

Addis Ababa University
College of Language Studies, Humanities,
Journalism and Communication
Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

The Images of Women in *Nibut* and *Yederasiwa*
File

Nahom Daniel

June 2012

Addis Ababa

Addis Ababa University
College of Language Studies, Humanities,
Journalism and Communication
Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

The Images of Women in *Nibut* and *Yederasiwa*
File

Nahom Daniel

June 2012

Addis Ababa

**The Images of Women in *Nibut* and *Yederasiwa*
*File***

By

Nahom Daniel

Advisor

Olga Yazbec (PhD)

**A Thesis Presented to the Department
of Foreign Languages and Literature in Partial
fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Literature**

**College of Language Studies, Humanities,
Journalism and Communication
Department of Foreign Languages and Literature**

June 2012

Addis Ababa University

Addis Ababa University
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Nahom Daniel, entitled: *Images of Women in Nibut and Yederasiwa File* and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (Foreign Literature) complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the examining committee

Examiner _____ Signature_____ Date_____

Examiner _____ Signature_____ Date_____

Advisor _____ Signature_____ Date_____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Olga Yazbec for her invaluable criticism and helpful suggestions during the writing of the paper. It has been a pleasure to write my thesis under her guidance.

I would also like to thank my dear friend W/t Yewubdar Demissie for her most valuable and enlightening suggestions and comments.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their endless support, love, and faith in my success in the preparation of my thesis.

Table of Contents

Contents	Page	
Acknowledgments	i	
Abstract	ii	
Chapter One		
1. Introduction		
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1	
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	5	
1.3 Objective of the Study.....	7	
1.4 Significance of the Study.....	8	
1.5 Methodology of the Study.....	8	
1.6 Scope of the Study.....	9	
Chapter Two		
2. Review of Related Literature and Conceptual Framework		10
2.1 A Review of Related Research Studies	10	
2.2 Sex versus Gender	13	
2.3 Representation of Female Characters	14	
2.4 Conceptual Framework.....	16	
2.4.1 Feminist Literary Criticism.....	16	
2.4.2 Feminist Theories.....	18	

2.4.2.1 Socialist Feminist.....	19
---------------------------------	----

Chapter Three

4. Portrayal of Heroines in <i>Nibut</i> and <i>Yederasiwa File</i>.....	21
3.1 Introduction	24
3.2 Synopsis of <i>Nibut</i>	24
3.3 Synopsis of <i>Yederasiwa File</i>	22
3.4 Women as Sex Objective.....	24
3.5 Determination and Self-Confidence.....	28
3.6 Stereotype Character Traits in Women.....	32
3.7 Unconventional Behavioral Traits in Females.....	37
3.8 Women's Empowerment.....	41
3.9 Struggle for Advancement.....	43

Chapter Four.....	45
--------------------------	-----------

Conclusion.....	45
------------------------	-----------

Bibliography.....	47
--------------------------	-----------

ABSTRACT

Traditionally, women have been relegated to the margins of society, history and culture in male-dominated environment. Patriarchal systems have long denied women to play an appropriate role in nation building and to enter the public sphere.

The representation of female characters in fictions by female writers is different from that of men owing to the fact that they have different life experiences. Both the novels that have been selected for the analysis, *Nibut* and *Yederasiwa File*, are written by female Ethiopian writers.

The aim of this thesis is to examine and analyze the images of women in the works of Ethiopian female writers.

The paper is divided into five chapters. Chapter one deals with the background, statement of the problem, objectives, significance, methodology and scope. The second chapter presents a review of related literature. In this section, an attempt has been made to review material related to this study. In the third chapter, an attempt has been made to explain the conceptual framework which focuses on Socialist feminist literary theory that has been applied in this study. In the fourth chapter, the selected novels have been examined and analyzed using the framework discussed in chapter three. The writer of this research has found out that the writers of the selected novels have tried to reverse the traditional stereotypical portrayal of women by giving the major female characters the face of the New Woman which is characterized by being intelligent, educated, self-reliant, etc. On the other hand, it has also been observed that the female characters are exposed to sexual abuses and harassments, and also are victims of traditional gender roles that have long been established by patriarchal dominated society. Then, the final chapter is the conclusion. In this section a brief summary and some findings have been given.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

It can be said that Ethiopian literature has rather been dominated by male writers be it in plays, novels or short stories. Starting from the inception of novel writing in Ethiopian literature, *Tobbiya* in 1901(EC) by Afework G/Eyesus, to the present day, the authors of most literary works are male writers. Moreover, most of the literary studies are done on works of male writers.

Even though it is difficult to say women writers have played a great role in Ethiopian literature, some writers can be mentioned who are well known to many readers. Starting from 1933 E.C to the present time, female writers have been trying to produce different works in different genres in Ethiopian literature. Some of the literary creations of Ethiopian female writers that can be cited are *Maebel* (translation of Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*, into Amharic) (1933 EC) by Sara Workinehe, and *Yelebe Metsehaf* (play) (1942 EC) by Sinidu Gebru. Some of the novels that can be mentioned are *Mehajeba* (1966 EC) by Mekdes Asnake, *Yebakenew Gize* (1965 EC) by Yemetenetwork Samuel, *Quasa* (1980 EC) by Tsehay Melaku and *Nibut* (1993 EC) by Muluwork Asrat. There are a few short stories also.

Studies that have been conducted on women are only few and they show that women in Ethiopia have been considered inferior and have been marginalized for many centuries. Their activities have been restricted to household chores and other drudgeworks. They didn't have the privilege of getting education, participating in the political and economic affairs, in making decisions in important matters, etc. The discriminatory political, economic and social rules and regulations prevailing in Ethiopia have barred them from enjoying the fruits of their labor ("Women in Ethiopia"). And their contribution has not always been recognized. So, they are still considered inferior and incompetent

and are thought to be people who only fit to routine work. What makes this worse is men's perpetuating this in the minds of women. Regarding this, Lerner (1986) says, "Women for millennia participated in the process of their own subordination because they have been psychologically shaped so as to internalizing the idea of their inferiority (218)."

Lena (2006) points out that women of African descent who are writers have challenged the status quo in the cultural, political, and spiritual realms of their communities by using their craft to present women who defy traditional roles and resist strictures of oppression. In this regard, Ethiopian female writers have tried to reverse the negative stereotype of women in their literary works. In addition to this, they also tried to show the suffering and agonies that women experience due to patriarchal ideology in their society. It is true that literature has been used as a weapon for different purposes since the very early times in social reforms, social commentary, entertainment and pleasure to the reader, to heighten people's awareness of certain aspects of life, etc. Similarly, the works of Ethiopian female writers mostly put their central focus on fighting patriarchal ideology of the society. Accordingly, Ethiopian female writers struggle to change the images of females in their literary works.

In Ethiopia, women make up almost half of the total population, that is, 49.8%, so the implementation of any action that is intended to improve the socio-economic condition of the country should take women into account. Nevertheless, women in Ethiopia, especially, before the coming of EPRDF, were subjected to different kinds of oppression and humiliation.

Prior to the 1974 Revolution, there were a few non-governmental women's organizations like Ethiopian Women's Welfare Association, the Ethiopian Officer's Wives Association and the Ethiopian Female Students' Association. Nevertheless, they had very little effect on government's policies, laws, regulations or development programs mainly because they were limited in

scope, and were found only in cities. As a result, they failed to address gender and equality issues (“Women in Ethiopia”).

Following the 1974 Revolution, the Derg regime set up an organization by proclamation known as the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women’s Association (REWA), but this association did not provide any significant benefits to women. It was used just as a tool to strengthen the Derg’s power. Its main concern was neither about women’s issues nor influencing government policies, or helping women benefit from development programs. Mikell (1997) says “its operational principles were so driven by the interest of the state that the goal of providing service to rural women was overshadowed” (188). Therefore, there was little change in the lives of women in the social, economic or political spheres, particularly for women who live in the rural areas.

The advent of EPRDF to power signaled a new era for the equality and wellbeing of women. In the last twenty years, so much has been done on issues regarding women in all spheres of life though a lot has still to be done. Currently, the government is giving different kinds of support to women. For example, the National Policy of Women is one of the most significant measures that the government has taken. It was formulated in 1993 and aimed at addressing gender equality in the socio-economic and political areas, and advising strategies to address gender issues, and removing the legal and customary barriers which block the realization of women’s right. Therefore, The Women’s Affairs Office was created within the Prime Minister’s Office and was mandated to coordinate and facilitate conditions to promote gender equality in areas of development. At the respective sectoral ministers, the Women’s Affairs Departments (WAD’s) were put in place, the Regional Women’s Affairs Bureaus at the regional administration level, and Women’s Coordination and Desk Officers at the respective Zonal and Woreda levels (“Appraisal Report: Institutional Support Project To The Women’s Affairs Office”). The Women’s Affairs Office is technically charged with responsibilities to oversee and

coordinate activities leading to the effective implementation of the National Policy on Women. In addition to this, the government recognized women's equality in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia under Article thirty-five. Article thirty-five guarantees the rights of women as equal to men in all spheres including equality in marriage, the right to equal employment, and rights to maternity leave with pay, the right to acquire, administer, control, use and transfer of land and inheritance issues and the right to access family planning and education.

A new federal law, based on the principle of gender equality, also came to effect in July 2000. It raised the minimum age of marriage from fifteen to eighteen years and established the right of women to share any asset the household had accumulated if the couple has been living together for at least three years in irregular union ("Gender Equality"). The Ethiopian penal code also criminalizes domestic violence and harmful traditional practices including early marriage, abduction, and female genital mutilation.

The government has recently developed a twenty years Women and Children's Plan. The Federal Ministry of Women's, Children's, and Youth Affairs is mandated to ensure that federal policies, legislations and programs contribute to gender equality, and to make recommendations for affirmative action in economic, social and political affairs, as well as in various government agencies. The government has also allocated more human resources with accountability for the implementation of national policies on gender.

