comments this as, “Otoo ija isaa irraa hinfudhatiin harka isaa itti qabee hafe. Akka kolloo arbii yaadaan furguggifaamaa qalbiin hatamee bade. (p. 127) [Fixing his eyes on her and stretching his hand to shake her, he is lost in thought. He is lost in thought like a rocket]. When he looks at Marartu, he is forced to move back, in thought, to a lover who was lost accidentally. Yadani, who was lost long time ago has left a scar (wound) which is repressed and comes out because of the presence of Marartu who looks identical to Yadani. The word

'yadani' is a metaphor that signifies nostalgia. As her name depicts, when Ayana meets Marartu, he is nostalgic about Yadani. When Marartu, who looks identical to Yadani appears, she is a cause for the lost Yadani to be relived. Here, Marartu is used as an object (a mirror image) to bring back the lost Yadani to the fore so that Ayana loves back the latter. This is what Marartu is afraid of when she tells Ayana that he is going to use her as an object to love back his lost lover, Yadani. That he loves back her is complimented by Marartu's suspicion and frustration on the date when they are having a journey to Atlantic City away from DC as:

“Yaadani waliin wal fakkaattu akkuma naan jette, Yaadani sitti fakkaadhee yaadi kee natti qabamee ta'a. Eenyummaa koon otoo hintaanee fakkaattii nama biraan najaallattee laatan jedheen sodaadhe. Ar'allee Yaadaniin akka onnee kee keessaa hinduune nan beeka. Kun ammo yoo hinaaffaa nama lubbuun hinjirre tokko ta'uu baatullee wabii jireenyaa na dhorkata. ” jettee boquu dabsitee “Namooti si'a tokko tokko haala hin yaadamneen jireenya namaa seenanii battaluma ba'u. Tokko tokko garuu bubbulanii qalbiifi yaada namaa hatanii mallaattoo faana miila isaanii onnee namaa keessatti dhiisanii jireenya namaatti holqa uumanii deemu. Kanaafan jaalala sodaadha....Kanaafan ofis shakkee namas shakka...” fuulli ifaa silaa battala daaraa uffate... (p: 211).

[“As you tell me that I resemble Yadani, perhaps you get attracted to me because I resemble her. I feel frustrated with a suspicion that you love me not in my own right as myself but through the image of the other. I know that Yadani is still not dead in you. Though I am not feeling envious of the person who is not alive, it denies me a trust for life. ” saying this she slightly leaning her head side ways and said, “Sometimes some people enter our heart and leave out soon. However, others gradually controlling our thought and feeling, they leave out leaving their traces, creating a hole in our heart. Therefore, I am afraid of love. That is why I suspect myself and others too].

The episode is when Marartu asks him if he has eaten his lunch. This time the wound which is repressed in his unconscious has come out as “Ijawwan isaa imimmaan kuufatan... Bara lubbuun jirtu namni akkas ittiin jettu Yaadani qofa turte (p. 211). [Tears have filled his eyes...

When she is alive, it is Yadani who asks him if he has eaten his lunch]. So, Marartu is an object through whom Ayana loves back Yadani which is the unfinished business between them. Hence, Marartu is used as an object.

Other than subject/object positions that Marartu has assumed, there are instances where she is depicted to be in abject state. The most shocking state of abjection is when she is reduced to the level of skeleton because of the disease she suffers from. The disease is “Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia”. Before she is informed by the doctor, the setting evokes abjection, “a wind which is cold and that blows”, “an ice that rains”, “trees that stood bare (without leaves” (p. 276). It is after this that the doctor informs her that she contracts an acute Lymphocytic Leukemia. Though she frequently visits a hospital, for her status is highly complicated she is admitted to a hospital where many women of her kind are treated. The scenario in the hospital also evokes an abject state. People die on daily bases. What Marartu hears day in and day out is the death of women. The classes in the hospital where the patients are treated are classified according to the degree of the complication of the disease. Marartu is admitted to the last class where one rarely leaves alive. This indeed has evoked in her abject state (p. 277). This depicts that Marartu not only has assumed subject and object positions in different circumstances but also is in abject state.

In sum, the critical examination made so far shows that Marartu is not a simple stereotype. Instead, she is depicted to be a subject, an object and even in state of abjection (in between subject and object) in different situations. Maratu’s situations show that she is a female character who oscillates in the continuum between the subject and object positions.

5.3.4 Deconstructing Institutional Motherhood

In this sub-section, Marartu's life is critically examined with regard to motherhood in the novel. How institutional motherhood triumphs over the mother-daughter empathy and how the thematically important mothers are marginalized have been analyzed.

Marartu, at times is depicted as an institutional mother who has given birth to a baby boy who has been given a name that shows the complex life that his father has gone through (p: 320). In the process of emasculation which is androcentric where a father-son bond is established, Marartu serves as an institutional mother to perpetuate the patriarchal bond. Here, she is depicted as an object who is created to set a stage for Ayana's substitution of what he lacks.

However, this notion of Marartu's depiction as a token of father-son bond is deconstructed by evidences from the marginal elements. That is, her mother was trying to bring up Marartu alone. However, she unfortunately lost her life by car accident while rushing towards her daughter. After Maratu hears this tragic news from her colleagues who have heard the news from her father's friend, she psychologically is having an attachment with her mother as she is busy looking for her father to know why he hardened his heart against her mother and why he battered her before he was jailed. This shows Marartu's attempt to spiritually attach herself with her mother. This implies a mother-daughter bond between Marartu and her mother which in turn deconstructs the father-son bond established by the text.

Here, Marartu is depicted as a female sandwiched between two contradictory powers- a daughter who is nostalgic of mother- daughter bond and a mother who serves as an instrument for the fulfillment of the dream of father-son bond. On the one hand, as a who longs for a mother-daughter bond in her unconscious , she has tried to know the where about of the place of burial of her mother, has been looking for her father to be told about her mother; on the other hand, she has played the role of an institutional mother for the realization of the dream of Ayana who is very keen to create a father-son bond.

The other thematically important mother is Yadani's mother. As Yadani's life is embedded in Ayana's through flashback, her mother's life is embedded in her. It is only when one gets access to Ayana's mind when he is telling about Yadani to Marartu that one gets access to Yadanis mother. Her mother enters the narrative only to be assassinated in the text. A lot could have been said about her abject poverty and the sympathy she had for her only daughter. However, one only gets accessed to her life after entering to the lives of Ayana and then Yadani. This shows that, regardless of the key issues of feminist concerns which are depicted in her life, the text marginalizes the space given to the mother (p. 140).

