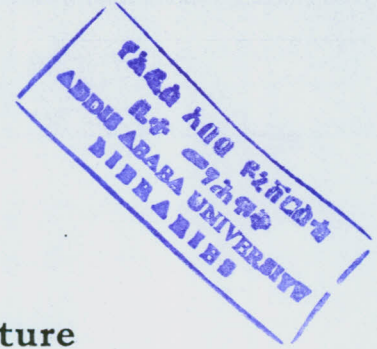


Addis Ababa University
Institute of Language Studies
Department of Foreign Language and Literature



**THE IMAGE OF WOMAN IN THREE AMHARIC
NOVELS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Addis Ababa University in
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School of Graduate Studies

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NOVELS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

There are a considerable number of literary theories prevalent in the discipline of literary criticism and all of which are very essential in analyzing works of art. Feminist literary criticism is one of these tools which has become a dominant force in approaching literary works for quite some time now. Recognizing the timeliness of this literary theory in relation to the present situation, this paper investigates the image of woman in Ethiopian Amharic fiction.

In doing so, only those Ethiopian Amharic fictional novels published within the last thirty years are included in this study. This decision is taken up since there are already some research papers available on feminist readings on Amharic fictional works produced prior to 1970's. The three Amharic novels on which this particular feminist study is based include *Yewodiyanes* (1978) by Haile Meleket Mewal, *Senselet* (1983) by Fekade Yohannes, and *Yelot Menged* (1998) by Tekelu Tilahu.

This thesis is generally organized into four chapters. The first chapter is the introduction. In this chapter research elements such as background of the study, statement of the problem along with objective, significance and limitations of the study are all presented. The literature review is the second chapter. Here literature related to this particular study is reviewed to discuss the theoretical background as well as to evolve the conceptual framework of the study. The third chapter is devoted to the analysis of and discussions on the image of woman in the three Amharic novels *Yewdiyanesh*, *Senselet* and *Yelot Menged*. In the fourth chapter the common and different image of woman as witnessed in these three novels are discussed in order to point out the general image of woman in these novels.

The overall research findings indicate that women have been predominantly depicted in the Ethiopian Amharic novels negatively accompanied slightly, however, by a few positive images. While the negative images include portraying women as just only mothers, wives and daughters confined to the household as well as viewing them as sex objects, the positive images present women as college students and professionals who are engaged in the public life.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

For centuries, the history of the world is marked by men ruling and women being ruled. According to Lynne (1976), this statusquo existed because of the central ideology of the patriarchal rule which declares that male is superior and female is inferior. As a result of this dominant belief, Carol and Mark (1976) state that “men and women enjoyed different ‘spheres’ of activity” or as Lynne (1976) observed “sex-based labor classification” was wide spread throughout the world. Under this patriarchal system the image of woman with all her roles and duties was defined narrowly for her.

Cheryll and Karen (1978) point out that a woman in the patriarchal society is viewed “as one who finds her highest happiness in loving and being faithful to one man, living through his achievement, having children, or making a home”. Similarly, Carol and Mark (1976), describing the kind of perception existed about women before eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, write as follows:

(A woman was) considered too weak physically to venture into the world outside the home and too deficient in reason to make important decisions, (she) was relegated to the domestic sphere where, under the guidance and direction of her rationally superior husband, she tended house, raised children, and gave her family comfort and pleasure.(p, 99)

However, resisting this dehumanizing treatment, women have always protested for their rights; and ‘individual writers’ and ‘thinkers’ have also

stood and worked for women's cause for long (Richard 1978). Some of the major early works produced on the subject of women's rights and equality, which subsequently led to the emergence of feminism, include Theodor Gottlieb Von Hippel's *On the Civil Improvement of Women* (1794), Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) and John Stuart Mill's *The subjection of Women* (1869) (*ibid*).

Ever since this historic point in time and afterwards, feminist ideology has managed to penetrate into all disciplines bringing in the issues of women to the fore front. One of these disciplines which is no exception to this movement is literary criticism. Upholding the notion of feminism, thus, measures were taken to overhaul previously established literary criticisms and formulate a new feminist literary criticism that brings the issues of women to the center stage. The need to abandon former literary criticism was necessitated due to its harsh and unreal treatment of women, as feminists state. To show the reason for taking to this approach, Josephine (1989) argues that since literature and literary criticism are filled with the same 'dominant patriarchal attitudes and customs of our culture' which relegated women's status in reality in the first place, it is important that feminists negate 'these reifications'. Similarly, to show how profoundly sexism and patriarchy is prevalent in the canon of literature and literary criticism and how women's experiences were pushed aside, Cheri Register in Josephine (1989) also observes as follows:

Only experiences encountered by male characters are called "universal" or basic to "the human condition". The "female experience" is peripheral to the central concern of literature- which is man's struggle with nature, God, fate, himself, and, not infrequently, women. (p,10)

Abrogating the already established literary criticism because of its misrepresentation of women, feminist literary criticism attempts to look into literary work from a different angle. Adrienne Riche cited by Brown and Caren (1976) calls this approach “revision-the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction.”

Steven (2005) writes that this new way of reading literary texts in feminist criticism mainly emanates from the perspective of ‘gender or our attitude towards gender’. He further argues, “Since the production and reception of literature have been controlled largely by men, the role of gender in reading and writing has been slighted”. Therefore, what feminist criticism does is not only recover the works written by women but also read other literary texts written to probe into the texts ‘for sexual oppression, exposing those assumptions and ways of thinking that have been deleterious to women’ (*ibid*).

Against this background, this thesis attempts to apply a feminist approach to the study of three selected Ethiopian literary works i.e novels produced within the last thirty years in order to have an insight into the way women have been portrayed in these works.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In the book entitled *Feminist Literary Criticism: Exploration in Theory*, edited by Josephine Donoval (1989), Cheri Register states that there are different subcategories of Feminist literary criticism and, of these, “image of women” criticism is one. This type of criticism generally attempts to identify what types of images women have been given in literature and analyze whether these images are real or unreal representations.

In her discussion of the major literary analysis made on some American literary works, Cheri Register concludes that the image of woman in American literary works is that of skewed ones filled with negative as well as positive stereotypes.

Citing Ellman's (1968) book *Thinking about Women*, Cheri states that American literature has identified, on the one hand, women's image with "formlessness, passivity, instability (hysteria), confinement (narrowness, practicality), piety, materiality, spirituality, irrationality, compliancy, and incorrigibility (the shrew, the witch)". On the other hand, Cheri also notes that literary works have, at the same time, portrayed the other side of women by presenting her as "the lily- the fair haired maiden, the symbol of feminine purity, the woman-as muse...". In her conclusion, Cheri argues that just like the negative stereotype, the 'positive' female stereotype is also undesirable because disregarding "the actual social condition of women, it persuades women to seek consolation in myths rather than work for social change"

Similarly, here in Addis Ababa University some studies have been conducted on feminist literary criticism both at the undergraduate and the post-graduate levels. These papers have made it possible for us to recognize the kind of images women have been given in Ethiopian literature. These feministic readings of Ethiopian literary works range from the earliest study carried out by Fekade Tekle (1990) to the most recent one made by Tekle Tesfalidet (2008).

These academic research studies seem to share one common method among them in their approach to literary texts. Of the studies carried out so far in this area, almost all seemed to be riveted to analyzing Amharic literary works that are either authored by a single person or by a couple of authors who belong to the same historical period. Some of them focused on either female-authored works or male-authored works only. It

is this kind of trend, author-based or synchronic type of method that is mainly found in their analyses of literary works.

Looking at the type of approach followed so far in feminist literary criticism, one cannot help but notice a certain gap. This gap is the relative absence of works in feminist literary criticism that analyze Ethiopian literature that belongs to different historical periods as well as written by different authors. The only exceptional work carried out in this context is Tekle Tesfalidet's thesis entitled *The Portrayal of Major Female Characters in Four Amharic Novels (2008)*.

Tekle's thesis makes a diachronic analysis of four Amharic fictional works authored by different persons at different periods in order to find out how women were presented in these works. These novels are *Toby* (1908) by Afework Gebre-Yesus, *Yelib Hassab* (1931) by Hiruy Woldelessie, *Setegna Adari* (1964) by Negash Gegre-Marriam and *Kadmas Bashager* (1970) by Be'alu Girma. Two of these four fictions have a special place in the Ethiopian Literary history, the former being the first modern Ethiopian literary narrative and the latter being one of the most famous literary works in modern Ethiopian literary history respectively.

Even though Tekle's thesis is ground-breaking in terms of providing a sample of feminist literary criticism from a new angle not so much taken up by other researchers and shows us the kind of traditional depiction of women characters in Ethiopian literature, it seems to be out of touch with the present situation. This is because all the literary texts which Tekle selected were produced in the distant past: *Toby* (1908); *Yelib Hassab* (1931); *Setegna Adari* (1964); and *Kadmas Bashager* (1970). Following this temporal distance reflected in Tekle's study one cannot help but wonder as to what kinds of image women characters have been given since then.

This does not mean that there are not any studies conducted so far in terms of feminist literary criticism on recently published works. Of course, there are some studies and of these Tigist Defaru's thesis *The Images of Female Characters in Films: A case Study of two Male-Authored Amharic Films-Kezkaza Wolafen and Semayawi Feres* (2005) and Miheret W.Michael's thesis *A feminist Reading of Selected Films: A Case Study of two Female-Authored Amharic Films- Sara and Roman* (2007) are noteworthy. However, these two studies addressed film productions rather than fiction. Therefore, I have found out from my reading of the research papers on feminist criticism produced till now that there is some ground that has not been explored yet.

Even though different feminist readings have already been carried out on Amharic novels, not enough research undertakings are available in examining the image of woman across time. It is only Tekel's thesis that is available in this regard. His finding however only applies to the image of woman in Amharic fiction produced prior to 1970. This particular study then offers a comparative view about the portrayal of woman in Amharic novels published in the last thirty years. It is, thus, this existing gap that this thesis hopes to fill.

For this purpose, I have taken three Amharic novels. These include *Yewodiyane* (1978) by Haile Meleket Mewal, *Senselet* (1983) by Fekade Yohannes and *Yelot Menged* (1998) by Tekelu Tilahun all of which were published within the last thirty years.

1.3 Significance of the study

It is the researcher's conviction that this thesis may provide useful information to different bodies of the society concerning the portrayal of women characters in modern Ethiopian literature. And this input in return will most likely benefit the concerned bodies in undertaking

positive projects towards the constitutionally envisioned women empowerment.