Women in Ethiopia have benefited so much from the policies that the government has designed. For example, in the last few years, women's involvement in the socio-economic and political spheres has increased considerably. For example, the percentage of women who were using contraception in 1990 was only eight percent. In 2011 survey, it has increased to twenty-eight percent. The Ethiopian parliament also approved a new law legalizing abortion in 2004 for minors, those who have been raped, and cases

in which the mother's life is in danger. While political participation of women is low, their representation has been increasing in recent years. For example, women hold twenty-eight percent of seats in the federal parliament, thirteen percent in cabinet minister, fifteen percent in state minister, etc("Gender Equality"). The government is creating conducive environments for women by setting up micro and small scale enterprises as well as micro lending institutions. These actions are laudable given that they help women to be economically dependent (Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2008). In other areas like education, employment, etc, there has been a change due to different policies like affirmative action though the gender gap still prevails.

Despite all the attempts of the government and other non-governmental organizations, the improvement of the situation in the rural areas is still too slow. It is obvious that women in the rural areas are so much vulnerable to gender related oppressions. This is due to different impediments that the government and other organizations face to reach out and create awareness in women in rural areas. The two main obstacles that can be stated are lack of communication infrastructures and transport. The deep-rooted gender oppression in the rural areas is also one of the major setbacks in creating gender equality awareness ("Gender Equality").

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Literature reflects the set of ideas and moral attitudes belonging to a society, the process of class struggle and so on. Therefore, any literary work can establish the society's viewpoint toward a particular issue. In most societies, particularly in third world countries like Ethiopia, women are considered inferior to men in social, political and economic aspects due to patriarchal ideology. Tyson (2006:83) defines patriarchy as "any culture that privileges men by promoting traditional gender roles". And this patriarchal ideology of the society has been a severe impediment to females' equality and growth for many

generations. In this regard, the feminist movement has played a very crucial role in fighting against these oppressions of women. Women in Ethiopia, like women in other parts of the world, are also victims of these oppressions and dominations. Tyson (2006: 86) points out that:

The belief that men are superior to women has been used, feminists have observed, to justify and maintain the male monopoly of positions of economic, political, and social power, in other words, to keep women powerless by denying them the educational and occupational means of acquiring economic, political, and social power.

Similarly, Habib (2005) indicates that for most of this long history women were not only deprived of education and financial independence, they also had to struggle against a male ideology condemning them to virtual silence and obedience, as well as a male literary establishment that poured scorn on their literary endeavors.

Madsen (2000: ix) states, in the preface of her book *Feminist theory and literary practice*, that many texts by women “express the same concerns as feminist theory: the unique experience of women in history; the notion of female consciousness; the definitions of gender that limit and oppress; and the cause of women’s liberation from those restrictions”. It is also the researcher’s strong opinion that female Ethiopian writers do fight, in their literary creations, against the patriarchal ideology that has been pervasive in our society for many generations. Furthermore, the researcher supposes that female writers manipulate their works in a way that they can fight back chauvinistic views of their society that restrict females from equally participating in all walks of life like men. As a result, their works can be good examples of females’ strength in all social, economic and political spheres in their society.

Women in Ethiopia have suffered from sociocultural and economic prejudice and have had not many chances, unlike men, for personal advancement,

education, and occupation. And this domination is still persistent at long-held patriarchal values.

In this regard, some studies have been conducted by applying different approaches of feminist literary criticism, particularly in Amharic literature. However, considering the seriousness of the matter, it is very difficult to say that many studies have been made in the area. In addition to this, there have not been many studies conducted on literary works written by Ethiopian female writers, which is the main focus of this study. Thus, this study is devoted to revealing the images of female characters in the selected texts. Therefore, this study tries to answer the following questions:

1. How are the female characters portrayed in the selected novels?
2. What are the positive and negative images ascribed to the female characters in the selected novels?
3. Are the female characters portrayed as victims of patriarchy?
4. What are the qualities of the female characters depicted in the selected novels?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to analyze the images of women in the selected two novels by Ethiopian authoresses namely, *Nibut* (by Muluwork Asrat) and *Yederasiwa File* (by Yezena Worku), which were published in 1993 EC and 2002 EC respectively. The specific objectives of the study are:

- To examine how female writers view the female characters;
- To show the qualities of the female characters;
- To examine the hindrances that prevent the female characters from achieving their goals.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study intends to show the unfair treatment and bias against women in the patriarchal society. It will be valuable in combatting gender bias that the Ethiopian society has. Secondly, it will also reveal the strength and determination of women in struggling to achieve their goals like men. As a result, it will induce the society to recognize and acknowledge the role of women in the Ethiopian society. Thirdly, it will also have a significance to enhance the development of feminist literary criticism in Ethiopia by opening up other avenues for further research.

1.5 Methodology of the Study

This study is basically descriptive analysis in nature. The texts that have been selected for the study, *Nibut* and *Yederasiwa File*, will be read critically and will be analyzed from feminist perspectives using Socialist feminism. In addition to the primary texts, secondary data like library materials and different sources from the internet will be used to enrich the analysis of the selected texts and writing the literature review of related literature. The writer of this thesis selected relevant extracts from the novels under study and applied Socialist feminism to critically examine the portrayal of female characters. The extracts have also been translated into Amharic. In order to examine broader images of the female characters, three major female characters from each novel have been used in the analysis.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study deals with a feminist reading of two selected Amharic novels by Ethiopian female writers namely, *Nibut* by Muluwork Asrat and *Yederasiwa File* by Yezena Worku. Relevant extracts are selected from the novels and analyzed using parameters from Socialist feminism.

The main reasons for selecting these novels are that both novels are written by female Ethiopian writers. The main characters of the stories are also females and the stories have thematic relationship. The other reason is that the stories show that, apart from the suppression women experience, they try to resist difficulties and achieve their goals in life. In this respect, they are like men.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature and Conceptual Framework

This chapter deals with a review of research studies and the conceptual framework of the study. The novels that have been selected for the analysis, *Nibut* and *Yederasiwa File*, haven't been subjects of any kind of feminist literary studies, so the researcher believes that these two novels deserve analysis from a feminist perspective.

2.1 A Review of Related Studies

Some of the studies on feminist literary criticism by the students of the Institute of Language studies in Addis Ababa University are presented below. In this section of the thesis, five MA theses and one senior essay are reviewed.

The first study that is considered here is Yihenew Melese's M.A thesis, 'A Feminist Reading of *Tobbya* and *Endewotach Kerech*' (2004). He has tried to show that women are depicted, in the two novels, as having two contrasting images. He classifies his analysis into two: patriarchal assumptions and reflections and glorification of the female. He argues that the novels ascribe physical weakness and cowardice to females. In contrast, he also shows females' virtue, wisdom and strength.

Assefa Worku (1995), in his MA thesis 'An Analysis of Literary Techniques in Some of the Prose Works of Ethiopian Women Authoresses 1959-1985 E.C.', has examined the works of twelve Ethiopian female writers. His study is well detailed. In his analysis, he has tried to show that some of the female characters, in the works that he selected, lack credibility by saying "their actions, speeches and thoughts lack consistency, appropriate motivations and do not correspond with their personalities" (136). He also examines the language usage of the authoress. He says that most of the authoresses use "weak, inappropriate, incoherent and inartistic language" (140). Regarding this,

Assefa attributes these shortcomings to the authoresses' "lack of wide life experiences and sufficient knowledge of literary devices and readings" (141). However, he has underscored the contribution that many women writers have in portraying the oppressive elements in our social norms and cultural beliefs. Nevertheless, his study mainly focuses on examining the literary techniques the women writers use.

Another thesis that deals with women writers is Mehret W/Micheal's study entitled 'A Feminist Reading of Selected Films: A Case Study of Two Female-Authored Amharic Films – *Sara* by Helen Tadesse and *Roman* by Emebet Girma. In her thesis, she has tried to analyze these films using African Feminist Literary Criticism by applying Laura Mulvey's male gaze and Eva-Maria Jacobson's female gaze.

In her analysis, she explains that the women characters in both films are portrayed as strong beings which is against the expectation of the society. Nevertheless, she does not overlook the instances in which the women are exposed to the patriarchal prejudice and male gaze. For example, perceiving women as an "object of desire", women's economic dependence on men, and so on.

Finally, she concludes by suggesting that women writers should write about themselves, by showing how essential they are to the society.

The other study to be considered here is Meknonnen Fekadu's MA thesis entitled 'Images of Women in the Fictions of Selected African Women Writers: A Comparative Black Feminist Study' (2005). The novels that he examines are *Efuru* by Mwapa, *So Long a Letter* by Mariama Ba and *Quasa* by Teshay Melaku. He analyzed the images of women in these works. The issues that he gives emphasis to are the idea of considering women as sex objects. In all the three works, he tries to show how men use women to gratify their sexual needs. The other point that he tries to make is the complication and the consequence of motherhood. Most of the female characters in these works suffer a lot

because they are mothers. On the other hand, Mekonnen tries to show also positive images of the female characters. He explains that the female characters are depicted as non-conformist, but they also respect the cultural values and traditions, and work hard to foster good family relationships.

In her B.A. thesis entitled 'Women in the Eyes of Female Writers' (1984 EC), Alem Bayelign has tried to analyze Ethiopian female writers' works. In her study, she has considered ten short stories and one novel. Due to this, she has failed to make a detailed analysis. In addition, she has also focused on showing other social issues that do not have much relation to feminist literary criticism. Because of this, it can be said that the study lacks depth.

In his thesis, 'Female Roles and Sacrifice in Political Drama: A Comparative Study of *Death and Maiden*' and *The Father* from a Feminist Perspective' (2008), Eskinder Hailu explains the consequences of rape and female sacrifice. He mentions that a woman who was raped would be highly traumatized and her future life would be severely affected. He also shows how the camera plays a crucial role in the movie *The Father* in showing the "dominance of the male and the submission of the women" (34). He also tries to show how the double standard is evident in the movie in showing that having multiple partners is acceptable for a man, but if a female was in the same situation, she would be ostracized by the society and would be labeled as a whore. He also tries to show how the well-being of a family is endangered when a father passes away. He explains that all accumulated wealth, business, what a father owes, etc will be kept in the dark while he is alive, nobody except him knows. And this shows that the father is the decision maker regarding the fate of the family.