In sum, motherhood, in *Dhoksa Jireenyaa* is depicted as a space where the dominant discourse appropriate for the domination of woman's body. On the other hand, this attempt is deconstructed in that there are female characters such as Marartu who spiritually attach themselves to mother-daughter bond. Moreover, there are mothers who overcome abject poverty and help their daughters in their education though not lucky to see the fruit of their efforts like Yadani's mother.

5.3.5 Deconstructing Knowledge

The purpose of this section is to examine the notion of knowledge in *Dhoksa Jireenya*. A close reading has been made to show the ways by which patriarchal system constructs women who deviate from the norms and how the power of argument female characters give deconstructs it. Moreover, a critical examination is made to show how female characters' critical ability deconstructs the misogynic description of their mental ability by male characters who are patriarchal agents.

In the text women are depicted as nonknowledgeable as depicted in the proverb "A woman cannot be knowledgeable but can bear a man who is knowledgeable" (p. 34). In the novel, a female character by the name Aster is depicted as nonknowladgeable. She is misogynically described by the narrator as empty-headed. She is described in a way that her faculty of thought has been 'decayed' due to which she has lost memories of any kind in her life as, "Gogaan qaama isheetii akka ilillii hongeen dhahee cooligeera... Sammuunshee yaaduuf, tilmaamuuf, har'a boriif egereessuuf ishee wajjin uumame sun dammeessa'ee isa har'aayyuu seeraan yaadachuu lagateera" (p. 119). [Her skin was shriveled as a flower hit by frost... The mind, which had been created to think, to predict, to speculate, was decayed and could not even tell what is going on today]. She is also described in a way that her memory is lost not only in remembering about the past but also, in not telling what is happening today. From this, it is possible to infer that she is depicted as a character whose mental ability is deteriorated. The problem is not because Aster is nonknowleadgeable but because she has not been given credibility as a knower, a lack of what Langton calls "intersubjective authority". Because of

this lack, even when she is the knower, she is not known by others as the knower (Langton, cited in Fricker and Hornsby, 2006, p. 132).

However, this notion of describing Aster as nonknowledgeable is not maintained constant in the text for evidences from the marginal elements depict that she has qualities which could make her knowledgeable. For example, after she mentions the fact that she lives half of her life in America, she mentions her observations to Anane which is a critical observation. It is difficult to expect a critical comment from the character like Aster who is misogynically described as above. However, it is possible to examine her critical ability in the comment she makes such as the following:

“Hin maraanne. Akkas miti maratummaan. Maraatummaa sitti fakkaachuu mala. Umrii koo walakkaan Ameericaa keessa jiraachaa jira. Nama na fuudhu dhabeen miti kanan umurii koo kanaan otoo hinheerumiin taa’u. Garuu, waan ati biyya kanatti argitu kun hundi itti fakkeessuudha malee waan dhugaa yookaan waan dhaabbataa miti. Hunduu qalbiin isaa bu’aa faana jira. Inni wal fuudhu wal jaallatee kan wal fuudhu sitti hinfakkaatiin. Inni dhiiraa tarii amma waarteesuu waliin jiraadhu maaliifan fuudhee kiraa manaa ofirraa hincabsu jedhee fuudha. Dhagaa tokkoon simbirroo lama isa jedhan beektaa? Isheen heerumtus jaallattee otoo hintaane, bu’aadhaafi. Booda otoo hinyaadiin yoo gaa’illi imaanaa ta’uu baran, jireenya biraa keessa dhidhimanii Uumaa komachaa jiraatu. Kanaaf, biyya kanatti jaalala dhugaa gaachitee jaalala dhugaa argachuun hawwiifi abjuudha.(p: 121).

[“I am not mad. This is not Madness. It may appear to you as if I am mad. I have lived half of my life in America. In the life I have spent, my problem has not been getting a man who marries me. But, all the ways of lives that you are observing here are not lives which are real but lives which are forged. The heart of everyone inclines towards a benefit. Do not think that everyone who marries each other do so because s/he loves each other. Man marries because he is offended of going with bar ladies and because the one whom he marries shares his burdens such as house rents. Do you know the saying that goes, ‘Killing two birds in one stone?’ The woman marries not because she loves him but for a benefit. However, when at the end of the day they realize that marriage is an institution that

requires commitment, they shift their blames on God. That is why in this country, to give and to receive a true love for a couple is rather a dream].

For one thing Aster deviates from the standard set for a woman. She is expected to be a coy, uninformed and loyal to be accepted as good women in the patriarchal system. But, because she crosses the boundary reserved for men because of the seductive role she is playing by pushing Anane to go with Alemayeh, she is labeled as a bitch. A woman who violates the norms established by the patriarchal order is given the characteristics of madness, monstrous and/or bitches. Lee Edwards, (cited in Davis and Schliefer, 1994: pp. 198-9) reinforces the view that negatively assigns strong women characters as:

More peculiar and sadly unsurprising were the assessments I accepted about fictional women. For example, I quickly learned that power was unfeminine and powerful women were quite literally, monstrous...bitches... they must be eliminated, reformed, or at the very least, condemned... Those rare women who are shown in fiction as both powerful and, in some sense, admirable are such because, their power is based, if not on beauty, then at least on sexuality.

Secondly, she goes against the established standard that a woman could not give on issues like the superficiality of human relationship. She is well informed about the nature of the people she is describing that they are 'forged' and that people are obsessed with the benefit they get out of relationships including marital relationship. So, the question worth mentioning is how a mind that is commented by the narrator as "decayed" gives such a critical comment about the social/institutional relationships that the people are having.

Moreover, the power of argument Aster gives and her critical ability in examining the ideology that is working deconstructs the view depicted in the proverb and the misogynic description of

her mental ability by the narrator. Her critical ability can be observed from the following extract:

“Biyyi lafaa kun isaan qulqullummaan keessa jiraataniif hinuumamne. Hattoota, sobdoota, hamtootaafi namoota yakkamtootaan kan guuttedha. Namooti keenya sagaagalummaa ifatti mormu. Dhoksaatti garuu ni raawwatu. Hattummaa akka cubbuu guddaatti ibsu. Dhoksaatti garuu hattoon isaan caale hinjiru. Ifatti yoo isaan soba ciigga’an argita. Isaan garuu sobaan riqicha hundaa cee’u. Yakka ni balaaleffatu. Haata’u malee harki isaanii dhiiga qulqulloota meeqaan dibamteetti. Biyya akkasii keessatti adda ta’een jiraadha yoo jette of sobuudha. Adunyaa cuubuun laaqamte kan keessatti amantiin ati natti himtu anaaf hiika hinqabu. Kitaaba isin ittiin of jaamsitan sana nama qorqalbii biyya lafaa kana dursee qoratetu barreesse” jetteen (p. 72)

“This world is not the safest place for those who live a sacred life. It is filled with thieves, hypocrites, backbiters and criminals. Our people condemn adultery openly. However, they practice it underground. They outrageously abhor stealing. But, in the underground, no one could compete with them. You see them when they outwardly despise dishonesty. But, for them, all bridges are crossed by dishonesty. They condemn crime. However, their hands are anointed by the blood of many innocent people. If you are at variance with all these, it is rather cheating yourself. The religion you are telling me in the world filled with sin has no worth for me. The book which you are blinded by was written by a psychologist who had already studied the world.