The different political and social institutions that are working on the issues of women will find this thesis an informative document which discloses the image of women in Ethiopian literature probably within the last thirty years. The findings then most definitely can be a resource for them to learn about the past and the preset perception about women and the kind of trend it has taken so far.

In addition to this, the thesis also attempts to make a modest and sincere contribution to the on-going research work conducted on feminist literary criticism by bringing in latest developments in this area. Anyone from the academic circle who is interested in carrying out further studies on feminist literary criticism could, therefore, take this paper as a research document that provides him/her with some preliminary information.

1.4 Objective of the study

The general objective of this study is to present a closer view or insight into the way women are represented in the three selected Ethiopian Amharic fiction. The three literary works, on which the research is based, belong to different literary periods historically.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives

By making a diachronic analysis of the three novels produced in different historical periods, the study hopes to attain the following specific objectives:

- To identify the images and roles women characters have been given in three selected Ethiopian Amharic novels;

- To compare and contrast the images and roles of women characters as portrayed in these literary works in order to find out if there are any similarities or differences;
- To determine whether the experiences of women characters shown in these works are merely stereotypical descriptions or reflection of reality; and
- To point out if there is any change of trend developing in the way women are portrayed in the current Amharic literature.

1.5 Methodology

This study employs the descriptive research method to obtain relevant information about the topic under investigation. In this process, the three selected Amharic novels will be studied closely with the intent of recognizing and extracting instances from these works where issues related to women are handled. Such issues include how women are portrayed and what roles they have been assigned. These images and roles once identified will be analyzed furthermore to check whether portrayal of women is stereotypical or authentic.

This study also depends on library research methods completely for procuring theoretical as well practical insights into feminist literary criticism. Studies on feminist criticism have been consulted to evolve a conceptual framework for the study. Similarly, theses conducted at the post-graduate levels on this topic, images of women in Ethiopian Amharic novels, will be surveyed and discussed to disclose their findings and also to show to what extent the present study is different from the studies previously carried out.

1.6 Delimitation and Limitation of the study

Just like every research paper, the range and extent of this study is also limited. First, of the different methods found in feminist literary criticism towards approaching literary texts, this study particularly focuses on identifying the images of women in three selected novels. This kind of feminist literary criticism is referred by Cheri Register in Donovan (1989) as 'image of women criticism'.

Second this feminist reading will be carried out on three Ethiopian Amharic novels selected for this purpose. Therefore, the analysis and the outcome will only apply to these novels only. Third, the extent to which related literature is available is also a limitation in terms of the nature and extent of this study.

Chapter Two: Related Literature and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Review of Related Literature

Among quite a wide variety of research works conducted so far at postgraduate levels within the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature in Addis Ababa University, the number of total theses found on feminist literary criticism are rather few. The number when roughly estimated does not exceed ten. Considering the long tradition of educational provision in the Graduate School Program at Addis Ababa University, it is extremely surprising to discover only eight papers, to be specific, on feminist literary criticism. Further, out of the eight studies on the image of woman only five were carried out within the context of Ethiopian Amharic literary history. Moreover, the publication dates of these five these also reveal another intriguing fact: Nearly all the papers, with the exclusion of one, were produced only recently from the year 2000 and onwards.

This reality implies a couple of things. One, the small number of studies shows that much research has not been made to explore the image of woman in Ethiopian literary works. Second the fact that almost all of the studies are recent indicates that feminist reading was not taken up by researchers before and it is a new and recent phenomenon.

In a chronological order, Mulumebet Zenebe's thesis *A Comparative Analysis of the Images of Men and Women in the Works of Some Ethiopian Women Writers* (1996) is the earliest feminist study in Addis Ababa University. In her paper, Mulumebet took several novels authored by female novelists to make comparison between the images of men and women. These novels include *Owsa* and *Anguz* by Tsehay Melaku and *Tsilmet* by Elfinesh Bekure. In her feminist reading, Mulumebet has adopted 'theme of seduction' and 'culture' as theoretical framework for

understanding the portrayal of women in these selected literary works. Mulumebet's finding announces that the majority of female characters in the novels are generally viewed as 'sex objects' and 'depicted as the victims of the men's cruelty and ignorance'. Mulumebet also notes that despite their being victims, most of the women are very determined, resolute and resilient enough that, with their choice to live independently, their lives end up happily. Mulumebet, taking this and the fact that the authoresses have allotted much of the story line to 'the inner feelings of the women characters' has argued that the writers have showed clear preference to the female characters over the male ones.

Owing to the emphasis made by feminist literary critics that literature produced by women should primarily be on the experience of women, the fact that the authoresses have done just this by riveting much of the story line to the female characters should not be viewed as a drawback as Mulumebet had.

Beside Mulumebet's, there are other studies which have taken up the sex of an author as a criterion for examining literary works. These are *The Images of Female Characters In Films: A case Study Of Two Male-Authored Amharic Films-Kezkaza Wolafen and Semayawi Feres* (2005) by Tigist Defaru and *A feminist Reading of Selected Films: A Case Study Of Two Female-Authored Amharic Films- Sara and Roman* (2007) by Mihret W. Michael.

While Mihret's attention was on two movies produced by females, Tigist's criticism focused on two films scripted and directed by males. As a theoretical framework, Tigist has adopted 'Laura Mulvey's concept of women as object of male's gaze in mainstream films'. According to her feminist reading of the two films, *Kezkaza Wolafen* and *Semayawi Feres*, the women in these movies were represented as visionless (without dreams), 'sex objects', 'failures', 'submissive' and as objects to be

possessed and saved or rescued by men. Mehret's analysis of women's images in the two female-scripted and directed movies, *Sara* and *Roman*, tells, however, quite a different story. In her study, Meheret has employed several feminist perspectives: African feminist literary theory, Laura Mulvey's male gaze and Evan-Maria Jacobson's female gaze. According to Mihret, even though most of the women were depicted as victims in these films, the central female characters, Sara and Roman, were portrayed as having unparalleled and incomparable 'strength and beauty'. For instance, Roman besides being 'strong, independent, decisive and rational...' was also resilient, determined and goal or career-oriented who at last became a winner by overcoming all her problems and accomplishing her dreams. This was also true of Sara.

Mekonnen Zegeye's *Images of Women and Plot Structure in the First Four Novels of Fikere Markos Desta* (2001) is another thesis in feminist literary criticism. Among some of the devices enumerated by Kolody in Rice and Waugh [2001] as potential tools needed in making a feminist reading, Mekonen has made his feminist reading based on one of these: culture. In his discussion, Mekonnen articulates that in these novels the images of women constitute two aspects. On one hand, women from the small ethnic groups and ethnicities of the Southern state of Ethiopia were presented as victims of the cultures of their societies as they were viewed as sex objects and, because of their sex-based roles, confined to home and home chores. On the other hand, some women from the big metropolitan cities were portrayed as career-oriented, independent, rational, 'strong and liberated'.

A similar observation has also been made by Tekle Tesfaledet in his work *The Portrayal of Major Female Characters in Four Amharic Novels* (2008). In this latest feminist study, Tekele has taken a completely new approach which has not been explored before, to investigate the image of woman in

Ethiopian literary works. Like his predecessors, Tekele did not resort to taking literary works written by a single author or fictional novels produced at one particular literary period. He rather took four Amharic novels which range in their publication during the years 1908-1970. In his study, Tekele stated that his analysis of the image of woman is based on 'an eclectic mix or a comprehensive approach of feminist perspectives'. His diachronic analysis of these four novels shows that women were portrayed in both positive and negative stereotypes. Listing out these stereotypes, Tekele writes:

Women are portrayed merely in their biological and primordial roles. They are depicted as mothers, wives, mistress and sex objects. [However, they were also presented] as strong, virtuous, intelligent and independent for religious or other thematic purposes. (p, 99)

The overall outcome of the above account of the five feminist literary studies on the image of woman in the Ethiopian Amharic novels is that there exists a tradition of presenting a stereotypical image of woman. These stereotypes have been mostly negative but with some positive aspects as well.

Despite the tremendous value these limited research papers have in terms of shedding light on woman and her image in Ethiopian literary context, the accounts, particularly those research studies conducted on fictional novels, provide are not only insufficient in terms of showing the image of women within the last thirty years but also distant from the present situation. For instance Mulumbet's thesis (1996) relied upon three novels written in 1980's: *Owasa* (1982); *Anguz* (1984) and *Tsilmet* (1985). Similarly, Mekonen's (2001) study included the four novels of Fekeremarkos Desta that were published within the last fifteen years.

One of these theses which actually took several novels for analysis was Tekle Tesfalede's *The Portrayal of Major Female Characters in Four Amharic Novels* (2008). However, even the results of this study fail to be applicable to the Amharic novels produced within the last thirty years. This is because the novels he selected for his study were published between the years 1908-1970. Even though Tekele's study is broad in its range, it has only dealt with the image of woman in Ethiopian Amharic literary works published before 1970.

Therefore, noting the gap of research in Ethiopian Amharic novels that were published within the last thirty years with reference to the image of woman, this study aims at revealing how woman has been portrayed in recent literary works.

For this purpose, three Amharic novels are selected. These novels are *Yewodiyaneh* (1978) by Hiale Meleket Mewal, *Senselet* (1983) by Fekade Yohannes and *Yelot Menged* (1998) by Teklu Telahun. The publications of these novels are according to Ethiopian calendar. As could be observed from the publication dates of these works, all these novels were produced within the last thirty years. Moreover, each of the novels belonged historically to different and successive decades, 1970's, 80's and 90's. This particular selection, which consists of taking one novel from each of the three different decades, is made deliberately in this research in order to obtain a more comprehensive and typical representation of women during this period of three decades.

2.2 Theoretical Background and Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Feminism

It is appropriate to note from the available literature, Evans (1997), Baker (2008) and Cudd and Andreasen (2005) that defining the term

feminism is not an easy task. This is so because the very word rather than constituting a single, stable meaning which proves to be functional for all women contains strands of ideas and concepts that are diverse. Referring to this complex and dynamic aspect of the term 'feminism', Evans (1997) pointed out:

Feminism has become more complex in its traditions, and the very word now demands a measure of deconstruction if we are ever to tease out from it the various appeals that this diverse movement makes to different constituencies .(p, 63)

Evan's explanation suggests that since nowadays women everywhere are subdivided into different smaller or mini-groups it is impossible to find an all-embracing definition of feminism that addresses all of them. Likewise, Barker's (2008) statement about feminism as "a field of theory and politics that contains competing perspectives and prescriptions for actions" resonates the same point. Describing feminism as consisting of 'a number of different meanings' in their book *Feminist Theory: A Philosophical Anthology*, Cudd and Andreasen [2005] have also retreated the fluidity of the word feminism which is already mentioned by Evans and Baker. However, almost all of these different meanings mark 'key turning points in the history of feminist thought' [*ibid*]. From Cudd and Andreasen's account of feminism it is reasonable to assume that all the various meanings attributed to feminism have their origin from different periods of struggles made within the general movement of women's liberation.