The above reviewed MA and BA theses have relevance to this study in that they reveal the ways in which different writers portray female characters in different genres. What makes this study different from most of them is that it takes into consideration only novels written by female writers, and attempts to analyze the ways in which the female authors portray female characters. In addition,

the feminist approach that is used in this study, that is, Socialist feminism, has not been used in any of the above reviewed theses. What makes this study similar to the studies reviewed above is that it deals with analyzing images of female characters.

2.2 Sex versus Gender

According to Esplen and Jolly (2006), the English-language distinction between the words sex and gender was first developed in the 1950s and 1960s by British and American psychiatrists and other medical personnel working with intersex and transsexual patients. Since then, the term gender has been increasingly used to distinguish between sex as biological and gender as socially and culturally constructed. Feminists have used this terminology to argue against the 'biology is destiny' line, and gender and development approaches have widely adopted this system of analysis (ibid).

The issue of the distinction of sex and gender has been a topic of debate since the beginning of feminism. Holms (2009:2) explains the differences between sex and gender by saying "sex refers to whether a person is considered female or male, based on the kind of body they have. And gender describes the ideas and practices that constitute femininity and masculinity". Holmes believes that social construction is the main reason that shapes people into kinds of women and men. He mentions that this shaping happens through large-scale social organizations and through everyday interactions that we take for granted such as family, school, the workplace, the media, etc. And these institutions teach us that girls should act in certain ways, such as being caring and boys in different ways, such as being strong and independent (ibid,2). Similarly, according to Ember and Ember (2003) gender is taken to refer to a culturally based complex of norms, values, and behaviors that a particular culture assigns to one biological sex or another, and sex to refer primarily to biological characteristics like biological, physical and genetic differences, etc.

Feminist theorists privilege 'the body' as a site of analytic enquiry because we explain the exclusion and marginalization of women from political and academic discourses as a consequence of the conceptual association of reason with masculinity and the association of femininity with the body.

From the outset, those involved in the women's movement, for example Mary Wollstonecraft, maintained that nothing politically relevant follows from biological difference. Recommending that "reason" and "understanding" not be grasped as biological faculties, she argues—although obviously not using these terms—what appear to be dimorphic characteristics (of biological sex) can be better explained by differences in education and culture, matters of social experience (gender)(Howie, 2010:157).

Carlos and Zahidi (2005) say that gender is not synonymous with women, nor is it a zero-sum game implying loss for men; rather, it refers to both women and men, and to their status, relative to each other. Gender equality refers to that stage of human social development at which "the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not be determined by the fact of being born male or female," in other words, a stage when both men and women realize their full potential (ibid).

2.3 Representation of Female Characters

Male dominance has always existed in every sphere of life in this world for centuries. Among the many things that help men maintain their social position, literary work is one of them. According to Habib (2005), the depiction of women in male literature as "angels, goddesses, whores, obedient wives, and mother figures" was a central method of perpetuating these ideologies of gender (667). Tyson (2005) states that whenever patriarchy wants to undermine a behavior, it depicts that behavior as feminine. She also adds that portraying female characters as frail, modest, timid, etc disempower women in the real world, that is, "it is not feminine to succeed in business, to be extremely

intelligent, to earn big bucks, to have strong opinions, to have a healthy appetite (for anything), or to assert one's rights". (ibid, 88)

Freibert (2002) describes the early images of women in American literature as evil and frivolous. The image of women that persists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, according to Freibert, was the image of the fallen women in which the heroine suffers either ostracism or death. He also adds that the mature women or the mother figure in the early nineteenth century usually remains in the background, supporting and protecting husbands and children, guarding the morals and asserting that things will turn out right. The most stark image that appeared in the twentieth century is women as "sex object" (ibid). In the mid 1970's, Freibert (2002) says, the images approach generally shifted to the study of women writers and a literature that more accurately reflects women's experience and model their possibilities.

Similar to American literature, in British literature women have always been considered as weaker and played a subservient role compared to men. According to Lawrence (2008), throughout the middle ages, the image of women is associated with superficiality and temptation. She says that the majority of male writers casted women in the role of man's downfall. The gradual change of the images of women in British literature, according to Neha and Memphis (n.d) is stated as follows:

Yet, women morphed from being creatures depended on their lord, and playing merely a functional role in the story, to asserting more independence and playing a more symbolic role in the story, to actually being one of the major characters in a work of literature, elaborately develop with flaws and possible redeeming points alike. This changing perception of women reveals a person that many revered, even feared, for their intelligence as well as morality (§ 2).

The images of women in African literature is not different from those we find in American and British literature. As cited in Fonchingong, Kolawole (1997) notes that most male writers in the early phase of African literature encouraged

the marginalization of women. In this context, female characters are made marginal to the plot of the fictional work, while only a few emerge as powerful and credible protagonists. In addition to this, the ideal female character created by male writers often acts within the framework of her traditional roles as wife and mother. Fonchingong (2006) also states that contemporary female writers have made great strides in an attempt to re-define and focalize on the one-sided presentation of the African women in African literature. As cited in Fonchingong, Lapin (1984) observes that nearly three dozen women writers are currently recognized as authors across the African continent, and they have been joined by some male writers in giving serious treatment and a realistic characterization and all rounded perspectives of the female gender. This recent phenomenon shows that the early representation of women in African literature is being replaced by a more positive and actual portrayal of female characters.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

In this part, the conceptual framework of the study is discussed. Selected parameters from Socialist Feminism are used to analyze the female characters in the selected novels.

2.4.1 Feminist Literary Criticism

Feminist literary theory is a complex and dynamic area of study that draws from a wide range of critical theories, including psychoanalysis, gender and anthropology. Feminist theory encompasses work done in a broad variety of disciplines. Its main aim as a theory is to understand the position of females and gender conflict in literary works.

Feminist literary criticism offers strategies for analyzing texts to emphasize issues related to gender and sexuality in works written by both men and women such as issues concerning their images and representations of their experiences, their authorship and creation of female tradition or canon, the

production and consumption of texts by women and the usage of language in their literary creation (Benstock, S., Ferriss, S., & Woods, S., 2002). Similarly, Tyson states that “feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women” (2006:83). Regarding the aim of feminist literary criticism, Madsen puts it as follows:

Feminist literary theory had three main aims: to expose the workings of the ubiquitous patriarchal power structure; to promote the rediscovery of women’s historical achievements (including literary history); and to establish a feminine perspective on critical, literary, political, scientific, philosophical (and other) theories of the cultural forces that shape our lives. The intended aim was to change the sexist bias of traditional educational and social practices (2000, 15).

The history of feminist literary criticism, according to Plain and Sellers (2007), properly begins four or five decades ago with the beginning of second-wave feminism. It is Kate Millet’s book, *Sexual Politics*, which sets feminist literary criticism firmly in the academic agenda. It is a book that shows literature was used to reinforce women’s subordinate role through characterization and language (ibid). Madsen refers to Millet’s work as “one of the pioneering literary studies” which offered an analysis of authoritative male writers and revealed a pattern of masculine dominance and feminine submission that Millett identified as misogyny (Madsen, 2000:16). Madsen also feels that feminist literary critics such as Millett can promote a positive image of women in art and therefore in life, and can also raise the consciousness of women to their own oppression, which is the main aim of feminist literary criticism (ibid).

One of the many achievements of feminist literary criticism, according to Madsen, is discovering and defining a tradition of women’s writing by finding and publishing the works of neglected writers as well as the theoretical effort to define the nature of feminine lives, creativity, styles, genres, themes, images, genius or sensibility, and the like (ibid).

Although feminism as a theory and literary criticism deals with the same concerns about women's equality and rights, there have also been differences among the proponents of each feminist perspective. However, their common goal has been stated by Carter as follows:

What unites the various kinds of feminist literary theory is not so much a specific technique of criticism but a common goal: to raise awareness of women's roles in all aspects of literary production (as writers, as characters in literature, as readers etc.) and to reveal the extent of male dominance in all of these aspects (2006:91).

In general, the domain of feminism is very broad because it is committed to creating social change to end the discrimination and injustice against women, especially injustice against women as women.

2.4.2 Feminist Theories

There are different kinds of theories of feminism at the present time. The main kinds of feminist theories are Liberal feminism, Radical feminism, Marxist feminism, Black feminism, and Psychoanalytic feminism. There are also a number of other feminist theories. Liberal Feminists seek equal rights with men and believe individuals should be treated in accordance with their talents, effort etc as opposed to characteristics of their sex. Radical feminists believe that the main rival of women is patriarchy, which guarantees male supremacy and the subordination of women at work and in the home. Marxist feminists believe social class affects the life chances of women. They say that it is a key factor in the relationship between men and women. Black Feminism has developed in recent years as an attempt to highlight the importance of race and ethnicity.

As can be seen from above, the main reason why there are differences among the many feminist theories is in the divergence of the question of which is the primary oppression for women, and which should be given primacy in feminist

political struggle. Below is a brief discussion of Socialist since this thesis applies aspects of this approach to the analysis of the selected texts.

2.4.2.1 Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminism is a branch of feminism that focuses upon both the public and private spheres of a woman's life and argues that liberation can only be achieved by working to end both the economic and cultural sources of women's oppression. Socialist feminism is a two-pronged theory that broadens Marxist feminism's argument for the role of capitalism in the oppression of women and radical feminism's theory of the role of gender and patriarchy. (Wikipedia).

According to Madsen (2000), Socialist feminism focuses upon power relationships, especially the intersection of capitalism, racism and patriarchy, and the production of a politicized personal life. She argues that collectivity of oppression is a fundamental assumption of socialist feminism. The social class structure is seen to be inseparable from gender divisions: just as the rich oppress the poor, so men oppress women and this is not something that can easily be blamed on individual men who oppress individual women. This collective oppression of all women by men is the effect of culture or the social relations which define our existence as gendered individuals. Consequently, a change in society is needed before any significant change in gender relations can be brought about (ibid, 185).

She suggests that convincing individual women to change their lives by producing structural alterations in the economy that change men's lives, producing a generation of resisting readers who are skeptical of all the cultural messages that are offered to them, and formulating an effective concept of collective oppression can bring about change (ibid, 186). Socialist feminism represents not only female oppression, but also the entire oppressive

patriarchal power structure by exposing (as unnatural) relationships of male domination, especially in their relation to capitalist modes of production.