Aster is very critical about the existing religious, moral and psychological phenomena. She has observed how people even religious people are living in this world. In the extract, it is depicted that she is familiar with religious values like Biblical commandments. For instance, stealing, killing, dishonesty (false witness) and adultery are some of the Ten Commandments she refers to. She is also well aware of the biblical teachers who do not abide by what they preach and that they are hypocrites. The point is not whether her understanding is right or wrong rather one wonders how she, who is subjected to the notion of irrationality, is giving such a critical comment about the operating ideologies such as religion. Given that she gives

such a critical view, it is difficult to label her as nonknowledgeable, as depicted in the proverb. Hence, Aster's critical ability deconstructs the notion that labels all women to a category of nonknowledgeable.

Furthermore, Marartu is another female character whose role in the novel deconstructs the notion of the nonknowledgeability of a woman. Marartu comments that women have become a victim of patriarchal values imposed up on them and that they behave in relation to the interest of those values such as passivity and coyness. She comments on this as, "Nan beeka, shamarran waan hundaa dhiira irraa akka jalqabu barbaanna. Haala guddinaa, haala naannoo, aadaa badaa biyya keenyaa fi saalli keenyas itti ida'amee nu miidheera waan ta'eef, waan akkasii irratti ija hinjabaannu" (pp. 192-193). [I know that we, women want everything to be initiated by men. In addition to gendered notions, the way we were brought up, our environment, the repressive culture of our society suppressed as not to be assertive]. This is what Judith Butler addresses in her books (1990, 1993, 2005). This comment depicts that Oromo women are subjected to behaviours such as timid, submissive and coy. In the situation where they are depicting such behaviors one cannot expect them to be knowledgeable and that they could play their role in showing their power of knowledge even to the extent that they can influence men and be an agent in positively changing the life of men.

However, this way of depicting women in the text is ironically deconstructed by the role played by Marartu. Marartu is cognizant of her being subjected or gendered by social and cultural codes. On the other hand, she crosses the boundary that patriarchal tradition preserved for her. In the conversation she is having with Ebisa, first, Marartu initiates the conversation between

Ebisa and her. Second, every new topic is introduced by her. Moreover, she dominates the floor. On top of that, she plays the role of a councilor to Ebisa, the male character in the novel. Her advice helps Ebisa save his family from divorce (p. 191). Marartu is a health professional and she applies that to advice Ebisa. The advice includes the actions he needs to take to approach his wife to save the relationship which is at risk. In their conversation, Marartu is assertive to ask him if there is a problem of compatibility between him and his wife. While she is waiting for his response, he takes a long time as he bows down. He could not have courage to respond to her question. The narrator describes his situation as “Isheen isa taanaan inni ammo ishee ta’e” (p. 192). [While she becomes him; he becomes her]. This comment depicts the stereotypical role assigned to femininity and masculinity. In the dichotomy between timid/assertive, the first sequence is a position that is taken by masculine where as the second one is that which is assumed by feminine. When the authorial narrator comments he becomes her and vice versa, it is to mean that Marartu assumes the position, which has been reserved for masculine power. The narrator’s comment on the one hand depicts the fact that women can occupy the boundary reserved for men. For the other thing, the female character is professionally so powerful that she opens to issues which are taboo so long as her business is discharging her professional duty. Ebisa applied the advice that Marartu has given him and it is found out helpful (p. 199). The professional assistance is from a female character, Marartu, whom the society considers nonknowledgeable.

Therefore, in the text, though not given enough space, it is depicted that a woman can share her knowledge and hence contributes a significant role in changing the life of men. This deconstructs the instability of the dichotomy knowledgeable/nonknowledgeable established by

the text itself. Hence, Marartu's role disrupts the notion of knowledge/nonknowledge and masculine/feminine dichotomies which reserves the first term sequences for man and the second term sequences for woman. That is, a woman is expected to show a characteristic of femininity such as timidity, where as masculinity is expected to show a characteristics of assertiveness.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the two novels *Illaa* and *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* are examined from the perspectives of feminist deconstructionist reading. In the first part of the chapter, *Illaa*, the novel by the female authoress, Rahima Johar has been critically examined by using feminist deconstructionist approach. In this section, the attempt made by the text to valorize feminist agendas such as female education, the role of a single mother in bringing up her daughters, the reaction of men towards her who are agents of patriarchal values have been addressed. On the other hand, an examination of how the text deconstructs itself when Chaltu (the mother of the two daughters) submitted herself to patriarchal values has also been made.

The second section has dealt with *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa*, by Abdi Fite. Notions such as woman's body, subject/object, motherhood and knowledge are critically examined from the perspectives of feminist deconstructionist approaches. How these notions are depicted in contradictory ways in the text has been shown.

In the final chapter, a brief summary of the study is given. Moreover, conclusions are given based on the analyses of the novels made in the fourth and fifth chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED NOVELS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Comparative Analysis of the Selected Novels

The purpose of this section is to compare and contrast the works of the four authors whether they attempt to perpetuate or subvert patriarchal notions of gender representation. To this end, a close examination is made to see whether female characters occupy a significant space or relegated to a marginal space in the selected novels. Moreover, whether authorial narrator sympathizes with female characters and whether the point of view follows female characters are notions to be dealt with in this sub-section. The subversive role female characters play by transgressing social, cultural and institutional (for example, marriage) codes to exercise their agency is also examined.

To begin with *Hawwii*, the novel by Esayas Hordofa, attempts are made to avoid the perpetuation of patriarchal way of representing women. First, the novel focuses on Hawwii who is the protagonist in the novel. As a protagonist, she has gone through ups and downs in the running novel. The authorial narrator leaves Lati, the male character aside and follows Hawwii when the former leaves for Sweden. In her journey from Naqamte to Addis Ababa, the authorial narrator follows her and narrates every action that she receives. In her stay in Addis Ababa, the authorial narrator narrates every episode, action, event and/or her relationship with other characters following her.