These historical moments in the history of women's movement are believed to have occurred in 'three waves'. In order to develop an accurate insight into the concept of feminism, it is therefore very important to look into these three periods closely. Before setting to do this, however, it is better to examine some of the general descriptions of

feminism provided by some scholars.

Evans (1997), for instance, states that feminism has always been 'a form of protest by women about their exclusion from full citizenship in Western, bourgeoisie society'. Edgar and Sedgwick (2002), similarly, identifying the existence of different theories within feminism, state that to all of these feminists, despite their differences, feminism basically "is the belief that women are subordinated to men in Western culture" and that feminism seeks to subvert this situation by constructing a culture that embraces 'women's desires and purposes'.

From these two general definitions it is obvious that feminism, as its ultimate objective, gears towards subverting or reforming the existing culture which has created an unfair patriarchal environment for women and subsequently replacing this undesirable culture with a new culture that guaranties woman's participation and place. Below a general survey is given with a view to looking into the concept of feminism more closely by taking each of the three feminism movements separately to identify the essence behind each of these movements.

2.2.1.1 First Wave feminism

There seems to be different accounts among feminists concerning the exact time when the first wave feminism emerged. According to Cudd and Andreasen (2005), the period of first wave feminism is primarily associated with 'the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). On the other hand, Sarah (1982), stresses that to some feminists the 'first wave' feminism began approximately in 'the mid nineteen century'.

Apart from this, Sarah (1982) also challenges the conventional consideration of women's movement in the second half of the nineteenth century as the first wave feminism since, to her, there were other movements made prior to this time although they were all relegated as

'isolated'. In her argument, she explains that the taken for granted 'first wave' feminism came to be so due to its convergence with 'a particular political and economic context-the development of liberalism, capitalism and social movements in this period' (*ibid*).

Even though there is a certain degree of disagreement among feminists themselves as to when exactly the first wave feminism began and whether the typical first wave feminism is actually the first in its kind in terms of raising the women's quest for equality, all feminists conclusively agree upon the positive effects and the practical changes it has brought. As Cudd and Andreasen (2005) point out, committed to seeking for 'equal political and economic opportunities for women', the first wave feminism managed to bring women such rights as political suffrage, the right to own property, the freedom to have education and work, which all of these women had been deprived of before. Sarah (1982), confirming the commitment of the first wave feminism towards bringing equality for women in political and economic spheres, also mentions that the movement simultaneously had also raised and fought for some other moral issues regarding the ill-treatment of women both in public and private life.

According to Sarah (1982), it was courtesy of the first wave feminism that it became a reality '...to expose the system of male power and to do something about it'. However, she still holds that much more about the first wave feminism is yet oblivious to the public due to lack of 'sufficient research' and the 'rule of men and male interests' (*ibid*).

2.2.1.2 Second Wave Feminism

Unlike the first wave feminism, there seems to be no shortage of the availability of preserved literature on second wave feminism. According to Evans (1997), this is because, the whole history of second wave feminism has been 'fully documented both in fiction and non-fiction' of which, she

continues, Sarah Davidson's *Loose Change* is the most lucid one in terms of describing the second wave feminism and 'the emotional and intellectual' commotion it created in the United States of America.

As to when the second wave feminism started, Cudd and Andreasen (2005) state that the second wave feminism was set into motion 'in 1949 with the publication of Simone de Beauvoir *The Second Sex*. In her work, de Beauvoir disproving the assumptions held hitherto about biology being the root cause of gender difference articulates that this false statement has been used for centuries by men to continue their suppression of women (Lglitzin and Ross 1976).

Apart from *The Second Sex*, there were also some other works such as *Sexual Politics* (1970) by Kate Millet, *The Female Eunuch* (1970) by Germaine Greer and *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Betty Friedan, to mention a few, that were produced during this period and all of which received mass appeal. According to Evans (1997), while the *Feminine Mystique* of Betty Friedan, by showing the depressing condition of white middle-class women, makes an emotional appeal for more women to get access to education, *The Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer shows how restricted women were from exercising a desired sex in the patriarchal system.

Beside these, Kate Millet has demonstrated in her book *Sexual Politics* the total annexation of 'public and private life' by men and she used the term 'patriarchy' to refer to this male-dominated system (Cudd and Andreasen 2005). Evans (1997) also writes that Millet, through her book, has examined the extent to which Western literature was filled with 'misogynist' ideology which in return made Millet to be doubtful of 'the study of literature and literary criticism' in general. Beside the significant books written during this time, there are some basic markers that distinguish second wave feminism from its precedent.

Cudd and Andreasen (2005) have outlined the distinct characteristics of the second wave feminism into three major areas. The first one is even though feminists of the second wave considered the effort taken by first wave feminism as significant in bringing political and legal rights for women, they did not believe that these measures *per se* brought about the needed outcome. This is because the real causes of 'sexist oppression ...are all pervasive and deeply embedded in every aspect of human social life-including economic, political, and social arrangements as well as unquestioned norms, habits, everyday interactions, and personal relationships'. The second point that the feminists in second wave feminism stressed was bringing an economic reformations that provide 'full economic equality for women' instead of ratifying a one that only ensures for women sheer 'economic survival' which indeed was the case in the first wave feminism. The third and the last distinct characteristic of second wave feminism is, unlike first wave feminism, by managing to scrutinize the private life which was up to then held as something political, it succeeded in investigating into various issues like 'institution of marriage', 'motherhood', 'heterosexual relationships', 'women's sexuality' and so forth (*ibid*).

In short, as concluded by Cudd and Andreasen (2005) the objective of second wave feminism was 'to radically transform almost every aspect of personal and political life' to liberate women.

2.2.1.3 Third Wave Feminism

According to *Wikipedia* (www.wikipedia.org), third wave feminism began in 1990's and extends to the present. It has come to raise women's issues that have been overlooked or ignored in the second wave feminism. As it has been understood, in the first and second waves women were campaigning collectively as one unified body against the

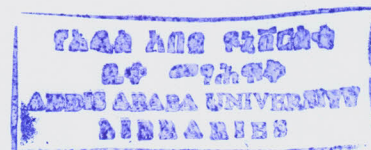
rule of men. The whole idea of second-wave feminism especially can be summed up with a single word 'patriarchy'. As Evans (1997), referring to an article on the pitfall of patriarchy, writes that the notion of patriarchy *per se* veiling 'individual differences' moves towards one general 'theory of sexual relation' which claims that 'a universal system of patriarchy, and patriarchal knowledge, oppressed women'.

As a result of preferring to focus on the common experiences of women with regard to oppression, the third wave feminists argue that the second wave feminism turned a blind eye to the 'social circumstances' of women leaving out the experiences, interests and concerns of, for instance, colored women (Cudd and Andreasen 2005). These feminists, therefore, were interested in bringing 'diversity...more central to feminist theory and politics'. For them, feminism should not be no more identified with 'a cohesive political and theoretical movement with common liberatory aims for all women' instead it should embrace 'diversity and allow for multiplicity of feminist goals.' The third wave feminism is then a counter-feminism which realizing that women themselves are different from each other in terms of race, ethnicity, and class tolerates and includes these differences.

The third wave feminism, however, has been challenged by some critics. According to Bryson (2003), the fact that the third wave feminism heavily emphasizes individual differences by undermining the concept of class identity or 'collective identity' which is very essential for resistance and change, will ultimately put the overall 'feminists' political commitment' into jeopardy.

2.2.2 Types of Feminism

Even though the idea of feminism is to get rid of the prevailing inequalities of women in patriarchy ultimately, not all of the feminists have the same vision about how to arrive at this destination, nor do they



all have the same understanding about the actual cause of these inequalities in the first place. Due to this divergence feminism itself is branched out into further sub-classes. The most popular ones are discussed below.

2.2.2.1 Radical Feminism

Radical feminism, as the word 'radical' clearly suggests, is engaged in a different mode, unlike the other types of feminism, in terms of bringing equality to women. As to when exactly this feminist theory was developed, Bryson (2003) states that radical feminism was consciously postulated in 1960's even though its ideas were already known much earlier. Similarly, Donovan's (1993) statement "Radical feminist theory was developed by a group of ex 'movement women' in the late 1960's and early 1970's, primarily in New York and Boston", beside the time and place, also describes by whom actually this feminist theory was first constructed.

In 1960's there were different political and social movements in America including civil rights movements and anti-war protests. Along side men, there were women activists in these parties. These women, however, received ill-treatment from their male compatriots within these organizations. Recounting the situation of women in these parties, Bryson (2003) explains that the only existing roles for these women were to be 'secretary, housewife or sex objects, serving the political, domestic and sexual needs of male activists'. And if they attempted to raise complaints on these issues, they were met with 'contemptuous treatment' from the men (Donovan 1993). Subsequently, these women who were part of the civil rights and anti-war movements managed to organize a revolutionary party with radical feminist theories.

The very distinct characteristics of radical feminism have been classified by Bryson (2003) into four. The first one is radical feminism claiming to

have identified patriarchy as the root cause of women's oppression states to have developed a theory by women and for women that does not reconcile with the prevailing 'political perspectives and agendas'; second, radical feminism points that since women's subjection is the most universal and fundamental, it seeks to terminate the system once and for all; the third characteristic of radical feminism is its assertion that women, unlike men, are united as one because of their mutual interests which they should embrace to struggle for their freedom: the fourth and the last feature is the exposure of male power not only in public world but also in private life (*ibid*).

In accordance with what could be the core features of radical feminism, Donovan (1993) has similarly considered the following to be the central 'theses' of radical feminism in general:

Patriarchy, or male-domination...is at the root of women's oppression, that women should identify themselves as a subjugated class or caste and put their primary energies in a movement with other women to combat their oppressor-men; that men and women are fundamentally different, have different styles and cultures, and that the women's mode must be the basis of any society. (p, 64)

2.2.2.2 Liberal Feminism

Not accepting the radical feminists claim that biology is the only factor that brings differences between men and women, Liberal feminists argues that it is 'socio-economic and cultural constructs' that produce these differences (Barker 2008). Upholding the beliefs of liberals as to freedom being 'a fundamental value' that should be granted to all citizens, liberal feminists 'insist. on freedom for 'women' ([www:http//plato.stanford.edu](http://plato.stanford.edu)).