Socialist feminists argue that liberation of women can only be achieved by working to end both the economic and cultural sources of women's oppression such as gender roles should be abolished, women should be economically independent, etc. These aspects of Socialist feminism are applied in the analysis of the selected texts. Therefore, the writer of the present thesis tried to examine how such socio-economic aspects affect the relation between male and female characters in the selected novels.

The Socialist feminist approach is highly applicable in analyzing the selected texts. For example, in the selected novels we can see the major female characters struggling with life in order to be economically independent. We can also see that cultural sources of women's oppressions like gender roles affecting the lives of the female characters. Therefore, Socialist feminism is the most appropriate approach to analyze the selected texts.

Chapter Three

Portrayal of Heroines in *Nibut* and *Yederasiwa File*

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents a critical analysis of the selected novels, *Nibut* and *Yederasiwa File* based on the framework of analysis discussed in chapter three. That is, aspects of Socialist Feminism are applied to the critical analysis of the novels under study. In the process of analyzing the selected texts, concepts like women as sex objects, determination, stereotype, unconventional traits of women, etc are used as a lead to the analysis. The texts are not analyzed separately, rather they are treated together under the above concepts.

3.2 Synopsis of *Nibut*

Nibut is a story about a girl whose name is Helina. Her mother dies when she was two years old, and she lost her father when she was very small. Just before her father dies, he requests W/ro Belaynesh, who rents them a house, to take Helina to her mother's sister who owns a hotel in Akaki. On their way to Akaki, W/ro Belaynesh and Helina meet Yared, who helps them find Helina's aunt's house. W/ro Abaynesh, her aunt, is a ruthless rich woman. While being in her aunt's house, Helina can't tolerate the cruelty of her aunt. As a result, she decides to leave the house. When she leaves her aunt's house, her aunt makes her imprisoned by claiming that she has stolen some money from her. Yared hears this and bails her out, and then they start living together.

Helina considers Yared just like her brother, but his feeling for her is quite different from hers. He loves her so much, but he does not want her to know this because he thinks it will be a hindrance to her education. When Yared leaves for Germany for a scholarship, Helina starts to live with w/ro Belaynesh. While Yared was abroad for his education, she finishes high school and joins

Kotebe Teacher's College. When she graduates, he tells her that he wants to marry her, but she is so shocked because she thinks marrying him is like marrying her own brother. Then, she moves to Assela where she is assigned to teach. She thinks it is a good idea to be far from Yared for his own sake. In Assela, she starts seeing Hassen, who is Yared's best friend. But she is not happy with their relationship because it is limited to having sexual intercourse only. Then after some time, she finds out that he has a fiancée and then she stops seeing him.

One day, one of her friend's mother passes away and she helps them by serving the mourners with food and drinks. Then Mesfin, her friend's brother who comes from America, sees her and likes her. Then they introduce themselves to each other and talk about life in Ethiopia. After he goes back to America, he starts writing her letters frequently. Finally he marries her and takes her to America. In America, she finds life a bit difficult and she also realizes that there is a gap between Mesfin and herself in the way they perceive the world. He wants her to have a baby, but she insists that she should have a job of her own and pursue her education before she gives birth to a baby. Because of this disagreement, things start going wrong between them. Finally, she finds out that he cheats on her by sleeping with her best friend. Finally she decides to leave him and come back to Ethiopia to Yared.

3.3 Synopsis of *Yederasiwa File*

This is a story about a girl who wants to be a writer starting from her early age. She inherited the desire to be a writer from her father whom she loves so much and considers as her role model. Her father once writes a book and tries to get it published, unfortunately, due to the content of the novel, it is rejected. Because of this, her father becomes despaired, and starts coming home late being drunk. As a result, he gets sick and dies. Tsion, on the other hand, is obsessed with a thought that nothing will get in her way of doing what her

father couldn't accomplish. Girma, who is Tsion's father's friend, loves Tsion, but he does not show it because he does not want her to be distracted from her education. He wants to tell her how he feels about her when it is the right time, that is, after she finishes her education. It is during this time that Bizunesh, who is Tsion's best friend, introduces her to Mengesha. She does this because she wants to make Girma hers. Mengesha, however, has a fiancée. He just wants to be with Tsion just because she is virgin and beautiful.

Things cannot go the way Helina expects. Soon after her father dies, she takes the national exam and fortunately she joins a university. In the meantime, Girma tells her that he loves her, and promises her that he will take care of her no matter what happens. After she starts her education at Addis Ababa University, she finds herself in a dilemma between learning and writing a novel and finally her fascination for writing the novel outweighs her interest in learning which results in her dismissal from the university.

When she goes back to her house, keeps telling her to stop writing and find work until she goes back to university. Because they cannot agree on this issue, Tsion leaves her house with an expectation that she will never come back. Working as a servant, she gets into so many troubles, mainly facing sexual harassment from the men who she works for.

One day when Kelil, the man who she works for, tries to rape her, she shoves him away and he falls and his head is cut open. People hear the loud noise and come home. When they realize what she has done, they take her to the police station. The next day, Kelil, feeling a remorse for what he tried to do, goes to the police station to try to set her free. Then he is told to bring another person who can bail her out. Before he comes back, Girma gets a phone call from the police station and is told that the woman whom he has been looking for is there. Then, he immediately goes there and bails her out.

After she comes back to his house, she pays a visit to her mother which makes her mother thank God by kneeling down and kissing the earth. After that, she starts to live with her mother once again until she goes back to the university.

Finally, she publishes her fictional text with the help of Girma, and proposes to marry him.

3.4 Women as Sex Objects

Nibut: Helina is portrayed as a young girl rendered with good looks and brain. All people who see her, especially males, are attracted by her beauty. Her good looks cause her some trouble. For example, when she was an elementary student, an old man who was her aunt's customer wants to abduct her and rape her just because she looks attractive to him, and he wanted her to give him a male child that his wife cannot. To make sure that he will get a male child after raping her, he visits a wizard and gets permission to do so. Here, we can see that men have the societal norm that allows them to do whatever they want to women even to the extent of abducting and raping. Here, the girl's consent has no value because whether she likes it or not, if the man wants her, she should accept him and suffer the consequences. This kind of sexual oppression, according to Socialist feminists, is seen as a dimension of class power.

The other instance which shows that her beauty causes her a problem is that Hassen, her first boyfriend, uses her only to gratify his sexual desire. While he has a fiancée, he deceives her into believing that she is the one he wants to marry.

ሀሊናን ከድብብቆሽ ጨዋታ በላይ እጅግም አስቧት አያውቅም። ስለትዳር ፣ ስለቁምነገር ባሰበ ቁጥር ሙና ትመጣበታለች።

He has never thought about life with Helina beyond hide and seek. Whenever he thinks about marriage and serious issues, Muna comes to his mind.

(Muluwork, 2001:253)

The above extract shows that Helina is being used as a sex object. Hassen does not want his friends to know his relationship with her because he does not want to have a serious relationship with her. He just appreciates her beauty so that he can satisfy his lust, nothing more. The above text also shows that some men are unfaithful to their sexual partners.

Yederasiwa File: Tsion, the main character in *Yederasiwa File*, is depicted as a very beautiful girl. Her looks and mindset make her desirable by men which, indirectly, cause her to be seen as an object of sex toy and a victim of sexual harassment. For one thing, her boyfriend hides from her the fact that he has a fiancée. He just wants to use her as a sex toy to satisfy his lust.

መንገሻ ግን ቅዳሜና እሁድን በአብዛኛው የሚሳልፈው ደብረዘይት ከምትኖረው እራሴኛው ዘንድ አየሂደ ነው. . . ስለዚህም በማንኛውም መንገድ ድርጊቱ እንዳይጋለጥበት ከፅዮን ጋር በድብቅ መቅበጥ ጀመረ . . . ድንግልናዋን ከወሰደ በኋላ በቅርቡ እንደሚያገባ ትዝ አለው ::

Mengesha spends the weekend with his fiancée who lives in Debrezeit... So, he began to have an affair with Tsion secretly... After he deflowered her, he remembered that he is going to marry soon.

(Yezena, 2010:29)

From the above extract, we can see that females are seen as sex objects by men. If a woman/ girl looks attractive both in looks or mentality, she most probably becomes captivating for men. As a result, she will be a center of attention. In this novel, Tsion also becomes a victim of being considered a sex object. Mengesha, having a fiancée that he is going to marry soon, starts seeing Tsion. But he definitely knows that he is only using her to satisfy his libido. This shows that females are used as sexual objects by men, and also men are unfaithful to their sexual partners and also are cheaters.

Apart from being a sex object, she is also depicted as a victim of sexual harassment. While she is working as a servant, she faces sexual assault by men. One of them is married and has children, and the other is single.

ዕየን መብራቱን አጥፍታና አልጋዋ ላይ ቁጢጥ ብላ በንቃት ታዳምጣለች።
ቢላዋን ጨብጣ ይዛዋለች። ባላት አቅም ልትፋለማቸው ወስናለች በንዴት
እየጋሉ ሄዱና በሃይል ደበደቡት። መልስ አጡ። በሩ አጠገብ ሆነው በእልህ
ሲንቆራጠጡ ቆዩ ከዚያ በእልህ እየዛቱባት ወደ ሳሎን ተመለሱ።

Tsion turned off the light in her room and squatted on her bed. She tightly gripped the knife. She decided to fight him back as far as she can... He started banging at the door, but there was no answer. He waited pacing up and down with obstinacy at her door, and finally returned to the living room threatening her.

(Yezena, 2010:194)

However, by using her mind and her physical strength, she manages to escape from the attempted rapes. This shows that she is brave and alert and can take care of herself despite facing challenging situations. Even though she is not practically raped, the people who try to rape her do not consider her as a human being because she is a woman, the other, because she is a servant who is considered as an underclass. We can clearly see that women who are, especially, in the lower class are highly exposed to the oppressions, maltreatments, discriminations, sexual harassments and abuses, etc. This is one aspect of Socialist feminism that looks into women's oppression as class oppression. That is, women who are in the lower class are highly exposed to oppressions from men.

The other female character who is portrayed as a sex object in *Yederasiwa File* is Bizunesh. Women in many literary works are represented as tools that help men do what they want. Similarly, in this novel, Bizunesh is also depicted as a sex object.