Because she is the central character in the narrative much space is given to her as compared to the male protagonist Lati. She is a female character whose strength and weakness,

determination and fragility-all aspects of her life are fully portrayed. The space given to her enables the reader gets exposed to the attempts the female protagonist makes to exercise her agency (pp. 21-23, 59, 71-72, 77, 130). Moreover, significant space is given to her when she attempt to abide to the gendered norms and an anxiety when she is denied expectations such as love and togetherness (with her lover Lati) (pp. 136-137, 195, 203-204). On the contrary, the authorial narrator has not followed Lati in his journey and stay in Sweden and report about the events that has taken place there except occasionally sharing little information about what is going there. This shows an attempt the text makes to avoid gendered representation with regard to a space given to the female characters as compared to the male character in the novel.

However much space is given to Hawwii, she is not totally free of patriarchal domination. For example, from the space given to her, it is unraveled that she is depicted as chaste which is a patriarchal representation. It becomes patriarchal notion of representation not because male characters are free from such expectations. Rather, it is because the text valorizes that of the female protagonist's role to remain virgin till she once again meet her lover. Of course, Lati too is chaste though not explicit and as recurrent as that of Hawwii. It is the recurrence which makes it that of hers gendered . Moreover, she is limited to roles such as indoor activities in Dalasa's house and in Mr. Ayana's house and other people's house as a servant.

As the protagonist, Hawwii enters to several trials such as racial segregations for she could not speak Amharic as fluent as the native speakers which she equivocally resisted and has shown that her worth as a human being cannot be measured by speaking the language fluently. She also faces sexual harassment by male characters such as Hailu and Amare. She is also an object

of oppression by other female characters such as Mr. Ayana's wife where the notion of subject/object is problematized for who assumes the subject position is a woman (Mr. Ayana's wife) which depicts that a women can be an oppressor of another woman.

When Rahima's *Illaa* is compared to that of the novel *Hawwii*, more feminist values are valorized in the former than the latter. *Illaa* begins with a female protagonist haadha Hadara (Hadara's mother), later on named Chaltu. The text not only begins with a female protagonist Chaltu, but also develops its story centering other female characters such as Nanahi and Sartu who are the daughters of Chaltu. Secondly, much space is given to these three female characters. Moreover, the text valorize feminist agendas in that it 'silences' male characters such as Chaltu's first and second husband (where the latter enters only to get assassinated by the moment he enters to the narrative for the narrator only reports that he is murdered). Her father and brother also appear in the text to set a stage to Chaltu so that her determination in empowering women giving emphasis to female education, the role of an independent mother in bringing up her daughters and supporting them in their education is valorized. As the story progresses full coverage is given to the three female characters- the mother and two daughters. This makes Rahima's novel an ideal feminist novel.

As much of the space is given to the female characters, the authorial point of view also follows Chaltu, Nanahi and Sartu. This enables a reader to get exposed to the detailed lives of the female characters. For example, that Chaltu is snatched of her property such as her house by the one who pretends to be her brother-in-law for the patriarchal order allows him to inherit after the death of her husband; that she enters to abject poverty after she is snatched of her property;

that she is determined to bring up her daughters and support them in their education regardless of her limitations; that she is crushed by powers such as economy and social orders due to which she takes an ambivalent position are depicted in detail because the authorial narrator follows female characters and reports every event, action and episode after them. Similar to that of *Hawwii*, in *Illaa*, the authorial narrator not only follows the protagonist and reports everything but also sympathizes with her and her daughters.

There is an attempt to address feminist agendas in *Illaa* in that the protagonist, Chaltu is used as a mouth speech of the authorial narrator in attending to feminist issues such as the subversion of the patriarchal view that goes that a female alone cannot bring up her children. Moreover, she is determined to support her daughters in their education which she categorically is shown to be successful though it eventually is disrupted because of the twisting of the novel to husband –son-mother discourse. The latter is marginal in that the husband is mentioned occasionally in the beginning of the novel and then only in the last part of the novel just to set a stage to the protagonist Chaltu. In this regard, the female writer's novel subverts patriarchal notions of representation in that it marginalizes the space given to male characters which is contrary to the treatment of male characters by male authors who give much space to male characters such as Dachasa in *Kuusaa Gadoo*, and Ayana in *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa*.

In two novels *Hawwii* and *Illaa*, attempts are made to avoid the perpetuation of patriarchal ideology by giving much space to *Hawwii* and Chaltu, by sympathizing with them (the authorial narrator), by centering them (the narrative point of view). However, these positive portrayals only cannot grantee that the texts are free of the perpetuation of gendered

representations. The texts are not free of ambivalence in that there are situations in which the female characters are depicted to be gendered subjects as seen in the fourth and fifth chapters under the analysis of each novel.

Contrary to *Hawwii* and *Illaa*, in *Kuusaa Gadoo*, the text begins with male protagonist Dachasa. The point is not why the text begins with Dachasa as a text can choose one of the sexes in introducing his narrative to a reader. However, the text sympathizes much with the male protagonist as compared to that of the female character Yadashi. Even, beginning from the middle of the narrative and onwards, especially after Yadashi enters to post marital sexual relationship with Asfaw, though Dachasa too enters to post-marital infidelity; the authorial narrator blames her for her infidelity. The thing is not why he blames her, but what is fallacious is that the authorial narrator does not blame Dachasa when he enters to the same infidelity with Genet. The following is one of the instances that show that the authorial narrator is not sympathizing with Yadashi: “Mirgi Yaadashiin dachaasaa irraa argatte ji’a jaha caalaa hinturre” (pp. 164-165). [The right Yadashi gets to enjoy Dechasa’s salary does not go more than six months]. Here, there is an implication that she is someone who ‘enjoys’ someone’s money which she is not entitle to. Such comment by the authorial narrator has left aside the roles Yadashi played at home bringing up the child who belongs to both. After all how much it costs, if what she has invested on the child is calculated in terms of promotion as rewards had the indoor activity been given a due credit?

Moreover, much of the space is given to Dachasa in *Kuusaa Gadoo* which is contrary to that of *Hawwii* and *Illaa*. This makes a reader gets exposed to the detailed life of Dachasa, for example,

the romance he enters to while he is studying his undergraduate programme in Addis Ababa University; the arguments he is making with his friends in a dormitory, his life in Bokoji as a health officer and his life in Addis Ababa after getting employed and his determination and plan in killing Asfaw. The very title of the novel *Kuusaa Gadoo* (Cumulative Grief) depicts Dachasa's grieves. The title implies that Dachasa is indulged to grieve and it is indeed the grief that makes him avenge Asfaw.