However, to promote this, liberal feminism does not believe in the total and complete changing of the entire system. They instead argue that 'laws need to be changed; opportunities simply have to be opened up to allow women to become equals in society' [www.suite101.com]. Similarly, referring to Mackinnon (1987, 1991) Baker (2008) writes that the goal of liberal feminists is bringing 'equality of opportunity for women' in all fields and this could certainly be materialized within the already existing 'legal and economic frameworks'. According to liberal feminists this could be accomplished by making legal reformations of those laws that both impeded the liberty of women by providing 'special privileges' to women and also by recognizing and altering those aspects of patriarchy that are intrinsically found in traditions and institutions [www.plato.stanford.edu].

2.2.2.3 Marxist Feminism

Unlike radical and liberal feminism, Marxist feminism considers a different factor as the underlying cause of women's inequality. As *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* (www.wikipedia.org) states 'Marxist feminism...focuses on the dismantling of capitalism as a way to liberate women'. As can be understood from this, for Marxist feminists the root cause of inequality is capitalism, an unfair distribution of wealth and power. Explaining this point furthermore, *Wikipedia* states:

Marxist feminists see contemporary gender inequality determined ultimately by the capitalist mode of production. Gender oppression is class oppression and women's subordination is seen as a form of class oppression which is maintained because it serves the interests of capitalist and the ruling class.

The above passage shows that since in the world of capitalism women,

just like men, are forced to serve the interest of the upper classes, their inequality does not come from no where but from 'the capitalist mode of production'. This attribution of women's inequality to capitalism, of course, is not the brain-child of Marxist feminism. As stated on the web site (www.syl.com) 'Marxist feminism arises out of the doctrines of Karl Mark'. What Marxist feminists have done is by borrowing Marx's ideology of capitalism they have come to prove that women have been an oppressed class because of the capitalist system or its mode of production and distribution.

Finally, it should be realized that there are a number of feminist theories, more than the three types discussed above, each with its own distinct approaches to the question of women. Some of them include black feminism, post-structuralist or post-modernist feminism, post-colonial feminism, lesbian feminism and so forth.

2.2.3 Patriarchy

In many of the theories formulated by feminists, one element has been constantly and repeatedly mentioned as the most dominant and pervasive factor for causing the subjection of women. This system which brought the inequality of women is referred to as patriarchy.

Patriarchy literally means '...a form of social organization in which the father or the eldest male is recognized as the head of the family or tribe' (Websters New World Dictionary 1986). This word alone also denotes another broader concept, according to feminists. As Edgar and Sedgwick (2002) mentioned, patriarchy implies to the large proportion of feminists 'the way in which societies are structured through male domination over, and oppression of women'. Confirming the same notion of patriarchy *Wekipedia Encyclopedia* [www.en.wikipedia.org] also writes 'patriarchy is most likely a reflection of deeper expectations of formal male dominance

in a wider range of social relationships'. From these two versions of what patriarchy is, it is clear to note that this word stands to mean a system of human organization where power in all aspects of life is captured by men.

Even though the word patriarchy has been used for so long to mean 'rule of father' or 'rule of old men over young', it was, in fact, Kate Millet who took the term patriarchy and managed to postulate that the same word could also indicate men's power control over women in a society (Donovan 1993).

On the basis of certain studies published by some scholars, it is possible to determine some of the characteristics of patriarchy which will subsequently help in identifying whether a society is patriarchal or not. According to Johnson's book *The Gender Knot* posted on the web [www.books.google.com.et] 'a society is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privileges by being male-dominated, male-identified and male-centered. It is also organized around an obsession with control and involves as one of its key aspects, the oppression of women'. In addition to this, patriarchy is also considered as a society that divides and labels the whole characteristics of a person as masculine or feminine, valuing the qualities of the former one while devaluing the qualities of the latter (www.veg.source.com).

Lglitgin and Ross (1976) also writing their own model for determining whether or not a society is patriarchy state that a society is patriarchy if there exists within that society sexual division of labor, expression of women's identity based on their relationships with men or prevalent views about women preferring private life over public affairs.

Relating to the factors which have actually helped patriarchy to be persistent during all these centuries, different researchers have

considered different factors as the primary causes. Taken collectively these factors, according to Lglitgin and Ross (1976), include biology, culture, religion and the shift of society from community-based production to private-led production.

2.2.4 Feminist literary criticism

Feminist critics in general believe that literature and literary criticism have been used for many years as vital and essential modes for perpetuating patriarchal ideologies. They argue that the discipline of literature, which has been viewed as independent and free, is not actually free and, in fact, has been the subservient of the culture of the society all these years. This perspective has been expressed in various books written by renowned feminist critics such as Josephine Donovan, Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore.

In the book she edited *Feminist Literary Criticism Exploration of Theory and Practice* (1989), Josephine states this feminist assertion as follows:

Feminists believe that women have been locked off in a condition of lesser reality by the dominant patriarchal attitudes and customs of our culture. We find these attitudes and customs reified in the institutions of literature and literary criticism. (p, 74)

Similarly, discussing Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970), Bryson (2003) writes that, according to Kate, beside other things 'education' and 'literature' have been very instrumental in strengthening the 'values' of patriarchy by ingraining them into the behaviors of both men and women. As a result of this discovery, feminists came to develop a new awareness about literature and literary criticism.

They come to realize that the notion of literature held so far as being 'a

repository of timeless truth', 'neutral' and simple 'depictions of reality' was actually incorrect and instead literature by being a cultural product shows how societies perceive and affect each other (Catherine and Belsey 1997). Since this new literary criticism has emerged based on the perspective and experience of women, it can be considered as a counter production. In fact that is why Anderson (1977) calls feminist literary criticism 'a retort' or Donovan (1989) refers to it as 'a mode of negation' to the already established literary canon.

This resistance was necessary and justified because as Cheri Register [1989] pointed out, the tradition of literature has been filled with 'female stereotypes' that are both positive and negative, and likewise the tradition of literary criticism not only has failed to 'discuss female writers as writers without regard to their sex' and recognize 'many female writers altogether' but it also has made 'universal statements' based on male experiences only. Therefore, as Toril Moi, cited on [www.members.tripod.com] defines "feminist literary criticism...is a special kind of political discourse, a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism.." or as Sharon Spencer (cited on the same web page) describes feminist criticism 'attempts to set standards for literature that is as free as possible from biased portraits of individuals because of their class, race or sex'.

From the views of these two scholars it is then obvious that feminist literary criticism aims at, first, identifying the presence of patriarchy ideology in literature through analysis of the ways women are represented in literary works and, second, prescribing ways in which literature should allow fair portrayal of individuals no matter what their sex, class and race are.

According to Annette Kolodny in Browns and Olson (1977), works that could be referred to as feminist literary criticism include:

(1) any criticism written by a women, no matter what the subject; (2)any criticism written by a woman about a man's book which treats that book from a 'political' or 'feminist' perspective; and (3) any criticism written by a woman about a woman's book or about female authors in general. (p, 37)

Annette's description of which works could actually be considered feminist literary criticism completely rests on one factor, that is the criticism is written by a woman. Even though some feminists agree on this point with Annette, there are others who do not. For instance, Ruthven, a male feminist critic, argues that a feminist criticism should not be necessary taken as 'women's work' but should rather be viewed 'as of any revolutionary criticism' which attempts 'to subvert the dominant discourses...' (www.members.tripod.com).

Despite this contention, there have been many books published on feminist literary criticism by both male and female writers. However, not all of these works focus on identical issues. Some are directed on assessing women's image in literature while others investigate the criticism given on female writers. This very fact shows that within the domains of feminist literary criticism exist different sub-classes. Describing these subcategories, Cheri Register in Donovan (1989) writes:

Feminist criticism has three distinct subdivisions, each with its own target...(1) the analysis of the "image of women...(2) the examination of existing criticism of female authors. (3) The third type...is a "prescriptive" criticism that attempts to set standards for literature that is "good" from a feminist view point. (p, 2)

Since this study aims at examining “image of women” in selected fictions in Amharic, effort will be made below to discuss some of the notable works produced in image of woman.

2.2.4.1 ‘Image of women’ Criticism

Cheri Register (1989) states that of all kinds of feminist literary criticism “ ‘the image of woman’ approach was the earliest form”. According to an article posted on the web (www.members.tripod.com), the origin of this particular feminist literary criticism could be dated far back to the time of ancient Greece and Rome when Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas first depicted the nature of female. Literary works such as Aristophanes’s comedy *Lysistrata* and ‘Aeschylus’s trilogy the *Oresteia*’ could also be considered as ‘the earliest examples of feminist criticism’. From a feminists’ point of view, it is possible to take Aristotle’s statement, ‘The female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities’ or ‘St. Thomas Aquinas’s assertion that woman is an ‘imperfect man’ as the earliest negative stereotypes of woman (*ibid*).

Among the earliest feminist literary criticism on the image of woman in literature, Christine de Pisan’s work was believed to have stood out from the others. Christine de Pisan was born in 1364 in France and she lived supporting herself and her children through her writings and, apart from being ‘the first critic to speak of Dante’, she had also argued with writers such as Jehan de Meun over ‘the unfair description of the feminine character’ in the works of these artists (Anderson in Brown and Olson 1977). An excerpt from Pison’s argument was cited by Anderson as follows:

Thus women are often ill-spoken of by many people and quite unjustly. It’s word of mouth and also often written ...Let gentlemanly preachers talk I say...That woman’s

nature is most generous. (9)



This type of feminist literary criticism was also taken up by other critics in the subsequent period. In the seventeenth century both Esther Sovernam and Bathsua Makin upon reading many classical texts discovered that women were 'identified' with 'powerful deities and influential muses', and later in the last decades of eighteenth century Mary Wollstoncraft articulated that 'sentimental novels' presented women as 'helpless and silly' (Catherine and Belsey 1997).

The tradition of examining the image of woman in literature not only persisted particularly in the twentieth century but also flourished as many feminist critics followed this practice and produced many works. Some of the most prominent feminist readers of the twentieth century include Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Mary Elleman's *Thinking about Women* (1966) and Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970).