በማግስቱ ደውሎ ቀጠሮ ሰጣት። ተቀበለችው። ከተቃጠሩበት መዝናኛ ቦታ ሲገናኙ
አልጋ ተከራይቶ ነበር የጠበቃት... እናም በጭንቀት ልጃገረድ መሆኑን
ነገረችው። እንደምንም አባብሎና በመጠጥ ጉልበትም ቢሆን አዳክሞ ሳያረጋግጥ
ሊለቃት አልፈለገም ። እንዳሰበውም ከመሳም አልፎ ሌላ ምንም እንደማያደርጋት
ቃል እየገባላት ዋለ። በመጨረሻ ግን እሷም ተረታች።

He called and appointed her the next day and she agreed to see him. When they met at the hotel, he waited her booking a room to take her to bed. When she tells him nervously that she is virgin, he decided not to let her go without checking it by begging or intoxicating her. He also promised her he would not go beyond kissing. But finally, she was seduced and gave in.

(Yezena, 2010: 34)

Here, we can see that men use females to satisfy their sexual needs. The next day after they introduced to each other, he waits her having a room ready to take her to bed. When she tells him that she is virgin, he makes her drink a lot and deflowers her. During the time they have been lovers, he never talks about their future. He is simply with her to take her to bed and gratify his sexual desire. Even when he gets a chance to go to Germany, he says nothing to her. Finally, he leaves for Germany alone.

The other instance that justifies the idea that men use women to satisfy their sexual desire is when the government officials deceive Bizunesh to sleep with them by giving her hope that they will give her a job.

...የራሷ ስራ ስለሌላት ወዳጆቹዋም የሚጫረቱባት “ስራ እናሲዝኛለን” በሚል የተስፋ ቃል ነበር።

Because she doesn't have a job, her lovers compete to win her with hope that they will get her a job.

(Yezena, 2010:209)

This shows that women who are not economically independent are forced to use their womanhood in order to be economically independent. On the other hand, the case is normal to the society, which shows that the problem is deeply rooted in this patriarchal culture. This in turn allows men to enjoy their patriarchal based superiority freely.

3.5 Determination and Self Confidence

Yederasiwa File: Tsion is portrayed as a very determined and independent girl. For each and every decision and action she takes, no matter how dangerous the consequences are, she has the courage to do it. A good example that can be given to support this is that after she joins university, an idea of writing a novel about her father preoccupies her mind. She finds herself in a dilemma between writing the novel and learning. If she is dismissed from the university, she knows how difficult her life would be. Nevertheless, her interest in writing her novel outweighs her interest in learning. Then she keeps writing her novel and finally gets dismissed from the university. The real challenge that she faces comes when she goes back to her house. Tsion and her mother cannot get along mainly because Tsion wants to write, just like her father, but her mother insists on her finding a job until she goes back to the university. Finally, she decides to leave her home and stay a few days in her friend's house. After staying there for a few days, she starts working as a servant in other peoples' houses.

በረጅም ተንፋሳ ሰውነቷን እያፍታታች የህሬን ብቻ እነብዙነሽ ቤት ለማደር ወሰነች :: ነገ ወደፈራችው ግን አማራጭ ወዳግችለት ቤት ሠራተኛነት::

Taking a long deep breath and stretching her body, she decided to spend only this night at Bizunesh's house. But, tomorrow, she starts working as a servant which she is scared of, but also the last options she has.

(Yezena, 2010:154)

Her determination along with her being self-reliant forces her to make the toughest decision that she has ever made. Being raised up without doing much household chores, she knows that it will be very difficult for her to be a maid. She can also anticipate the maltreatment, sexual abuse and harassment, etc. that she most probably will encounter. Despite all these, she dares to try it.

This shows that she is a very determined person who is ready to bear the consequences of whatever happens to her.

Tsion also opposes anything that comes on her way to prevent her from achieving her goals. She finds a way or fights back anything that endangers her objectives. This is clearly shown in the following extract:

ከወጠነችው ውስጥ አንዱንም ሳታጠናቅቅ ሚስት መሆኗ ሌላ ሀላፊነት መጨመር ፡፡ እንዲያውም ተግባሩን ሀሳቡን ማሰብ አቃታት፡፡ የፈለገውን መስዋዕትነት ትከፍላለች እንጂ እንደማታደርገው ደመደመች፡፡

She thinks that being a wife before fulfilling what she has dreamt is to add another responsibility. Let alone doing it, she can't even think about it. She decided to make whatever it takes than being a wife.

(Yezena, 2010:124)

In the above text, it is clearly shown that Tsion is portrayed as a woman who determined to achieve her goal. She knows that marriage for a woman like her is a trap. She has some dreams that she wants to fulfill before she gets married such as finishing and publishing her novel, continuing her education and becoming economically independent. She thinks that if she married Girma, she might have children and she might not see the realization of her dreams, for example, becoming a famous writer. So, no matter how difficult her life would be, she decides not to marry Girma and sacrifice anything to get where she wants to be. This makes her a determined and single-minded strong woman.

In another instance, Tsion is depicted as a woman who respects and gives value to her womanhood. Unlike other women who use their womanhood to get benefits and advantages, she would rather suffer the consequence of her fate than using her womanhood to get what she wants. This is clearly shown in a conversation that she has with her roommate, Martha:

ማርቲ፣ ይህንን ነገር በተደጋጋሚ ተነጋግረንበታል። መግባባት አልቻልንም አይደል። ተይኝ! ሴትነትን ለመወጣጫ እንደመሰላል መጠቀም ለእራስ ክብር መንሳት ነው ።

Marty, we have talked about this issue so many times, but we still cannot agree on it. Just leave me alone! Using one's womanhood to step up is to disrespect oneself.

(Yezena, 2010:119)

The above text indicates that Tsion strongly disagrees on the idea that women should take advantage of their womanhood to get what they want. She believes that those who do that do not have respect for themselves and also disgrace their personality. Therefore, she decides not to ask for help. And because of that, she is dismissed from the university and suffers the consequences of her action. Despite this, she does not regret making up her mind for not using her womanhood as a way out of the problem she is in.

The other character in *Yederasiwa File* that is depicted as a determined woman is Bizunesh. The following extract can be very good evidence:

የምትፈልገውን ለማግኘት የቻለችውን ሁሉ ታደርጋለች። ካልተሳካላት ግን የሰላም እንቅልፍ አይወስዳትም ። ከማንኛውም ነገር የተሻለውን ከሌሎች ቀድማ የመውሰድ ፍላጎትም በውስጧ አድጓል።

She does whatever it takes her to get what she wants, but if does not succeed, she cannot sleep. A desire has grown deep down inside her that makes her want to get the best things than others.

(Yezena, 2010:33)

The above text shows that Bizunesh strives to put anything that she wants under her control. It is uncommon to portray a female character the way Bizunesh is depicted. She believes that she deserves the best, and also works hard to get whatever she wants to the end. A very good evidence that can be given is all her endeavors to make Girma her own man. First, she introduced Tsion to Alemayehu so that she can keep Girma away from Tsion. She also tells

Tsion that Dereje is a very bad person without justifying her case. She also goes to the extent to write a false letter intended to end Girma's and Tsion's relationship saying that Girma is having an affair with her friend, and mention the time and the place they meet in the letter and recommend Tsion to see the incident with her own eyes. Even though, her determination and bravery is overshadowed because she is trying to take Girma away from her best friend, Tsion, her effort in getting what she want should be appreciated.

The other instance that shows Bizunesh's determination is that she does not back down from anything that she believes in. Even if she loses, she retaliates in whatever way she can.

“ በተቻለ አልርቀዉም፡፡ እየተከታተልኩ የሚወደውን አሳጣዋለሁ፡፡ በስቃይም እረካለሁ፡፡ ደግሞም ደስተኛ እንደማይሆን አውቃለሁ” አለች ጥርሱዋን ነክሳ ፡፡

“I will be around him as much as I can. I will follow him and make him miss what he loves, and I will feel happy seeing him suffering. I am sure he will not be happy,” she said grudgingly.

(Yezena, 2010:49)

From the above text, we can realize that Bizunesh is a tenacious woman who does not want to back down very easily. This show that her depiction is carried out in a way that shows she is against the stereotypical portrayal of female characters.

W/ro Yetemegn is also depicted as non-submissive and self assertive woman. Whenever she wants to say anything to her husband, she says it regardless of how he may react. She is a straightforward woman who freely expresses her feelings without any hesitation. When it comes to, particularly, anything that she considers meaningless, she does not hesitate from showing her feelings. The following extract can be a good example:

ኤዲያ! የታደሉት ኑርዋቸውን ያሞቃሉ የእኛ ቤት ሁል ጊዜ ባዶ ወረቀት፡፡

Jeez! The lucky ones live their lives comfortably, but in our house, it is just only a heap of blank papers.

(Yezena, 2010:16)

From the above extract, we can see her self-assertiveness very clearly. She outspokenly tells her husband what he is writing is fruitless without showing any fear. At the same time, she is also telling him that he is not doing what is expected from him for the family. W/ro Yetemegn does not see herself as inferior to her husband. She believes that she has an equal power like her husband. She also makes her own decisions over her husband. For example, one day, her husband comes home late very drunk. When he knocks at the door, W/ro Yetemegn orders Tsion not to open the door. However contrary it looks to popular depiction of female characters, especially mothers, it shows that W/ro Yetemegn has the bravery to make decisions even on her husband.

3.6 Stereotype Character Traits in Women

Most female character are depicted, especially in literary works of most men writers as submissive, dependent, modest, timid, etc. But in these two novels, these stereotype character traits have been reversed. Therefore, these female writers have tried to show the positive side of female characters.

Nibut: Helina is also portrayed as a girl who conforms to certain cultural values and traditions. We can infer this from the following extract.

ያሬድ ከኬሻው ውስጥ ከሰል እያነሳ ማንደጃው ላይ ሲጨምር አገኘችው፡፡
“ቆይ እኔ ላግዘህ ፤በኔ ያምራል አለችው” እጇን ወደ ከሰሉ ኬሻ እየሰደደች
“አንቺ ዛሬ እንግዳዬ ነሽ፤ትንሽ አረፍ ብትይ ጥሩ ነው”አላት
“ግድ የለም” የሴት እንግዳ የለውም” አለችና ሰራውን ተቀበለችው

She found Yared trying to build a fire.