The text is ambivalent in the portrayal of Dachasa. On the one hand, the text attempted to focus on him and attempts to show that he is responsible, autonomous, active and brilliant in every aspect. On the other hand, he is short sighted in his decision to leave his only son in the city where the child knows no one. He is also impulsive in his neglect of his wife at least without asking what forces her to be infidel. The irony is that he is infidel too. On the contrary, Yadashi enters to the narrative either to be a cause for the complication of Dachasa's life or serve as an object to the fulfillment of some of his need (that is, he is employed and hence need a wife and a son).

Similar to that of Gadissa's novel *Kuusaa Gadoo*, Abdi's novel *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* also begins its narrative by introducing the male protagonist Ayana to whom the female characters such as Yadani and Marartu enter to the narrative to set a stage to the former. After assassinating Yadani who is thematically important in the novel, the text valorizes Ayana's disgrace at the cost of her death. Yadani frequently comes to Ayana's memory to valorize the latter's distress so that one sympathize with Ayana. So, the recurrent coming of Yadani's death to Ayana's mind is not to depict her as a subject but valorize his humiliation. Hence, her role is to set a stage to Ayana. What is more, the text brings Marartu to the narrative so that Ayana is

rewarded as compensation to the loss of Yadani. Marartu's resemblance to Yadani is also to reinforce and facilitate every situation to the benefit of Ayana. The two female characters role is to set a stage to the fulfillment of Ayana's life conditions in the novel

With regard to a woman's body, Rahima's *Illaa* attempts to avoid the stereotypical way of depicting a woman's body. When one closely examines the description of the body of both male and female characters, disparity is not the case observed in *Illaa*. The description of the physical appearance of both male and female are not sexist, violent, misogynic and not obsessed to certain body parts (especially in the case of female characters) which entice sexual desire. Though it does not maintain fixed, Esayas' *Hawwii* attempts to avoid partiality by describing both male and female characters similarly. However, contradiction is observable in the case of Esayas' *Hawwii* in that when *Hawwii* is separately described the sexism of representation is at work where the female character is depicted as object of gaze. That is, she at times is described physically as similar as Lati and the other time described as if her beauty carries a 'disease' (p. 40). Abdi's *Dhoksa Jireenyaa* attempts to establish to borrow Naomi's phrase a "beauty myth" by recurrently describing female characters. Descriptions of the female characters such as Obse (p: 23), Amarti (p: 25), Solan (p: 83), Yadani (p: 161), Marartu (p: 80), Soyome (p: 95-96), Anane (p: 79) and Rahel (p: 43) show the perpetuation of beauty myth. However, there is a loose stone that disrupts the perpetuation of the beauty myth established by the text that depicts contradiction (pp. 115, 153-154). The loose stone, indeed does not guarantee the avoidance of the perpetuation of beauty myth but it rather shows self contradiction. As for Gadissa's *Kuusaa Gadoo*, female characters are depicted as objects of gaze (*KG*, pp. 7, 60).

With regard to the transgression of the female characters to certain cultural and social codes of the society, there are some female characters in the selected novels who are portrayed as resistant under some circumstances. In *Hawwii*, the female protagonist Hawwii refuses marriage by force and leaves her home town and goes to Addis Ababa. The text depicts that she passes between the people who are busy preparing food and drinks on the eve of her marriage and leaves to Addis Ababa. Her refusal of marriage by force and leaving her place of birth to exercise her agency depicts her position to subvert the cultural code that dictates that a daughter should marry to the husband of her family's choice. Such resistance is unexpected in the Feudal historical period where girls rarely break the orders given to them by their family. The fact that she refused to be an object of marriage by force could label her as a transgressor as she breaks the social (institutional code).

The female protagonist Chaltu, in *Illaa* also transgresses the patriarchal belief that females are not able to support mothers in old age. The point is not to argue that sons are not important as it makes no difference for a mother like Chaltu, who herself believe that there is no difference between both sexes so long as they are properly guided in helping a mother or a father in old ages (pp. 21-22). But, the context of the novel is that she has lost a hope to get her son who disappeared long time ago. Whom she has at hand are the two daughters. They are these two daughters that her father and brother count them as not helpful and she on the contrary argues that they can be helpful if supported in their education. Therefore, for her the ultimate guarantee for her future life is not getting indulged to marriage now and then as she does so two times. What she believes in is that she has two daughters and if she supports them in their education and that they are successful they are helpful for her future life. However, her father

and brother are agitating her so that she marries for the third time. This is what she refuses. So, her position, not to be influenced by her father's and brother's agitation to get married for the third time to the one who they have chosen for her shows her subversive power.

Yadashi of *Kusaa Gadoo* also has played a subversive role in breaking the cultural codes that dictates that married women should never go with someone. There are two evils before her: either to die of starvation or to subsidize her and her son submitting herself to Asfaw's post-marital sexual partnership. Secondly, when the support she gets from Asfaw stops, Yadashi has no choice but enters to prostitution. Here, she one's again faces two evils: either to die of abject poverty or subsidize her and her child entering to prostitution. Eventually, she decides to use her body as a source of income though it is considered as a practice which assigns the one who practice it to the level of moral degradation. Yadashi has no choice than receive moral condemnation by the society. But the irony is that her sexual partners are men. Though the tradition condemns a woman for entering to prostitution, it is blind of the fact that the ones with whom a women practices the transgressive practice are men. An African feminist critic Nfaha Abenyi (1997) contend that when men are condemning those women who enter to prostitution, the irony is that they forget the moral decadence of men who are being involved in such practice. For Yadashi, though the society counts her as a transgressor, she has no option than using her body as a means for survival.

Aster in *Dhoksa Jireenyaa* is also transgressive for she uses her body as a source of income. That is why an authorial narrator describes her as that her "mind is decayed" (P. 119). However, though it is transgressive, Aster knows why she uses her body as a source of empowerment.

That is why she say, “Hin maraanne. Maraachuun akkas mit.” (p. 211). [I am not mad. This is not madness]. She not only tells that she is not mad but also exposes the moral depravity of men who externally show themselves as if they are those who professes that they are married but irresponsible and preach as if they are people with perfect religious values but on the contrary ‘thieves, hypocrites’, backbiters’, and ‘criminal’ (p.121). She intentionally has crossed the moral order knowing that those who condemn women are themselves transgressor. What is inferred from the positions of Hawwii, Chaltu, Aster and Yadashi as transgressors of social code (marriage institution) established by the society is the imposition of patriarchal force that denies female freedom of choice. Moreover, the position of Yadashi and Aster as a transgressor of the moral codes is that there are forces such as survival that are a cause for female breaking the moral codes. From the positions of these female characters it is possible to infer that rather than being blaming them, an alternative option should have been sought to safeguard both the females and the social and cultural codes.