According to Lynn (2004), Simone de Beauvoir has shown in her masterpiece *The Second Sex* (1949) that women all these years have been portrayed in the tradition of literature '...as either Mary or Eve, the angelic mother or the evil seductress'. Lynn refers to these two positive and negative stereotypes as 'idealization (woman as saint) and misogyny (women as monster). Similarly, Cheri Register (1989) has also underscored the same point after discussing some of the great works on the image of woman. These feminist reading Cheri relied upon include Mary Ellmann's *Thinking about Women* (1968), Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1966), Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970) and Katherine M. Rogers *The Troublesome Helpmate*. In conclusion, Cheri states that in the tradition of American Literature women, on the one hand, have been represented as 'the Rose and the bitch' and, on another hand, they have also been portrayed as 'the Lily-the fair haired

maiden, the symbol of feminine purity, the woman-as-muse...'

The reading of these important feminist critical approaches to the image of women in the American novels clearly indicates that there has been a long tradition in American literature to depict two extreme images of women in literary works. These two extremes are considered by feminists as stereotypes: one is a positive stereotype; the other is a negative one.

To investigate the image of women, different feminists suggest different theoretical frameworks. While Carolyn Heliport and Catharine Simpson in Josephine Donovan (1989) state looking into texts for the existing attitude towards 'sexuality' and 'sex roles', Kolody in Rice and Waugh (2001) cited by Mekonen (2001) lists 'ideology', 'class', 'force' and 'culture' as important tools in feminist reading.

In this study to examine the image of women in the three Amharic novels, sex roles and patriarchal culture have been adopted as the two major strands in its theoretical framework.

Chapter Three: Image of Woman in three Amharic Novels:

Yewodiyaneesh, Senselet and Yelot Menged

This chapter is devoted to analyzing the image of women characters in three Ethiopian Amharic novels. These novels are *Yewodiyaneesh* (1978) by Hiale Melekot Mewal, *Senselet* (1983) by Fekade Yohannes and *Yelot Menged* (1998) by Teklu Telahun. To make an objective analysis, a theoretical framework from feminist perspective has been adopted. The feminist elements or tools employed during the close reading of these novels include cultural attitudes and gender-biased sex roles. Since the three literary works selected for this study represent three different decades, 1970's, 1980's and 1990's, the analysis follows the chronological order. This type of approach is believed to provide the image of woman across time and to show the historical trend for comparison and contrast later. To provide the general picture about the themes of these three novels, the synopses of these fictional narratives are also presented.

3.1. A Synopsis of the Novel

The title of the first novel *Yewodiyaneesh* is also the name of the central female character *Yewodiyaneesh* in the novel. Thus, *Yewodiyaneesh* is the eponymous heroine of the novel.

The narrative *Yewodiyaneesh* begins with a girl named *Yewodiyaneesh*, poor and emaciated, was hired as a maid servant by a rich family. The master and the mistresses of this family were imbued with aristocratic values. Their son *Getahun*, however, believed in the equality of all human beings. As time passed the meek, shy and hard working

Yewodiynesh won the heart of every one. Further, Yewodiyaneş's unfolding beauty indeed caught the eyes of the men, especially Getahun.

The Getahun who had a flirting nature started an affair with Yewodiyaneş which turned step by step into romance without anyone else's suspicion. To pursue their secret love interests, Getahun and Yewodiyaneş had secret rendezvous. One night they both slept together. Some months later it was discovered that Yewodiyaneş was pregnant. The mistress of the house, to keep the scandal from reaching others, particularly her own husband, literally kicked Yewodiyaneş out of the house right away. This shocking discovery also adversely affected the relationship between mother and son.

After five months of time, no sooner Getahun had found Yewodiynesh than was she convicted to five years imprisonment for abandoning her newly born child. Gethaun, however, stood by her side faithfully till she got released. After her release, Gethun and Yewodiyaneş rented a house and started living together bringing up their orphaned child.

Though hostile in the beginning Gethaun's mother, upon hearing the whole story had at last a change of heart and accepted Yewodiyaneş and her new grandson, but Getahun's father, infuriated and enraged by the whole disgraceful affair, refused to do so adamantly, and died finally after having a stroke.

3.1.1. Cultural Attitudes and Sex Roles in *Yewodiyaneş*

As Lillington and Ross (1976) pointed out, and as already discussed in the previous chapter, one distinct quality of patriarchy is its intrinsic ideology that women should stay in the private sphere of life while men should engage themselves in public affairs. This patriarchal ideology in a

society predetermined the image and predestined the role of women only to be a wife and mother devoted to the house chores.

This type of gender-biased sex roles which highly characterize a patriarchal society have also been dominant in this novel. While in the novel Yewodiyaneh almost all of the female characters were basically associated with house and all its activities, the men characters, on the other hand, were identified with other roles except household chores. The male roles include public affairs such as having professional careers and holding important public positions. To substantially show the portrayal of women with respect to domestic affairs in the novel Yewodiyaneh, passages from the narrative that clearly depict the roles of each of these female character will be illustrated and discussed below.

3.1.1.1 W/ro Tekabech: wife, mother and mistress of the house

Among the female characters in Yewodiyaneh, W/ro Tekabech is a major character. W/ro Tekabech was the wife of Ato Yayeh Yirad and the mother of Gethun and Yewibnesh. On top of this, as a wife and mother with no education and career, the activities of W/ro Tekabech were confined to the household only. Hence, throughout the novel the role of W/ro Tekabech can be observed distributed from being a wife, to being a mother and a mistress of the house.

As mentioned above, one of the roles of W/ro Tekabech was being the mistress of the house. The daily preoccupation of W/ro Tekabech, as a result of this, involved staying at home and supervising things. Even though all the household chores were executed by the maids, it was W/ro Tekabech, through assigning different types of work to the maids, oversaw the whole activities.

W/ro Tekabech's duty in directing the maids what to do and generally looking up the house works could be recognized in this one instance:

እናቴና እህቴ ስለምን ጉዳይ እንደሚያወሩ እንደሚጫወቱ
መከታተክል አልቻልኩም ዓይኔም ቀልቤም ከሠራተኛይቱ
አካባቢ ወልፍት ሳይል ቡናው ተፈልቶ ወረደ።
«እስኪ ትንሽ ቁርስ አምጪ፣ እጣኑንም አጩስልን
ብላ እናቴ ስትናገር ከእንቅልፋ እንደባኑ ሰው ነቃሁ። (20)

I could not follow what my mother and sister were talking about. The Coffee was brewed without my eyes and my mind being taken off of the maid servant,. When my mother said “Bring something to eat, lit also the scent” I became aroused like a person who just woke up from sleep. (p, 20)

Or another instance:

ረዘም ላለ ጊዜ በፀጥታና በገዝምታ በመቆመጤ መላ
አካላቴ በድንገተኛ ትካዜ የተወረረ መሰለ» እናቴ ከወደ
መኝታ ቤት ብቅ ብላ «እስኪ እነዚያን ራት
አቅርቡ በያቸው» ብላ ተመለሰች። (20)

My whole body looked as though it was overwhelmed with sudden sadness for I had sat in quietness and silence for a long while. My mother, appearing from the bed room, said “tell them (the maids) to serve dinner” and went back. (p, 20)

W/ro Tekabech's engagement in the household activities is also repeated in other parts of the narrative. For instance, following Ato Yayeh Yirad's (the master's) good fortune on one of the religious days, it was a wont in the family to throw a religious party and celebrate this day annually with close friends and family members. However, the majority of the work at this time is again rested on the shoulder of W/ro Tekabech and the other

* The page numbers given throughout this chapter refer to the text of narrative, *Yewodiyaneshe*, 1978 published by Kuraz publishing Agency.

women. Similarly, the scene described at the beginning of the second chapter also clearly manifests the prevalence of sex-biased roles in this rich family.

It was morning and the master of the house, Ato Yayeh Yirad before going out, was expecting his usual breakfast. But, unlike always, the meal was not served to him right on time. Realizing this the master became angry and complained to his wife: «ምነው በይ? ነውርም አይደል እንዴ? ዛሬስ ደግሞ ብዬ ብዬ ልጣራ? ሌላውስ አሁን በጅ? እንዴት እንዲት ስኒ በና ልከልከል? (10) (Why? isn't it shameful? Must I have to call for you today? Let other things be it's ok? How could I be denied a single cup of coffee?) (p, 10).

The master's complaint obviously expressed his reprimand or disapproval, in the first place, for not having his breakfast served to him. It also shows his irritation for having to call to them, the women, in order to get his breakfast. Both Ato Yayeh Yirad's complaint and the fact that W/ro Tekebech, dreading her husband's anger, have the breakfast served to her husband later with the help of her daughter and the maids absolutely proved without any doubt that the task of serving food and looking after the needs of a husband was the job of a wife.

Besides being the mistress of the house who supervised the activities in the house, W/ro Tekabech is also portrayed as a wife and a mother. This automatically means that the image and the role of W/ro Tekabech was completely identified in terms of her relationship with the two men in her life- her husband and her son. This type of image formation or role allocation again has been described by Liglitin and Ross (1976) in their book *Women in the World: A Comparative Analysis* or by Johnson in *The Gender Knot* posted on the web (www.book.google.com.et), as one feature of patriarchal society.

As a mother, besides taking care of her son's basic needs, W/ro Tekabech continuously reminded her son Gethaun to marry a nice lady from a noble background and start a family of his own. Even though her preference and her son's preference did not match, W/ro Tekabech did finally accept her son's marriage to Yewodiyanech the maid. w/ro Tekabech's confession, in which she explains as to why she had a sudden change of heart towards Yewodiyanech, clearly indicates that her initial reaction was motivated by the fact that as the wife of Ato Yayeh Yirad, the honorable and respected nobleman, and as a mother to her son, she thought, she had a duty to safe guard the family's reputation. The resistance W/ro Tekabech showed all the time from throwing out Yewodiyanech to verbally rebuking her son for the affair completely emanated from her role as a wife and a mother. It did not come from her as an individual woman. In fact she had pushed aside her personal feelings towards Yewodiyanech. This could be traced in one of the conversations she had with her children later.