Helina: Hold on, let me do it.

Yared: No, today you are my guest. Just take a rest.”

Helina: It is okay, no woman is a guest.”

(Muluwork, 2001:92-93)

From the above text, we can see that, apart from other traditional and cultural values that degrade women's place in the society, there are some traditional values that she conforms to. She thinks that as long as there is a woman in the house, she should do household chores that are thought to be difficult for men such as starting a fire, etc.

W/ro Belaynesh is depicted as a very kind-hearted old woman. There is nothing that makes her happy than helping people who are in trouble. The paradox is that she is very poor. Despite this, she helps Helina's father until he dies by providing medicine and food and drinks. In addition, she also allows Helina and her father to stay in her house without making them pay the house rent. She also weeps when seeing a man who has blood all over his body and has been beaten by police.

W/ro Belaynesh also has a traditional attitude towards gender issues, that is, she is highly influenced by patriarchal ideology. In this regard, it is very important to give two instances from the novel. First, W/ro Belaynesh believes that men and females are different in many aspects. While W/ro Belaynesh was taking Helina to her aunt's house one day, they meet a young man in the bus. They start talking, and he tells W/ro Belaynesh that she resembles his mother. Then they have the following conversation:

“ለመሆኑ እናትህ በህይወት አለች?”
ለወጣቱ መጥፎ ጥያቄ ነበር። በቋፍ የነበረ የሀዘን ስሜቱ ተቀሰቀሰ፤ አንደበቱ በሳግ ተወጥሮ እንባ ተናነቀው። መንፈሱ ተረበሽ አንገቱን በቅሬታ ደፋ አድርጎ
“ከሞተች ቆይታለች” አላቸው ።
“ተውእንጂ ልጄ፣ ወንድልጅ እኮ አይሳሳም። በዚህ ላይ እኔም እናት እሆንሀለሁ” አለች ለማፅናናት ያህል።

“By the way, is your mother alive?” asked W/ro Belaynesh. For him, it was not a good question. He was disturbed. His eyes filled with tears. He bowed down and said, “It has been a long time since she died.”

W/ro Belaynesh said, “My son, don’t feel that way. Men are not emotional. I could also be your mother,” just to comfort him.

(Muluwork, 2001:15)

In the above extract, we can learn that W/ro Belaynesh thinks that a man should not cry or should not be tenderhearted. She believes that a man should have all the masculine qualities that are thought to make a man a man, and being sentimental is definitely not one of them. This shows that W/ro Belaynesh is highly influenced by patriarchal system, which gives men the upper power and women the lower. We can understand that she considers crying as frailty in men.

The other instance is W/ro Belaynesh’s perception about marriage. Marriage for her is an obligation of a woman to bear and rear as many children as possible. We can see this in the conversation between W/ro Belaynesh and Helina.

**“ህሊና. . . ልጄ ለምንድነው እስካሁን ያልወለድኸው?” በማለት ጠየቋት።
ህሊና በጥያቄው ግራ በመጋባት “እቴጌ በላይነሽ ምነው ምን አደረኩዎት? የምን
መውለድ ነው?” ስትል በድንጋጤ መለሰችላቸው።**

“አይ የልጅ ነገር ባል አግብቶ ዝም ብሎ መቀመጥ አለ? ይህን የመሰለ ትዳር ሰጥቶሽ በጊዜ ዱብ ዱብ አድርጎ ወንድምና እህት ማድረስ ነው” አሉ በቁም ነገር።

“My daughter, Helina... Why haven’t you had a child yet?” she asked.
“Dear Belaynesh, what have I done wrong? What are you talking about?” Helina replied confusingly.
“Poor you! Is there anything like this after one got married? It is good to give birth to boys and girls soon for you have been given such a marriage,” said W/ro Belaynesh seriously.

(Muluwork, 2001:205)

The writer portrays W/ro Belaynesh as a conformist to the established patriarchal gender roles. For W/ro Belaynesh, marriage means a social

institution where women are bound by patriarchal gender roles which inculcate the idea that a woman should get married and bear and rear children, if possible, she should get married in her early age. W/ro Belaynesh does not take into account Helina's interests, needs, education, etc. She simply believes that a married woman's duty is bearing and raising children. This is the result of a long-held patriarchal belief that is instilled in the mind of W/ro Belaynesh by the patriarchal society she lives in.

The other character with a stereotype character trait is W/ro Abaynesh. She is a very rich and brave woman, despite this, her perception of education is wrong. She is a character in the novel that is highly influenced by traditional thinking regarding gender issues. In her belief, learning for a woman is a waste of time. Rather, what makes sense to her is that a woman should marry a husband and bear raise her children. This is clearly shown below:

ይሄ መከረኛ ትምህርት የሚባል ዘመን አመጣሽ አለ። አላገባም ብላ እምቢ አለች።

There is a vogue which is called education. She refused to get married.

(Muluwork, 2001:214)

From the above text, we can realize that W/ro Abaynesh does not consider that education is necessary for women. She believes that the role of a woman is to marry a husband, bear and raise children, satisfy her husband's needs, etc. All in all, W/ro Abaynesh feels that a woman's role is to be a good housewife and a good mother.

Yederasiwa File: W/ro Yetemegn is a character who is depicted as a housewife who is unhappy with her life mainly because her husband does not provide enough for the house. She is not educated, and her husband leaves her nothing when he dies. After her husband dies, she takes care of her two children by selling vegetables and fruits in the market in spite of her old age. This shows that she is a devoted mother who does not desert her children.

Although she has the above qualities, due to the social environment that she lives in and also because of her old age, she has a traditional view about gender roles. It is her strong belief that only girls should help their mothers with different household chores.

ሆኖም ሴት ልጅ ልትሰራው ይገባታል ብለው የሚያምኑትን የቤት ውስጥ ስራ ዕዮን እርግፍ አድርጋ ትታ ትምህርት ቤት መልስም እንደአባቷ ስታነብና ስትፅፍ ማምሸቷን አልወደዱትም... እሱ ከአባቱ ጎን ቁጭ ብሎ ቢያጠናና ቢፅፍ እሷ ደግሞ አብራቸው የቤት ስራ ስትሰራ ብታመሽ ነበር ምርጫቸው። ግን እንደሚፈልጉት አልሆነም።

W/ro Yetemegn does not like the idea that Tsion leaves aside household chores that she is supposed to do and focuses only on reading and writing after school like her father...W/ro Yetemegn would be very happy if her son reads and writes with his father, while Tsion helps her with household chores, but is not like the way she wants it.

(Yezena, 2010:9)

In the above text, portrays W/ro Yetemegn is portrayed as a woman who still conforms to one of the traditional gender roles, which is, a woman’s place is in the kitchen. She believes that there are some household chores that should be done by women. She also thinks that a boy’s duty is to learn and educate himself, and a girl’s duty is to be like her mother, that is, she should cook, clean the house, take care of her family, etc. In general, she believes that a boy should follow his father’s footsteps and a girl should follow her mother’s. In this regard, we can say that some traditional gender roles are still instilled in the minds of W/ro Yetemegn.

Bizunesh is also portrayed as a woman who is influenced by cultural and traditional values. This shows that, unlike Tsion, Bizunesh does not fight against the patriarchal thinking that gives freedom only for men.

አንዳንድ ጊዜ ደፍራ ማፍቀሯን ልትገልፅለት ታስብና ሀብረተሰቡ በሴት ላይ ያሳደረውን ፍቅርን በይፋ ያለመግለፅ ተፅዕኖ አንደበቷን ያስረዋል።

Sometimes, she decides to express her feeling towards him, but she hesitates when she thinks of how the society silences women from expressing their feelings to men.

(Yezena, 2010:32)

In our culture, it is almost completely against the norm for a woman to tell the man that she is in love with him. This is a very big issue that silence women from expressing their true feelings freely. Bizunesh is also a victim of this cultural tradition. She is very much in love with Girma, but she thinks that it is not right for a woman to tell a man that she loves him. Because she refrains from telling Girma how she feels about him, she makes her own life as well as Girma's and Tsion's lives very difficult.

3.7 Unconventional Behavioral Traits in Female Characters

The unconventional behavior of the female characters in these two novels is evident. The female characters like Helina, Tsion, W/ro Yetemegn, etc for example, exhibit unconventional behavior such as confronting with their spouses, a lack of feminine traits, acts of violence, etc. Such behaviors are deemed unconventional as they subvert the feminine ideal of how a woman should behave, which includes being submissive, gentle and docile.

Nibut: When it comes to raising a child, Helina's perspective is quite different from that of many women who believe that raising children is the responsibility of mothers only. The following extract can be good evidence:

እንዳንድ የሀገራችን ወንዶችም የሚሉትም እንደዚህ ነው። ልጅን እንደተፈጥሮ ፀጋ መቁጠር ማሳደጉን በጋራ ኃላፊነት እንደመወጣት ፍፁማዊ የሴቶች ኃላፊነት ብቻ ነው ብለው ያምናሉ። ሌሎቹም ሴትን ማስረገዝና ማስወለድ ሊፈርስ የደረሰን ትዳር ማረጋገጫና ሊሞት የተቃረበን ፍቅር ማነቃቂያ አድርገው ይጠቀሙበታል። ማለቴ በየምክንያቱ ትዳር ያልተስማማትን ወይም በፍቅሩ ያልረካችን ሴት በቁጥጥሩ ስር ለማዋል፣ የሴቶች እርግዝናና ልጅ መውለድ እንኚህን ወንዶች የማይበጠስ ሠንሰለት አድርገው ይወስዱታል።

Some men believe that having a baby is like a gift from God, but instead of sharing the responsibility of raising them, they completely put the responsibility on mothers only. Others think that impregnating their wives and making them bear children help them settle a marriage which is on the verge of break up. What I mean is that men use impregnation as a means of controlling women who are not happy with their marriage. They impregnate their wives and assume that will be used as a bondage that cannot be broken.