In general, Rahima’s *Illaa* attempts better in avoiding the perpetuation of the stereotypical ways of describing a woman’s body, both Esayas’ *Hawwii* and Abdi’s *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* are ambivalent in description of a woman’s body. In *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* there is a tendency to perpetuate the notion of a beauty myth. In Gadissa’s *Kuusaa Gadoo*, though not recurrent, female characters are described as objects of sex.

The theme of motherhood is recurrent in *Illaa*. Chaltu is depicted as a mother with three children: Dr. Bonsa, Nanahi and Saartuu. The fact that Dr. Bonsa is Chaltu’s son is not disclosed till the last chapter of the novel. So, the latter is depicted as a mother who has gone through ups and downs to bring up her daughters. In the novel mother-daughter empathy is

shown. This gives one the opportunity to see how a mother-daughter bond is strong and how the mother loves her daughters. Moreover, the moral, psychological and material support a mother gives to her daughters has been given a space from which one observes a mother-daughter bond. Here, though Chaltu contends that both sexes are equal for her, this is not shown in the text for the mother-son bond is not given a space.

Chaltu is determined to deviate from the conventional ways of bringing up her daughters. The relationship she has with her daughters is also harmonious in several situations due to which one cannot find a potential rivalry between the mother and daughters. That is, she is conscious of the secret of patriarchal operation in establishing an opposition between a mother and daughter. Hence, she becomes an ideal female character in that her daughter, Nanahi is eventually successful in her education though she dies of car accident before she receives her degree. This makes the text different from the texts of male authors. That is, texts of male authors depict the relationship between mothers negatively (not harmonious). For example, in the novel *Hawwii*, Mrs. Dinsiri is depicted to force her daughter marries an old man without her choice. When the daughter insisted refusing the proposal, the situation seriously harms the relationship between the mother and the daughter (p. 59). Similarity, in *Kuusaa Gadoo*, Yadashi's mother mistreated the former when she refuses to marry a man of their (father and mother) choice. After she marries Dachasa by her choice, their relationship is broken for the mother insists not to see the daughter any more (p. 75). So, in the case of *Hawwii* and *Kuusaa Gadoo*, the relationship between mothers and their daughters is not harmonious rather, there has been a tendency of opposition between them. As to *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa*, the notion of motherhood is not given enough space. Though marginalized, there is a mother- daughter empathy between mothers (Marartu's mother and Yadani's mother) and daughters (Marartu

and Yadani). Because they are entangled with story of the protagonist Ayana one cannot get the detail view of the relationship between the daughter and the mothers than unraveling what is implied. When *Illaa* is compared with *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa*, there is a wider space given to mother-daughter in the former case where the space given to the mother-daughter is limited in the latter case.

To sum up, though motherhood as experience is valorized in *Illaa* the protagonist at times do not stay static in her position where she at times embraces motherhood as an institution because of the forces such as family and marriage institutions -hence, she is depicted to be ambivalent. Though institutional motherhood is valorized in *Hawwii* (kindly refer to deconstructing institutional motherhood in *Hawwii*) there is a matriarchal power that marginalizes men to the position of dependence. However, matriarchal power is not valorized *Hawwii* as it is in *Illaa*. Similarly, though motherhood is not valorized in *Kuusaa Gadoo* as in *Illaa*, ambivalence is evident as analyzed in detail under the sub-section 'Deconstructing Institutional Motherhood' in *Kuusaa Gadoo*. What is more, in *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* motherhood is a highly marginalized notion as compared to the other three novels.

With regard to deconstructing patriarchal knowledge, though Rahima's *Illaa* makes an effort to valorize female education, the fact that both her daughters eventually die to some extent, limits the position of the female characters in serving as ideal female characters. In *Kuusaa Gadoo* and *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* female characters have shown that they are knowledgeable though some proverbs depict women nonknowledgeable.

In general, Rahima Johar's *Illaa* attempts to valorize feminist agendas though it becomes ambivalent because of the haunting of patriarchal ideology. Regardless of its historical account

which dates back to Feudal period, in Ethiopia (1950s), where it seems difficult to see resistant female characters such as Hawwii, the novel *Hawwii*, by Esayas Hordofa is ambivalent in its depiction of female characters. On the one hand, the female character Hawwii exercises her agency resisting marriage by force. On the other hand, she suffers from the gendered identity she has internalized such as chastity. Abdi Fite's novel *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* is also ambivalent in depicting female characters. So, though both *Hawwii* and *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* are set in different historical periods, the depiction of the female characters is more of ambivalent. However, in Gadissa's *Kuusaa Gadoo*, though there are loose stones that disrupt the text's attempt, the novel perpetuates patriarchal ideology by valorizing the power of masculinity focusing on male characters such as Yadashi's father, Guta, Dachasa and Asfaw.

6.2 Conclusion

Based on feminist deconstruction approach four novels have been analyzed in the study. The following conclusions are made based on the analyses and interpretation of the novels.

In the fourth chapter, *Hawwii* and *Kuusaa Gadoo* are analyzed from the perspectives of feminist deconstructionist readings. The fifth chapter has dealt with *Illaa* and *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* in view of this approach. Though the representations of women in the selected texts are not homogeneous, there are some sub-themes which the texts share in common. These shared features include dismantling institutional motherhood, conventional family and marriage. In spite of deconstructing institutional motherhood, the texts have found motherhood (maternity) as a vital space for envisaging the dynamics of female subjectivity. Though motherhood is confining, the texts depict the importance of love, responsibility and care as a binding force for human species. Some women characters such as Mrs. Dinsiri, Yadashi and Chaltu, oscillate

between the rewards of giving birth and its subjugation. Yadashi uses her children as a weapon to defeat her male counterpart in court.

The female character Chaltu is determined and assertive to bring up her daughters in the absence of a father though both her daughters are assassinated towards the end of the narrative and she is left with her only son. The point is not why she is left with the son, but as a text with feminist agendas (as its beginning and middle depicts), it could have been better if at least, one of her daughters are left alive. The power of patriarchy in one way or the other has influenced the authoress in not maintain up to the end the feminist agenda she begins with. This has an implication on the female protagonist Chaltu in that she has assumed an ambivalent position, taking a strong, determined and passionate position to see her goals achieved and assuming fragile and submissive positions because of the crushing power of the interlocking of patriarchy and economy. Hence, she is depicted to be both an institutional mother and an ideal mother.