እሷም ስሟ ገረድ መሆኑ ነው እንጂ ማለፊያ ቆንጆ ነበረች
 የባሻ ያየህ ይራድ ልጅ ከገረድ ተልከስከስ እንዳልባል ብዬ
 ነው እንጂ ምንጅ ይወጣላታል? አሁን መቼም ጩዋታ ነው
 ያለፈ ነገር አይደል? ሰው አክባሪ ታዛዥ በዚያ ላይ
 አንገት ሰባሪ ነበረች። (265)

She was quite beautiful had it not been for her name maid.
 Had I been not worried about what people would say about
 the son of Ato Yayeh Yirad messing around with a maid, what
 is wrong with her? We are now indeed chatting since it was all
 gone, right? Respectful, obedient and, besides, she was shy.
 (p, 265)

The same behavior of W/ro Tekabech as a woman who involved in responding to things as a wife or as a mother rather than as her own person could similarly be deduced from another conversation:

ድርጅት ሲሆን እኔን ምን የበደለችኝ መሰለህ?
ላንተ ብዬ ነበር ሰው አይሠራው ሥራ የሠራኃት። እኔማ
ውቃለሁ አምላኪ ይወዳታል። ኮከባችን ግጥም ነበር።
መልካ እንደሆነ ታጥቦ የሠራት ነች። ደርባባ ዘንካታ ልጅ ነች (290-91)

What do you think she did to me? It was for your sake that I had done what no one would to anyone. I personally love her instead. We get along well. Her face, she looked as though God made her with his clean hands. She is a beautiful girl. (p, 290-91)

W/ro Tekabech's admission here reveals that throughout the narrative she was putting the interest of her husband and her son first rather than hers. In another context also the image of W/ro Tekabech is portrayed as a wife: when W/ro Tekabech teased her husband over a certain issue. One night when the whole family was having coffee together, Ato Yayeh Yirad by a slip of tongue admires the beauty of yewdiyaniesh.

ይቺ ልጅ እንዴት አማረባት? ዘቢብ መሰለች
አይደል እንዴት? እንዲህ ሎሚ የመሰለች ናትና! (41)

How beautiful this girl looked? She looks beautiful, does not she? She looks just like lemon!" (p, 41)

W/ro Tekabech, on the other hand, remembering her husband's previous extra-marital affairs and suspecting that this might be repeated, especially after this kind of speech, scolded her husband. The angry husband however argued "..... ሚስት ገበና ከታች ናት ይባል ነበር እኔ ግን በስተርጀና ታዘብኩሽ! አንዲት ቃል ሳት ብላኝ ብታመልጠኝ እንዴት ከገድ ጋር ታውዋኝ? (48). (It was said that a wife hides her husband's dirty laundries. But I am a bit resentful towards you in my old age! Because one word slipped my tongue, you suspect me with a maid.) What could be observed from this single situation is that not only W/ro Tekabech was presented as a wife in relation to Ato Yayeh Yirad but also the idea of "what a wife's

image should be like” was imposed on her by her husband. According to Ato Yayeh Yirad’s definition of a wife, it should be a wife’s duty to conceal her husband’s affairs no matter how disgraceful they are. Rather than talking openly about her husband, a wife should keep his business a secret. In another instance, the powerlessness of W/ro Tekabech in terms of actively participating or having a say in the financial matters of the family is also explicitly stated by her son Getahun, the narrator.

እናቱ በግቢው ሆነ በመጨው ከላይ አረረ-መረረ የማለት
መብት የሌላት ከመሆኑም በላይ «በእንዲህ ያለው ጉዳይ
ውስጥ ሴትና ልጅ እጅን መለየም የለበትም» ስለምትባል
ለምና መመጽወት እንጂ የመወሰን ድርሻ የላትም። (9)

Since my mother had no right in complaining about in just of anything else and since she was also told that ‘on matters of this a child and a woman should not put their hands’, all she had to do is beg for money. (p, 9)

Ato Yayehi Yirad’s belief emphatically epitomized patriarchal ideology that completely restricted woman’s role to just only making a house.

3.1.1.2. Yewodiyaneh: from an inferior meek maid to housewife

Yewodiyaneh is another major female character in this novel. With her sheer abject poverty, Yewodiyaneh came into the story as a young peasant woman hired as a maid servant in W/ro Tekabech’s family. The portrayal of yewodiyaneh starts from a description of her abnormally thin body. The whole picture is described very minutely by the narrator Getahun that it arises a sense of repugnance as well pity. Yewodiyaneh literally was a bag of bones in rags as could be understood from the following passage:

ጣቶቿ ለድመት ግልገል ተዘልዝሎ እንደሰነበተ ሳንባ
በልዘው ጠቁረዋል ክንድችዋ ሥጋቸው ከውስጥ
ተፈቅፍቆ ወጥቶ ቆዳ ብቻ የለበሰ ይመስላሉ ...

ቀሚሷ ከደረቷ ላይ በመደቀደዱ ጠቆር ባለው ደረቷ
 ላይ እነድደገበጠ ማገርጃ የተጋደሙት አጥንቶቿ ፈጥጠው
 ይታያሉ ሰውነቷ በጠቅላላ ለሲመሰከቱ ለብዙ ገቢዜ
 አብሯት በከረመ እድፍ በመጥቆሩ ከረግረግ ውስጥ
 የተመዘዘ የእንጨት ጉማጅ ይመስላል (21፣23)

Her fingers were darkened like chopped up meat after several days. Her arms looked like bones covered up in skin after the flesh was carved out. Since her dress was torn around her chest her collar bone glared like a bent pillar. Looking at her body generally, the dirt on it made it look as though it was a piece of log pulled out of a swamp. (p, 22-23)

With the progress of the narrative, yewodiyane's behavior also unfolded. Unlike the former maid, she was presented as meek, compliant and hard working. These qualities of Yewodiyane helped her to win the hearts and minds of her new family. Getahun, the narrative voice, clearly observes this in his narrative:

ዋል አዳር አንዳላች የተሰጣት ሥራ ሁሉ በጥንቃቄ
 ለመስራት በመቻሏ መላው ቤተተብ ደስ ተሰኘ
 ሰው ሁሉ ወደዳት ትሕትናዋና ታዛዥነቷ ለተወዳጅነቷ
 ዋና ምክንያት ነበሩ። (32)

After some considerable time, the whole family became pleased by her ability to do works assigned to her carefully every body loved her, her politeness and meekness were the reasons for her adornment by others. (p, 32)

The first image of Yewodiyane portrayed, therefore, is that of a submissive maid. On top of this, there was also another side of Yewodiyane which caught particularly the attention of the men. This was the blooming beauty of Yewodiyane. At this moment in the narrative, Yewodiyane came to be viewed by the men differently. The three men in the house, Ato Yayeh Yired (the master), Getahun (the son) and the guard as well as some of the guests who visited the family to attend some celebrations started to gaze at Yewodiyane with sexual

desires. Yewodiyaneh thus became a sex object. For instance, it is possible to identify only those passages that offer the portrayal of Yewodiyaneh as a sex object in the eyes of Getahun only. Getahun, watching every step of Yewodiyaneh closely from the day she came into the house, notes the change in her beauty as follows:

የወዲያነሽ ያካላ ቅርፅና አቋመረ እየስተካከለ አማረ
 የተፈጥሮ ውበቷና ቁንጅናዋ ከያአደፈፈጡበት ፋካ ቀስ በቀስ
 አያዘገም መጡ። ጉንጮቸቿ ሞላ ብለው በትንብክብክ ያወጣትነት
 ደምና ሥጋ ጠረቁ ከሁሉም በላይ ደስ የሚያሰኘውና
 የሚማርከው ግን በፈገግታ ስትስቅ ጠይሙ ጎንጫ ላይ የሚሰረግጡት
 የውበቷ ልዩ ምንጮች ናቸው ደርጃ ስትወጣም
 ይሁን ስትወርድ የአካላቷ ንቅናቄና አካሄድ ከወዲያ ወዲህ
 ሊለው እንደ ወይን ሐረግ ደስ ይላል። (36)

The bodily figure of Yewodiyaneh developed and became beautiful. Her natural beauty and attractiveness popped out gradually from the bushes they were hidden behind. Her filled up cheeks were marked with youth blood and flesh. What was very pleasing and capturing above all was the dimples that appeared on her cheeks as she laughed smilingly. (p, 35)

The movement of her body from side to side as she climbed up and down the stairs looked very pleasing like a vine plant. (p, 36)

Ever since Getahun noticed Yewodiyaneh's beauty, he developed a sexual drive towards her. The previous image he had about her was completely replaced by a new one: a sex object. He recounted this change as follows: የአካላቷ ሙላት የመጨረሻውን ደረጃ ይዟል ከግምት በፊት በርህራሄና በሀዘኔታ ላይ ተመስርስቶ የነበረው ስሜት ፈፅሞ ተለውሞ አሁን ወደ ልዩ ሥጋዊ ወደታ አጋደል (50). (Her physical development reached its peak. The pity and compassionate feeling I had a year ago was now completely replaced by lust.) This new image of Yewodiyaneh as an object of sexual desire was also similarly reflected by Getahun in another context:

... ያወዲያነሽ የእጅ ውሃ አምጥታ አስታጠቦችን ወጣ
እንዳለች አካሉ ልዩ ውስጣዊ እንቅስቃሴ ጀመረ። የልቡ
የአመታት ፍጥነት ተለወጠ አንዳች ሚያንበረዝ ነገር የተነሳበኝ
ይመስል እያቁነተነጠ የሚያቅጠብጥ ነገር ወረረኝ። ያመጣችልኝን እንጂራ
ጠባቂ ጠረጴዛ ላይ አስቀምጣልኝ ወጣች። ከእግር ጥፍሯ እስከ ራስ ፀጉሯ
አየኋት። በጥቂት ወራት ውስጥ ሰውነቷ እንዲ በመለወጡ በጣም
ተደነቅኩ። (39)

Yewodiyaneshe brought me water to wash my hands. As soon as she left, my body began to make a special movement deep inside. The rate of my heart beat changed. As if I was in fits or convulsion, I was overwhelmed by restiveness. After putting the meal she brought me on the small table, she left. I watched her from the tip of her toes to the top of her hair. I was amazed by the way her body changed within few moths. (p, 39)

The fact that Yewodiyaneshe did become an object of sexual desire did also bring with it another point. While the men like the guard and Getahun were made to make a move towards Yewodiyaneshe to achieve their ends, Yewodiyanehe besides being portrayed as a sex object, was also presented as a flower to be plucked or fruit ripe to be tasted. Even though Yewodiyaneshe herself, as she admitted later, felt affection for Getahun, without doing anything about it, she concealed it for long till Getahun himself asked her for love. This circumstance in the story shows Yewodiyaneash as passive.