(Muluwork, 2001:353)

As can be seen from the above text, Helina does not accept one of the traditional roles, which says, raising children is the responsibility of mothers only. She believes that both the mother and the father are equally responsible for raising their children. In addition, she is also aware that men subjugate their wives when they feel insecurity about their marriage, which is, impregnating their wives and keeping them under their control. They believe that once the wife bears children, she is bound to her marriage even though she is not happy with her marriage.

W/ro Abaynesh is portrayed as a brave, rich woman who has not married since her husband died. She is also depicted as a very powerful woman who is feared and respected by many people in Akaki as it is shown in the following dialogue between Yared and Teshome:

“ህግ ባለበት ሀገር ምንድነው ችግሩ? ለምን አይከሰቱም?” ሲል ጠየቃት። “አንተ አታውቃትም! አባይነሽ እኮ በዚህ ሀገር ንጉስ ነች፤ እሷን ማን ይከሰዳ?” አለ ተሾመ ከትርሲት ቀድሞ።

“What is the problem in a country where there is law? Why don't they sue her?” Yared asked Teshome. “Oh, you don't know her! She is like a king in this country. There is no one who will dare to sue her,” said Teshome before Tirsit.

(Muluwork, 2001:79)

In the above text, it can be seen that W/ro Abaynesh is portrayed as a very powerful woman with a reputation of being dominant that goes to the extent

that is difficult to sue her. She owns a hotel and runs it herself without any difficulty. She is a woman who always wants to have the upper hand in everything.

W/ro Abaynesh is also depicted as a very wise woman who uses her mind to execute her plans carefully. A good example is the problem that she faces from Feruk, who used to be a guard in her hotel. He has done a big favor for her, which is, stealing the axe from Helina that she sees as a token of her father's love, and which W/ro Abaynesh thinks it is a curse. But he has not stolen the axe. After he makes her believe that he has stolen the axe, she brings him close to her. She even allows him to sleep with her. The real challenge that W/ro Abaynesh faces comes when Feruk controls everything in the hotel. He becomes the new boss, and W/ro Abaynesh's dominance starts decreasing from time to time. Then she comes up with a plan to regain her position in the house and throw out Feruk. The first thing that she does is buying a car. Before she buys the car, she knows that Feruk will insist on driving it. As she expects, he starts driving the car, and going to different places and spending a lot of time outside the town. This paves the way for W/ro Abaynesh to amend the disorder in the hotel that is caused by Feruk. Then, she gives the waitresses a notice, and hires new waitresses from Addis Ababa who should be loyal to her. She also buys a pistol, and is trained how to use it. Finally, when the right time comes, in front of some people, she put the gun on his face, insults him, embarrasses him, and says what she wants to say to him, and finally kicks him out of her house. From the above description of W/ro Abaynesh, we can learn that she deals with matters that threaten her power very carefully and wisely.

Yederasiwa File: Soon after the inaugural ceremony of her first novel, which would not seem possible without Girma's help, Tsion proposes to Girma which looks like a universal reversal of the male/female role.

. . . ቀኝ እጅዋን ወደ ደረቷ ሰድዳ በጡቶቿ መሃል ያቆየቻትን ትንሽ ሚስጥራዊ ሳጥን አውጥታ ስትከፍት በወፍራም ጥጥ የተጠቀለሉ ሁለት አንጻባራቂ የጣት ቀለቦቶች ታዩ። ግርማ በየወሩ ከሚሰጣት ብር ላይ እየቆጠበች የገዛቻቸው ቀለቦቶች ናቸው። ግርማ ያልጠበቀው ነገር ስለሆነበት ትኩር ብሎ ተመለከታት። በእርሷ ጣት ላይ የሚያጠልቅላትን ቀለበት ሰጠችው። የእሱን ስታጠልቅለት እሱም በእሷ ጣቶች ላይ አጠለቀላት። እንደገና ተቃቀረ።

When she send her right hand to her chest, took out a small box that she kept between her breasts and opened it, two shiny rings wrapped by thick cotton were shown. She bought these rings with the money that saved from the allowance Girma gave her every month. Girma stared at her because he didn't expect that. She gave him the ring that he should put on her finger. When she puts his ring on his finger, he puts hers on her finger.

(Yezena, 2001:253)

It is still an established and long-held tradition for man to propose to his woman to marry him. But here, the main reason that she proposes to him is because she puts all of his patience and kindheartedness into consideration, and also that she has successfully accomplished what she has worked hard for, that is, publishing her first novel. In addition, she also considers the proposal as a way of making it up to him for making him wait too long to marry her.

In most Amharic literary texts, women, especially mothers, are portrayed as beings that are passive and submissive to their husbands, who are thought to be the breadwinners. But, in the case of W/ro Yetemegn, we can see that the writer tries to reverse the stereotypical image of mothers to some degree. Basically, mothers are depicted as obedient wives who are modest and timid. But, when we see W/ro Yetemegn's portrayal, it is quite different from these. She believes, unlike other mothers in Ethiopia, that she is equal to her husband. She speaks straightforward to him. She even involves in a physical fight with him, which is very uncommon in real life situations.

አሁንስ በዛ! በዛ! በዛ! ባንተ ብሶ ዱላ አሉና አጠገባቸው ባገኙት ጫማ አንድ ግዜ ጀርባቸው ላይ ሲያሳርፉባቸው ጽዮን ደነገጠች።

“It is too much!” she said and hit him on his back with a shoe.
Then Tsion was shocked.

(Yezena, 2010:16)

Here, the conventional role of men and women that the society accepts is reversed. Normally, men are known for beating their wives for something wrong they do, and wives do not fight back, rather they accept it as a norm because this is what the patriarchal system inculcates in their minds. However, in the case of W/ro Yetemegn, the situation is different that we see her standing up for her own right.

3.8 Women’s Empowerment

Nibut: Helina has a firm stance on the female’s right to get education. When her aunt tells her to get married to a man who is from a well-to-do family, she reacts in the following way:

ለነገሩ የማገባውን ለመምረጥ ህግ የሚፈቅድልኝ ይመስለኛል። ሆኖም አክሱቴ ያልገባዎት ነገር አለ ። ከሁሉም በፊት እራሱን ማወቁ ይቀድማል ። እኔ ትምህርቴን ሳልጨርስ ለግርድና ባል አላገባም። ባገባም ቢጤዬን እንጂ ለገንዘብ ብዩ ባርነት አልገባም። አክሱቴ እውነት ትመራለች። ነገር ግን ሀቅ መናገሩ ከሺ ውሸት የበለጠ ያረካኛል። የእርስዎ ሀብት ከራስዎ ተርፎ ሰው ያስተዳድር ነበር። ያ ሀብት ሲታመሙና ዕርዳታ ሲፈልጉ እየመነመነ መጣ። በመጨረሻም አሁን ካለንበት ደረጃ አደረሰዎት። አክሱቴ ሁሉም ሀብት ያለው ከዚህ የተለየ አይደለም። የማይሰረቅ የማይዘረፍ፣ የማይመነምንና የማይነጥፍ ዘለአለማዊ ሀብት ትምህርት ነው።

I have the right to choose whom to marry. But there is something that you do not understand. What should be given priority is to know oneself very well. Before I finish my education, I will not marry a husband to serve him. Even if I do, I will marry who I love, not a wealthy one... Once you were rich. Your wealth was enough for many people, but when you got sick and needed help, it diminished through time. Finally, you are left only with this... Aunt, everybody’s wealth is like this. The real wealth that will not be stolen, and will not diminish that you can have forever is education.

(Muluwork, 2001:214)

From the above extract, we can see how determined she is concerning her viewpoint, that is, the importance of education for her. For Helina, education is the most important thing in her life. She sees it as a means of economic independence, a solution for women's oppression, and even a means of happiness. In my opinion, Helina represents the modern woman who strives to achieve personal empowerment in order to be economically independent which, entails less oppression to women or wives by their husbands. Unlike Helina, many women today want to marry rich men in order to live a life of luxury. They are not much concerned with personal development and empowerment.

The main reason why Mesfin marries Helina is because he wants to fulfill his long wish to have children. Due to some circumstances, he fails to do this. Now, he thinks that Helina should agree on his demands and satisfy his needs. This is clearly seen in the following extract:

ህሊና መቼም በእድሜ ከአንቺ ጠና ያልኩ ሰው ነኝ። ስለዚህ በዚህ አለም ከአንቺ ረዘም ላለ ጊዜ ቆይቻለሁ። እኔ አንቺን ሳገባ የመጀመሪያው ምኞቴ በህይወቴ ላደርገው ፈልጌ ሳላሟላ ያሳለፍኩትን ሁሉ ለመፈፀም ነበር። ታዲያ ያንቺ የመጀመሪያ ፍላጎት ደግሞ ልጅ መውለድ ሳይሆን ትምህርት መማር ነው።

Helina, it is obvious that I'm more mature than you and, I have lived in this world longer than you. When I married you, my first goal was to do what I missed in my life. However, your priority is to pursue your education, rather than having a child.

(Muluwork, 2001:352)

And Helina reacts to what he says saying:

“መስፍን ስለኔ የትምህርት ፍላጎት ከመጀመርያ ቀን ግንኙነታችን ጀምሮ እስከ ዛሬ ያላነሳሁበት ጊዜ አልነበረም። እውነትህን ነው፣ ለእኔ ከሁሉም በላይ ትምህርት ነው። ትምህርት ከወንድ እኩል ለሴት ልጅም ጠቃሚ መሆኑን የምትረዳ ይመስለኛል። አየህ ፣ ለእኔ ትምህርት ለህይወቴ መነሻና መንደርደሪያ አውራ ጎዳና ነው። የቤት ልጅ ማለት ሴት ሆና የተፈጠረች ፣ ባለመማርና ባለማወቅ ምርጫም የጠበበ ባሏን ለማርካትና ፍሎንቴን ለማሟላት የተፈጠረች መሆኗን አምና የተቀበለች ማለት እንዳልሆነ ለአንተ ልነግርህ አልችልም” አለችው ኮስተር ብላ።

Mesfin, since the day we met, there has not been a day that I did not raise my hunger for education. You are right that education is above anything for me. I believe that you know that education is

important for a woman as it is to a man. Look! For me, education is a platform of my life. I know you understand that being a woman doesn't mean someone created to satisfy and fulfill her husband's desire just because she is not educated and ignorant.