The women's body is found out as a figure with multiple significations. The body parts are dominantly used as the site of sexuality or desire. In some of the novels (*Hawwii* and *Dhoksa Jireenyaa*) it seems that gaze is circulating as energy or tossed around like a ball among male characters. This indeed shows the fact that the body parts of a female are used as a place of sexuality or desire. In texts such as *Hawwii* an attempt is made to describe both characters in a similar way but, the text deconstructs itself and the body of a female is depicted as a fragment. Evidences from each text deconstruct the attempts made by the texts to establish the stereotypical norms, with regard to woman's body. Besides, in *Illaa* the text deconstructs the patriarchal notion of describing female characters as objects of gaze. Rather the text

dominantly focuses on the description of body and mind of female characters rather than merely focusing on external body parts which is not realized in the works of the selected male authors.

In the novel *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* the text establishes a norm of the beauty myth where many female characters are objects used for fetish desire. There is an obsessive manipulation of female characters' body as an object of gaze regardless of the fact that female characters such as Biftu oppose it in which case the ideology of gaze that the text perpetuate is interrogated.

In texts by male authors, an attempt has been made to establish the stereotypical way of describing woman's body (as in the case of Gadissa's *Kuusaa Gadoo*, Esayas's, *Hawwii* and Abdi's *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa*). However, what makes the text of the female writer different from that of the male writers is that she deviates from the norm of describing female characters as objects of gaze.

In novels such as *Kuusaa Gadoo* and *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* some female characters have used their body for survival when they are at critical situations. Yadashi, in *Kuusaa Gadoo* is forced to enter to prostitution when she faces abject poverty. Her body is her source of income for survival. Aster, in *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* also uses her body as a source of income to overcome harsh life conditions. Though these characters are morally condemned by the society they live in, they have no option than surviving in times of urgency by using their own body as a source of income.

In some texts, it has been found out that knowledge is associated with masculinity and female characters are depicted as nonknowledgeable. More specifically, in *Kuusaa Gadoo* and *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* proverbs that negatively depict women as nonknowledgeable have been

used. However these proverbs perpetuate a stereotypical representation of Oromo women, evidences from the text have shown that there are female characters from both novels, that are depicted as knowledgeable. For example, Yadashi has defeated Dachassa in the court of law in the novel *Kuusaa Gadoo*. Genet graduates from a university and employed as a professional in one of the government offices. Marartu, in *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* has given her professional assistance to Ebbisa which effectively has helped him to solve his family problem in *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa*.

With regard to the novels by male authors, the pattern of beginning the novel using male characters is dominant. This has an implication on reproduction of system of sexism. In *Hawwii*, Lati comes first and Hawwii follows. The latter comes to the novel to set stages for the former. In *Kuusaa Gadoo*, Yadashi enters to the narrative dominantly to set a stage for Dachasa. Moreover, there is a preference of a baby boy as a first choice instead of a baby girl. This has been aroused from the socio-economic condition of the society in which the novels are set. Moreover, in *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa*, female characters such as Yadani and Marartu are used to set a stage for the male character, Ayana. Texts of male authors follow a similar set of patterns of using characters and hence the sexism of the system of representation is evident.

However, in fully exploiting female characters, different from that of male authors, the authoress deviates from the norm that the male authors have established. That is, in *Illaa*, the protagonist Chaltu and her daughter are dominant and other male characters such as Chaltu's husbands, Kumsa and, Dr. Bansa enter the narrative to set a stage for the female characters. In texts of male authoress all the other mothers and fathers do not give the chances for their children to marry a man of their choice. But, in that of the female authoress, Chaltu, had a

dream that her daughter marries a man of her choice, as she does when she gets married to the first husband. Secondly, her dream that her daughter completes her degree programme before she gets married, which none of the mothers and fathers in the novels under selection dream for their daughters is realized.

Both texts, *Illaa* and *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa* deviate from the norm of patriarchal notion of depicting female characters only to be paradoxically trapped by gendered representation. That is, the destiny of the ideal female character, Chaltu, is to fall on the hand of her male child, who is a medical doctor and her first husband. The text shows that the fact the sex of an author is female cannot determine the position of the female characters depicted in the novel. Rather, ideologies such as gendered representation triumph over the attempts the texts make to avoid stereotypes. Similarly, though Marartu, in *Dhoksaa Jireenyaa*, is depicted as knowledgeable, assertive and activist (politically), the text disrupts itself in that patriarchal ideology triumphs over the text's attempt and Marartu eventually is depicted as a female character who has given birth to a baby boy and who she has an interest to name her daughter by the name of her mother whom she has been looking for a long time, she could not do so because Ayana wants to name the child in a way that the name affirms the paternal root of Ayana the father (Kaku Ayana Guutuu), than the maternal root of Marartu.

The depiction of multiple characters who are assuming different positions contribute both to the the subjectivity of the characters. Male characters such as Dalasa, Mr. Ayana, Hailu, in the Esayas' *Hawwii*, Dachasa, Asfaw, Guta, Dabal in Gadissa'a *Kuusaa Gadoo*; Chaltu's father and Mume (her brother) and Kumsa, in Rahima's *Illaa* and Ayana and Zelalem in Abidi's

Dhoksa Jireenyaa have affirmed male domination. However male characters serve as tokens of patriarchal domination, the subject position reserved for male characters is assumed by female character such as Hawwii in *Hawwii*, Yadashi in *Kuusaa Gadoo*; Chaltu, in *Illaa*; Aster and Marartu in *Dhoksa Jireenyaa*. Though not always, the female characters have proved that the first term reference can be occupied by women. On the other hand, female characters also have assumed object position because of the crushing forces such as economy, patriarchal ideology and cultural and social institutions. Hence, the position of female characters such as Mrs. Dinsiri, Hawwii, Yadashi, Yadashi's mother, Chaltu and Marartu is found out to be contradictory.

Moreover, gender preference is at work in the novels selected. Getting a baby boy as a child, is the first preference of the female characters such as Mrs. Bashatu, Mrs. Dinsiri, Yadashi and Chaltu (the protagonist of the authoress though the narrative begins with her daughters). This has an implication that texts affirm male domination. Moreover, the social, economic conditions has forced female characters to be rescued by men where Hawwii is made to wait for the coming of Lati to be rescued; Chaltu wait to be rescued by her first husband and her first son and Marartu to be resqued by Ayana.

One of the most important feminist agenda is the depiction of a notion of "preservative love" by female characters such as Yadani, Yadani's mother, Mrs. Dinsiri, Mrs. Bashatu, Chaltu and Lensa. This notion of motherhood though marginalized, is depicted as the most important qualities of the female characters.

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Glossary of Terms

A. Glossary of *Afan Oromo* Terms

The following terms are used in the review and analysis part of this study. They are defined because many of them are culturally specific to Oromo.