The other feature of Yewodiyaneshe prominent throughout the narrative was her inferiority and her overwhelming emotions. The peasant background and the rough childhood Yewodiyaneshe had along with other factors made her to feel and act as an inferior. However, rather than seeing yewodiyaneshe to subvert this inability on her own accord it was her husband Getahun and his best friend Gulelat who were seen as her mentors, and kept insisting on her to change her personality. In fact in

one of the context, Getahun described that his friend Gulelat የበታችነትና የተገዢነት ባህሪ ተቆራኝነቷት እንዳይርና ሕይወቷ የመከራ ሕይወት እንዳይሆን በማሰብ (የወዲያነሽን) ይመክራታል (193). (In order not to have inferiority and submissiveness be her permanent personality, he advices Yewodiyaneh.) Besides this, yewodiyaneh also tended to be emotional when faced with problems. Rather than gripping her teeth to challenge them, giving in and weeping, she experienced a state of paralysis.

For instance, when Getahun announced that, for both of them to receive their child back from the orphanage, she had to see the administrators: «ዶፍ እንደወረደበት የፍየል ግልግል አካላቷ ተሸማቀቀ ልማደኛ ዕንባዋ አትንካት ሲል ተንቆረዘዘ» (241) (Her body shrunk like a lamb in a downpour. Her habitual tears falls down saying do not touch her.) It was after Getahun's encouragement and persuasion that she finally agreed to go. Similarly, when every time Getahun insisted that all of them, i.e Getahun, Yewodiyaneh and their child- should visit his parents and reveal the news about their marriage and their new life, and confront them if they refused, Yewodiyaneh would either remain silent or weep. However, no sooner had Getahun forwarded his persuasion than she was compelled to concede.

Beside her quality to consider herself less than others and was afraid of confronting her problems, Yewodiyaneh was also largely presented as a woman who only knew how to do the household chores. In the house of W/ro Tekabech, Yewodiyaneh was a maid servant and later when she began life with Getahun the only job she executed well was looking after the house while her husband Getahun was completely preoccupied with the mission of confronting his parents.

የወዲያነሽ ከሰራተኛይቱ ጋር በመረዳዳት ምግብና መጠጥ አቀረቡ
ከገመትኩት በላይ ሆኖ በማግኘቱ በአቀራረቧ ረክቼ ባይኔ ጠጉበኩ (268-
269)

ወይም ማድቤት ውስጥ መሆኗን በተለምዶ ግምት ስላወቅሁ ዘለግ ባለ
ድምፅ ተጣራሁ ወዲያው ከተፍ ብላ «ትንሽ ሥራ ቢጠይቅ ነው»
አለችኝ..... (271)

Together with the maid, yewodiyaneh served food and drinks.
Since the food and drink served were more than what I had in
mind, I became already satisfied just by looking at it. (p, 268-
269)

For I knew she was in the kitchen I called for her loudly...
coming up immediately she said “I had a small thing to do”.
(p, 271)

Narratives of this kind in the novel clearly prove that Yewodiyaneh, after
becoming a wife, was primarily caught up in the household chores.

3.1.1.3 Yewibeneh: student and supportive sister

The third female character in the novel Yewodiyaneh is Yewibnech, the
younger sister of Gethaun. Even though, like all the other female
characters in the story, Yewibnech is also depicted as a woman whose
role is , much of the time, associated with household chores, there are
some other distinct images of her own.

In one aspect Yewibnech’s image is similar to that of the other female
characters. Like them, she was identified with the household work. Some
passages in the narrative indicate this could be traced as follows:

የውብነሽ በፍውን እስከምትቀዳ እናቴም በበኩሏ ቁርስ ይዛ
ደረሰች (11)
እናቴ አንድ አገልግል ወሎ ጥጥ አቅርባ ትፈለቅቃለች...
የውብነሽ በጎና ተቀምጣ አንድ ሰማይዊ ጨርቅ ስትዘመዝም ደርቶ
የሚጥፍ ድ ትመስላለች (18) አማካላች ከሄደች ጀምሮ የእኔንና
የራሷን አልጋ የምታነጥፈው እህቴ ነበረች (21)

My mother arrived with the breakfast while Yewibnech was
pouring out the coffee...(p, 11)

Bringing one big bowl of cotton seeds, my other was
separating the seeds from the cotton. Sitting beside my

mother yewibnesh was sewing a blue clothe. When looked, she resembled a poor person patching up rages. (p, 18)

It was my sister who made our beds following the departure of Amakelech. (p,21)

Not only did Yewibnesh do the household activities but had also commanded the maids on what to do as well just like her mother w/ro Tekabech.

On the other hand Yewibnesh is also presented as a girl who was schooled and was an avid reader. In fact, if she was not busy with the household work, Yewibnesh would be either doing her school assignments or reading fiction as the following passages note this:

ወይዘሮ የውብዳር የሻሻቸውን ሁኔታ በጃቸው ደባብሰው ካረጋገጡ በኋላ ትንሽ ራቅ ብላ መጸሐፍ የምታገላብጠውን የውብነሽን አሻግረው እተሰመክቱ (15).....
የውብነሽ ለነገ ተሠርቶ የሚቀርብ የሂሳብና የድርሰት ሥራ አለብኝ ብላ የመኝታ ቤቷን ዘግታ ሥራ ከጀመረች ቆይታለች:: (37)
እሁድ ከሰዓት በኋላ ነበር የዕለቱን ጋዜጣ እያነበብኩ እንግዳ መቀበያ ክፍል ወሰጥ ተቀምጬ ሳለሁ የውብነሽ አጠገቤ ተቀመጠች:: የያዘችውን የአማርኛ ሰዋሰው መጻሕፍ እንደተገለጠ አጥራ ክብ ጠረጴዛ ላይ ዘረጋችው (146)
የውብነሽ ትንሽ ፈንጠር ብላ አንዲት አነስ ያለች የአማርኛ ልብወለድ መፀሐፍ ታነብ ነበር:: (183)

Touching with her hands and making sure that her shawl was on her hair, W/ro Yewibdar looking across yewibnesh who was flipping up a book a little farther.... (p, 15)

It was now a while since Yewibnesh went into her room to do her maths and creative writing assignments which were due on tomorrow.... (p, 37)

It was Sunday afternoon. While sitting at the guest room reading the daily newspaper, Yewibnesh came and sat beside me. She placed the Amharic Grammar book upside down on the small round table as it was open.... (p, 146)

Yewibnesh was reading a small Amharic fiction sitting a little bit far away. (p, 183)

The two images of Yewibnesh are vividly presented at the beginning of the novel. Besides being a good daughter who obediently performed what she was asked to do in the house, Yewibnesh is also depicted as a girl who took her studying seriously and liked reading very much. As the story develops, Yewibnesh is also portrayed in another way. Coming to hear Getahun's secret marriage to Yewodiynesh and the fact that he even had a son, she decided to help her brother persuade their parents accepting this. The supportive Yewibnesh expressed her commitment to help her brother as follows:

....በመጨረሻ ምክራን በመጠየቅህና ወደ እኔ በመምጣትህ ደስ ብሎኛል
ችግርህ ችግራ በመሆኑ የሚያዋጣንን ብልሃት በአንድ በላይ እንፈልጋለን
(254)

Because you finally asked for my advice and came to me I am very delighted. Since your problem is also my problem, we will look for a wise solution together. (p,254)

The examination of women characters and their roles in the novel *Yewodiyaneh* clearly shows that the image of woman is primarily associated with the household.

3.2 A Synopsis of the Novel, *Senselet*

The second novel entitled *Senselet* reflects the lives of a number of people as it is interwoven with each other. The Amharic word *Senselet*, which means chain, is used in this novel to imply the inevitable interconnection of family members, friends and people in general.

Dr. Nahom was a medical doctor working at Tikur Anbessa Hospital in Addis Ababa. He was happily waiting for the day of his engagement to his lovely fiancé, Ehite. As the engagement day was approaching, Ehite disappeared. No one knew where she was. While every one was struck

with panic, Dr. Nahom received a phone call from his closest friend and workmate Dr Biruk. From the telephone conversation, Dr. Nahom learnt that an unknown person had called looking for him but left him a message instead saying that Ehte had met with a car accident and she had been all this time in Sululta Hospital receiving treatment. Without suspecting that it was a trap to frame him for murder, Dr Nahom immediately drove towards Sululta. However, Dr. Nahom was detained by policemen at Entoto check point when he attempted to evade the regular pit stop for a quick search. As his car was being searched by policemen, a dead body hidden in a plastic bag was found in the trunk of the car. It was Ehte's body.

To prove Dr. Nahom's innocence, Fekirte, Dr. Nahom's younger sister, and Dr. Briuk hired a lawyer named Sine-work who was known for his honesty. Unlike most lawyers, his motive, whenever he took a new case, was truth and not money. From the talk Sine -work had with Ehte's best friend Samrawit he came to know about from where some photos and a letter he had found in Ehte's bed room came from. He discovered that all of them were sent to Ehte by her former boyfriend Tekola. As Sine-work dug deep to solve the crime, surprisingly he discovered that the crime was connected to his father, Ato Zerfu. Since Sine-work was a man of principle, he had his father arrested and let the innocent man, Dr Nahom free.

3.2.1 Culture Attitudes and Sex Roles in *Senselet*

A number of female characters are found in the novel *Senselet*. The images these female characters have with respect to sex roles are a little diverse. While some of the women in the novel are restricted to private life, others are engaged in the public sphere of life. If these female characters in this novel are to be categorized into groups specifically based on the type of function each of them performed, they would generally be grouped into

three different classes: females as wives and maids; females as students and professionals; and females as prostitutes. In order to identify which female character is identified with which females sex role and, most importantly, to prove substantially the existence of these three female sex roles in this novel, discussion will be made next using some passages from the story.

3.2.1.1 Females as maids and wives

Birknesh and Beletu are the two female characters in the novel *Senselet* who are presented as maid servants. Birknesh worked in the house of Dr. Nahom whereas Beletu, in the house of colonel Assefa. Through out the narrative Birknesh appears only in a few pages, confined to the household work. She is, the whole time, depicted as a maid whose only preoccupation was performing the household chores. There are a number of instances in the story which indicate this fact. The first passage which actually reveals the role of Birknesh reads as follows:

...የሰው ኮቴ ሲሰማ ዘወር አለ። ሠረተኛው ብርቁ ነበረች
«ቀራችሁ እንዴ ጋሼ?»
«ቀርተናል ብርቅነህ ራት ቢሰራልን አልከፋም።»
ተመልሳ ወደ ማብሰያ ክፍሏ ገባች (9) *

When he heard a foot step, he turned around. It was the maid Birke.