(Muluwork, 2001:352)

From the above text, we can learn that Helina is a woman who does not accept the gender difference between men and women. She believes that men and women are equal, and also she thinks education is a vital means of achieving equality. She takes a stand against the idea that women should marry and live to serve and fulfill the needs and desires of their husbands. The manner in which she explains what she wants to say to her husband, what many women do not dare to say to their husbands, shows her self-confidence. She is also brave and daring.

3.9 Struggle for Advancement

The first thing that Helina wants to do in her life is to get education. Unfortunately, her early childhood is full of difficulties. First, her mother dies when she is two years old, so she grows up without a mother. Second, her father is a very poor lumberjack. And thirdly, when her father dies, she is forced to live with her aunt whom she had never seen or heard about before. So, being in this kind of situation, going to school for her is unthinkable. However, in order to fulfill her strong interest in learning, she asks Solomon, her workmate, to teach her the alphabet.

“ ሰለሞን አንድ ነገር ልጠይቅ?” አለችው፡፡

“ጠይቁኝ ከቻልኩ እመልስልሻለሁ” አላት፡፡

“ሰለሞን እስኪ ፊደል አስተምረኝ?”

“ከፈለግሽ ዛሬውኑ እንጀምር”

Helina: Solomon, can I ask you something?

Solomon: Sure, I will answer it if I can.

Helina: Can you teach me the alphabet?

Solomon: We can start today if you like.

(Muluwork, 2001: 63)

The above text indicates the eagerness that she has to learn in her early age. After she gets a chance to learn after she starts living with Yared, she becomes a clever as well as a famous student, and gets a prize for her outstanding performance from the school. She also participates in different clubs in her school. This shows that if females get the chance to get education, they can develop and use their full potential, and become equally competent to men in different spheres.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

A lot has been done on feminist issues since the inception of feminism. Quite many women starting from Mary Wollstonecraft, who wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792, to the recent ones have contributed a lot in making the feminist movement get a worldwide recognition and impetus for achieving all the social triumphs women have achieved throughout the world. They have put their ideas in books they have written, and instill them in women readers that they can fight against this world which is ruled by patriarchal system, and have obtained a remarkable victory.

In Ethiopia, even though women's movement by women is in its very early stage, there have been some remarkable measures that have been taken by the government for the betterment of the conditions of women. In the analysis, I have observed that this change of the conditions of women is shown in the trends of representing female characters in literary works as independent, self-assertive, etc figures. This could happen by the coming of more and more female writers to the discipline. In the novels that have been selected for analysis, it is evident that both the writers, Muluwork Asrat and Yezena Worku, have tried to deconstruct the traditional stereotypical portrayal which marginalized and objectified female characters. These two writers have placed their major female characters in positions where they will not only be seen but heard, where they will not be passive but be an active participant in decision making, and most importantly, challenging patriarchal system in general.

However, their depictions, apart from resisting patriarchal thinking, also illustrate the various ways of oppressions and sexual injustices such as sexual abuse and sexual harassment that women experience in the patriarchal world. In my opinion, the writers make their focal point on the young generation, which is represented by the major female characters, Helina and Tsion, which create the new images of the modern new woman in Ethiopia.

On the other hand, both of the writers have used the characters who represent older generations, W/ro Abaynesh, W/ro Yetemegn and W/ro Belaynesh to show that patriarchal ideology still dominates their thinking and their ways of seeing gender roles. By doing this, the authors are able to show the change of representing the images of women by using the contrasting perception of gender roles between the younger and the older, which in their case, the younger's is more important. However, the female characters who represent the older generation are also depicted in a way that reverses stereotype depictions of female characters.

I conclude that the main female characters in both novels are portrayed as independent, determined, strong women who female readers would identify themselves with. In contrast to that, consciously or unconsciously, the writers of both novels show in their novels the idea that men are necessary for women. They each have used one male character, namely Yared in *Nibut*, and Girma in *Yederasiwa File* who have played a great role in helping the major female characters to become contented with their achievements at the end of both novels. This, indirectly, shows that women, despite the fact that they are strong or brave, they still need the help of men.

Bibliography

Assefa, Worku. *An Analysis of Literary Techniques in Some of the Prose Works of Ethiopian Women Authoresses 1959-1985*. E.C. Master's Thesis, Literature. Addis Ababa University, 1995.

Appraisal Report: Institutional Support Project to the Women's Affairs Office Federal Republic of Ethiopia.(n.d) .Web. 10 March 2012 <http://www.google.com.et/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=OCBsQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.Afdb.org%2Ffileadmin%2Fuploads%2Fafdb%2FDocuments%2FProject-and-Operations%2FET-2004-029-EN-ADF-BD-WP-ETHIOPIA-WID-PREP-ET_01.pdf&ei=sdCLT4fBHobltQbWqOjzCw&usq=AFQjCNFw0kRtcL6Izu8A8bRBmG1GByx29g>.

Beasley, Chris. *What is Feminism? An Introduction to Feminist Theory*. Steonards: Sage Publication, 1999.

Benstock, Shari et al. *A Hand Book of Feminist Literary Theories*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Carlos, Augusto and Zahidi, Saadia. *Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap*. Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2006.

Carter, David. *The Pocket Essential Literary Theory*. Harpenden: Cox & Wyman, 2006.

Castle, Gregory. *The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

Ember, Carol and Ember Melvin, eds. *Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender: Men and Women in the World's Cultures*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003.

Eskinder, Hailu. *Roles and Sacrifice in Political Drama: A Comparative Study of Death and Maiden' and The Father from a Feminist Perspective*. Master Thesis, Literature. Addis Ababa University, 2008.

Esplen, Emily and Susie, Jolly. *Gender and Sex: A Sample of Definitions*. December, 2006. Web. February 13, 2012 <http://www.iwtc.org/ideas/15_definitions.pdf>.

Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic Ministry of Women's Affairs. *Ethiopian Women's Affairs Development and Change Package*. Addis Ababa: National Printing Press PLC, 2006.

Fonchingong, Charles. Unbending Gender Narratives in African Literature. *Journal of International Women's Studies*. 26 February 2012 Web. 2006 <<http://www.africabib.org/http.php?RID=W00074675&DB=w>>.

Freibert, Lucy. *Images of Women in American Literature*. In *women's Studies encyclopedia*, ed. Helen Tierney. Greenwood Press. 15 March 2012. Web. 2002. <<http://www.gem.greenwood.com>>.

Gender Equality. (n.d). Web. 2 March, 2012 <[http://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/Chapter_3_\(72dpi\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/Chapter_3_(72dpi).pdf)>.

Gerhard, Jane. *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of American Sexual Thought, 1920 to 1982*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Habib, Rafey. *Modern Literary Criticism and Theory: From Plato to the Present*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Holmes, Marry. *Gender and Everyday Life*. Oxon: Routledge, 2009.

Howie, Gillian. *Between Feminism and Materialism: A Question of Method*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Knellwolf, Christa and Christopher, Norris, eds. *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Twentieth-Century Historical, Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Lawrence, Carolyn. *The Image of Women in Early British Literature: A Comparative Look at Women from Beowulf to Shakespeare*. 2008. Web. 1 April 2012 <[ttp://voices.yahoo.com/the-image-women-early-british-literature-1909106.html?cat=38](http://voices.yahoo.com/the-image-women-early-british-literature-1909106.html?cat=38)>.

Lena, Ampadu. *Black Women Writers as Dynamic Agents of Change: Empowering Women from Africa to America*. 2006. Web. 2 February 2002 <<http://forumonpublicpolicy.com/archive07/ampadu.pdf>>.

Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Patriarchy*. Oxford: Oxford, University Press, 1986.

Llim, Simon. *Females in the 16th and 21st Century: Gender Perception in Literature*. 2007. Web. 20 February 2012 <<http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/exchange/node/392>>.

- Madsen, Deborah. *Feminist Theory and Literary Practice*. London: Pluto Press, 2000.
- Mehret. W/Micheal. *A Feminist Reading of Selected Films: A Case Study of Two Female-Authored Amharic Films – Sara by Helen Tadesse and Roman by Emebet Girma*. Master's Thesis, Literature. Addis Ababa University, 2007.
- Meknonnen, Fekadu. *Images of Women in the Fictions of Selected African Women Writers: A Comparative Black Feminist Study*. Master's Thesis, Literature. Addis Ababa University, 2005.
- Mikell, Gwendolyn. Ed. *The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Philadelphia: University Pennsylvania Press, 1997.
- Neha K., and Memphis. *The Growing Importance of Women in British Literature*. (n.d). Web. March 12, 2012 <<http://www.teenink.com/opinion/all/article/185170/The-Growing-Importance-of-Women-in-British-Literature/>>.
- Osborne, Susan. *The Pocket Essential: Feminism*. Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2001.
- Plain, Gill and Susan, Sellers. Eds. *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Rooney, Ellen, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Selden, Raman et al. *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. 5th ed. Harlow: Prentice Hall, 1985.
- Socialist Feminism. Wikipedia Foundation. Inc. 10 February 2002. Web. 14 February 2012 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_feminism>.
- Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006.
- Walters, Margaret. *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Women in Ethiopia. (n.d). Web. 25 March 2012<<http://www.ethioembassy.org.uk/fact%20file/a-z/women-1.htm>>.

Yihenew, Melese. *A Feminist Reading of Tobbya and Endewotach Kerech*. Master's Thesis, Literature. Addis Ababa University, 2004.

ሙሉ-ወርቅ አስራት፣ ንቡት ፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ብርሃንና ሰላም ማተሚያ ድርጅት፣ 1993።

አለም ባየልኝ ፣ ሴቶች በሴት ደራስያን አይን፣ ያልታተመ የአርትስ ባችለር ዲግሪ ለቋንቋዎችና ስነጽሁፍ

ክፍልየቀርቦ፣ አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ፣ 1984።

የዝና ወርቁ ፣ የደራሲዋ ፋይል፣ አዲስ አበባ፣ ህትመት ብራና ማተሚያ ድርጅት፣ 2002።

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university, and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been dully acknowledged.

Name:- Nahom Daniel

Signature:- _____

Date:- June 2012