- Ateetee- The ritual offered to the goddess *maaram* by Oromo women.
- Buna qala- The ritual where coffee beans are bitten to be opened and put in Qilla (a type jar) which is filled with butter so that the butter enters the fruit and offered to the goddess *maaram* upon the birth of a child, which is exclusively performed by Oromo women.
- Damaraa- In Oromo, it refers to a tree cut and put on both sides of the main gate of a house on the eve of *Garanfasa* and *Masqala*.
- Dhaaba- A ritual practice offered by Oromo women so that *Maaram* protects her family.
- Farso (Buqqurii)- A beverage made from crops and cereals such as barley or maize.
- Garanfasa – The original name for *masqala*.
- Hanchoote- A type of food whose root is prepared with butter and eaten especially on *Masqala* ceremony.
- Maaram- The divine mother in Oromo worldview who is evoked and addressed in songs by Oromo women.
- Masqala- A religious festival practiced by Oromo people in the month of August.

Siiqqee: A stick which is cut and carefully fashioned and given to a bride on the day of her wedding which from then onwards is used whenever a woman goes to different social gatherings, signifying the power of a woman.

B. Glossary of some English Terms

The following terms have been used frequently in the dissertation. As some of the terms might have several referents, it is important to have the definitions at work in the context of the study. Some of the terms are technical and need elaboration at the outset. What follows then is the definition and description of the terms, in a way they are used in the dissertation.

Abject: Buchanan (2010: p.1) defines as “that which disturbs the self, by provoking either disgust, fear, loathing or repulsion. It is not an intrinsic quality of a thing, a being or state of affair. It is rather a peculiar type of response, the strange power of which seems to suggest someone is drawn to that which repels him/her (Buchanan, 2010).

In the context of this dissertation, the concept of "abject" is a state in which an individual is in state of disgust, fear, horror, repulsion and etc.

Binary Oppositions: It is the system of thought and expression in terms of contrary pairs. In the context of this dissertation, binary opposition refers to a center established by the text which could be deconstructed by evidences which, Derrida calls the margins and the supplements (Murfin and Ray, 2003).

Character focalizer: It is a character who is internal to the events represented and who observes things/person from inside (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983).

Core issues: Tyson (1999: p. 15) defines it as “unresolved conflicts, wounds, guilty desires repressed in the unconscious”

Defense Mechanisms: It refers to the reaction of the ego to a certain interior stimuli which the ego perceives as threatening (Tyson, 1999).

Institutional Motherhood: It is a cultural convention in which a woman’s worth is measured only in terms of giving birth to a child preferably a male child and brings up children at the cost of her choice, interest and career (Rich, 1977 and Nnaemeka, 1997).

Knowledge: The concept of knowledge as Moi (cited in Brennan, 1989:189) argues is a phenomenon variously labeled ‘male science’, ‘male theory’, or ‘male rationality’. She contends that such forms of structured thought are inextricably linked with traditional sexist categories of dominance and oppression. Knowledge also refers to patriarchal system of thought which labels woman as an inferior thinker, that is to say as irrational. Such notion of knowledge realizes its rationality by positing some irrational outside excluded from its own territory.

In this dissertation, the notion of knowledge is viewed as what Moi (cited in Brennan, 1989:190) suggests “commingling’ or fusion of the rational and irrational, reason and emotion and head and heart. There is, then, in both the deconstructive and the psychoanalytic situation a model of knowledge which at once radically questions and displaces traditional notions of knowledge/non-knowledge relationships and deconstructs the firm boundaries between

knowledge and non-knowledge. As this situation of knowledge offers no firmly established binary opposites, it cannot be gendered as either masculine or feminine, thereby offering us a chance to escape the patriarchal tyranny of thought by sexual analogy.

Narrator focalizer: According to Bal (1985) it is a type of focalizer who imaginatively sees things being external to the story. Both technical terms are interchangeably used in this study.

Object: Willams (1983: 309) defines that in its earliest English senses, 'object' is implied as an opposing point in an argument (as an 'objection'), or an obstacle, or something seen or observed, or a purpose. According to poststructuralists, as Buchanan (2010) defines, it is a thing which may be a person, body part, symbol, image or idea, through which the drive seeks to attain its aim, namely its satisfaction.

Regression: is retreating to an earlier, more primitive form of behavior to avoid pain or threat (Tyson, 1999).

Repression: Buchanan (2010:406) defines it as "the process whereby the conscious defends itself against unwelcome thoughts, impulses, desires, rising up from the unconscious". According to this study, it is the process whereby characters use different defense mechanisms to overcome the contents of the unconscious which are threatening.

Subject: The notion of 'subject' is very wide. It can refer to a person, a thing, an author and many others. According to Buchanan (2010), it is widely used in critical theory to

designate what is used to be termed the 'individual' or the 'self.' From poststructuralist context, subject is that which is the product of the "unconscious", "ideology" and "language". They also define it as that which is determined by or in conflict with forces that dominate it in some way or another. This subject is the subject-in-crisis, fragmented under internal and external forces and given to anxiety and alienation.

In context of this dissertation, subject/object opposition is defined as a space which is unstable where a woman can be "both victim and agent..., both weak and strong and goddess and whore" or at times neither of the two in different situations (Nneameka, 1997: p. 3).

Transference: As Tyson^{writes} (1999: p. 15) it refers to shifting or displacing one's traumas "on someone or something less threatening than the person who caused our fear, hurt, frustration, or anger".

Unconscious: It is one of the three operative systems in the psyche (the other two being the preconscious and the conscious) as Freud (1938) refers to in his famous work **The Interpretation of Dreams**. As he conceives, the unconscious refers to a dynamic system. It is dynamic in the sense that the libidinal energy and the cathexes that are active within it are ceaseless i.e they apply a constant pressure on conscious and met in turn by an equally constant pressure (repression). Tyson (1999, 2006) defines the unconscious as a storehouse of painful experiences and emotions, those wounds and fears, guilty desires and unresolved conflicts which are not wanted to be known about because knowing would evoke a feeling of being overwhelmed by them.

In this dissertation it is defined as a dynamic entity of the psyche which is a storehouse of painful experiences and emotions, those wounds and fears, guilty desires and unresolved conflicts.

Variable focalizers: They are different focalizers who see a thing/person either similarly or differently.

Woman's Body: The body can be viewed in terms of size, anatomy, physiology or as a sight of the aesthetics of comportment, decoration or mutilation. In literary texts, the body, more specifically the woman's body, may be fragmented both metaphorically through language and visual imaging. In the context of this thesis, woman's body is viewed as a fragmented body that serves as an object of gaze and landscape (nation) in literary texts such as the novel.