“Have you and Fikerte decided not to go, Sir?”

“Yes, we have. Birknesh it is not a bad time if you make dinner for us now”

She returned to her Kitchen *. (p, 9)

In this passage the role of Birknesh as a maid servant is described in

* The page numbers given throughout this chapter refer to the text of the narrative, *Senselet*, 1983 published by Bole Publishing Company.

detail. In fact, she was asked to perform one of the tasks assigned to her, which was to serve dinner. Similar to this, there are also a series other instances in the story where the same image of Birknesh as a maid servant that is repeated. These passages include:

.... ሠራተኛዋ (ብርቅነሽ) በጣትተነስታ ቁርስ በማሰናዳት ላይ እንደሆነች
ከውስጥ ሆኖ አወቀ በፈጣን እጅዋ የምትመታው እንቁላል በደንብ ይሰማ
ዋል (89) ትንሽ እንደጠበቀ በሩተከፈተና ሠራተኛዋ (ብርቅነሽ)እጅ ነስታ
መንገድ ለቀቀች (37) ጠላና ብርጭቆ አምጥታ ደረደረች (239)

He knew that the maid getting up early was preparing breakfast. He could hear very distinctly the eggs she whisked with her quick hand. (p, 89)

After he waited a little bit, the door was opened and Birknesh, after bowing down to salute him, moved to the side. (p, 237)

The maid brought local beer and some glasses, and placed them on the table. (p, 239)

These passages given above demonstrate that all the different household activities were primarily handled by Birknesh. Being a maid servant, Birknesh can be seen in the excerpts making dinner or breakfast, opening a front gate and letting guests in and bringing or serving drinks. Beside this, one of the sentences which begins as «በፈጣን እጅ» (with her quick hands) additionally implies how fast Birknesh was in performing these tasks. In another place in the narrative there was one circumstance in which the attitude of Birknesh towards the household chores was alluded. Below is the passage:

ዶክተር ናሆም እቤት ሲደርስ ፍቅርተ ሽርጧን አገልግ ከሰራተኛዋ ጋር ቤት ስታፀዳ አገኘናት:: «ጋሽዬ እንደምን አደርክ?» አለችው::
«እም እንደምን አደርሻ ሚሚ ምን እየሰራሽ ነው?»
«ቤት እያፀዳህ! ብርቁ ብቻዬን ወገቤ ተቆረጠ አለች::»
«አልወጣኝም ጋሼ:: እንዲያውም በእንጆራዬ እየገቡ ስለተቸገርኩ ክስ ልመጣ ትንሽ ነበር የቀረኝ:: ይህ ት/ቤት ቶሎ ተከፍቶ ካላረፍኩ መጣላታችን አልቀረም::» አለች ሠራተኛዋ ሰውነቷን እንደመሰበቀች አያለች::
«ደሞዎዝሽን እንዳትከፍልሽ ሰጋሽ? »

«አረ ከጠቀማቸው ሁሉም ቢወስዱት። ሥራ አያሳጡኝ እንጂ። አስቲ እግዚአብሔር ያሳይዋት ጋሽ እኔ ያለ ስራ መቀመጥ አልችል እሳቸውን ከተሻሙኝ ለኔ ምን ይደርሰኛል?» (103/104)

When Dr. Nahom arrived home, he found Fikerte cleaning the house with the maid.

“Good morning big brother” she said to him.

“hmm Good morning Mimi. What are you doing?”

“Cleaning the house! Birke said she could not handle it alone.”

“I didn’t say that. In fact I was about to come to you sir to report how much she troubled me by intervening into my works? Unless the school opens up soon, she and I will end up fighting over this!” said the maid servant.

“Are you worried that she might share your salary?”

“Let her take all of it if it’s of any use to her, but not the work.

For God’s sake! You see, sir I can’t sit idly without any work.

If she does some of the works, what will be left for me to do?”

(p, 103)

In this passage Birknesh complained to Dr. Nahom about Fikerte’s involvement in the household work. The reason why Birknesh was unappreciative of Fikerte’s help was also stated. According to Birknesh, if she had a help in the house chores, she would end up with nothing to do for much of the time. Since Birknesh knew nothing about any thing except household chores, a time when there is no work for her is unpleasant. This fact clearly shows how much in the novel the identity of Birknesh is inextricably intertwined with the household chores in the narrative.

The other thing we also learn from the aforementioned passage is the healthy relationship Birknesh had with Dr Nahom and Fikerte. The friendly bantering Dr Nahom made on Birknesh and the polite way Birknesh addressed both Fikerte and Dr. Nahom could be taken as proof

of this. There were also other instances in the novel where the closeness and affection was revealed.

One day Fikerte spent the entire day at home feeling angry with herself for mistrusting her brother's defense lawyer Sine-work. To make matters worse for her, Fikerte heard bad news that night about a car accident occurring on one of the buses that was heading towards Bale Goba. Believing that the accident could certainly have happened to the bus in which Sine-work was traveling, Fikerte was shocked. At this time, Birknesh approached Fikerte and asked her if something bad had happened. However Fikerte was not ready to open up. Even though Birknesh knew nothing and could not do anything for Fikerte, she felt for Fikerte as follows: *ሠራተኛዋ እንዳዘነች ወጣች የታላቅ እህት ያህል ነው ለፍቅርተ የምታስበው...* (282) (The maid went out feeling sad. She felt for Fekirte as though she was her sisiter).

In another instance in the narrative where Birknesh's feelings are expressed is when Fikerte, Dr. Biruk and Birknesh made a visit to Dr. Nahom at the police station to inform him how the case was progressing and also give him some provisions. Upon seeing Dr. Nahom for the first time since he was in police custody, Birknesh's reactions are described as follows:

.....ሠራተኛዋ (ብርቅነሽ) እንባዋ እያፈለሰች በአንገቱ ተጠመጠመችበት እጁ ከተያዘ ጀምሮ አይታው አታውቅም። የጢሙ ማደግ እንኳን ለሷ ለውጥና በደል ሆኖ ነው የተሰማት። እንጂቷ በመንሰፍሰፍ ተንሰፍሰፋ አለቀሰች (393)

Shedding her tears, the maid clung on his neck. She did not see him ever since he was arrested. For her, the growing bear she saw on his face was a sign of change and persecution. Unable to bear this sight, she sobbed again (p, 393)

Birknesh's sympathy for Dr. Nahom as stated above absolutely shows the intense emotional tie she had with Dr Nahom.

Likewise, there is also similar kind of closeness between the other maid servant, Beletu, and the family she was with. As stated in the story, Beletu was a maid servant who worked in the house of W/ro Lekelesh and Colonel Assefa. For most part in the novel, Beletu was only referred as "the maid servant". There is, however, one instance in the story where she presented playing this role. W/ro Lekelesh after suffering from blood pressure and diabetes was taken to a hospital. Standing by her mistress's side, Beletu nursed W/ro Lekelesh as follows:

ሠራተኛዋ በለጠው ቀዝቃዛ ውሃ ውስጥ ጨርቅ እየነከረች ግንባራቸው ላይ ትጨምቃለች። (124)

ወዲያው በንፁህ ብርጭቆ ውሀ አመጣችና ለአንቅልፍ ከተሰጣቸው ኪኒን እንድ አውጥታ ከአንገታቸው ቀና በማድረግ አዋጠቻቸው። (128)

Beletu, the maid, dipping a piece of cloth in cold water twisted it on w/ro Lekelesh's fore head (p, 124).

Bringing a glass of pure water immediately and taking out one of the sleeping pills prescribed for the patient, she helped the patient to swallow it. (p, 128)

In additions to this, Beletu was also continuously, through telling lies, attempted to soothe the patient, w/ro Lekelesh, who intuitively knew that her daughter most likely would have died. However, worrying that if this news was confirmed, the patient's life would be in jeopardy, Beletu acted as if nothing happened and tried to calm the patient with the following:

«አረ ባክዎን ዝም ይበሉ እማማ ዶክተሩ አይናገሩ ብለዋል »124

«አረ ባክዎን እማማ ምን ሆነች ብለው ነው አሁን?» 125

«አረ ይተው እማማ ራስዎን አይገዱ» 127

«ልጅዎ ምን ሆነች ተባለ?» 127

“Please be quiet, Madam. The doctor told you not to talk.”

(p,124)

“Please Madam what do you think has happened to her?”

(p, 125)

“Please stop Madam... Don’t hurt yourself.” (p, 127)

“What did people tell you about your daughter?” (p, 127)

These words mentioned above clearly show the care Beletu as a maid provided to W/ro Lekelesh, her mistress.

The other female characters found under this category are the wives. These female characters include w/ro lekelech, W/ro Denkenesh and Ato Zerfu’s first wife.

W/ro Lekelesh was presented in the novel as the wife of Colonel Assefa. She was completely depicted as an old woman who was seriously ill. It was, in fact, this illness that caused Ehite and Dr. Nahom to meet for the first time. Medical doctors had identified the diseases W/ro Lekelesh suffered from as blood pressure and weak heart. And these diseases caused W/ro lekelesh’s body to deteriorate. The frailty of the patient’s body is vividly described when Dr. Nahom came one night to see Ehite.

የእህተ እናት ወ/ሮ ልክለሽ የከሳ አካላታቸውን በእጥፍ ጋቢ ጠቅልለው ገቡ።
«እንዴት አመሸህ ናሆም?» አሉ ድምፃቸው ደካማ ነው። ትንፋሻቸው ነበር
ጎልቶ የሚሰማው።
«ጤና ይስጥልኝ እማማ ደሀና ሰንብቱ?» ተነስቶ ጨበጣቸው።
የእጃቸው ቆዳ እንደለተተ ቅጠል እጁ ውስጥ ሟሸሸ። ያጋረጠ ፊታቸው ደካም
ይታይበታል ቶሎ ቶሎ ይተነፍሳሉ። (18)

With her emaciated body covered in blanket, Ehite’s mother W/ro Lekelesh came in.

“Good Evening Nahom!” she said. Her voice was very weak. It was rather her breath that was heard distinctly.

“How have you been these past weeks, Madam?” Standing up he shook her hands. The skin of her hand deflated in his hand like a weathered leaf. There was fatigue in her pale face. She breathed quickly. (p, 18)

In W/ro Lekelesh’s words, it is stated that she believed this disease would be the cause of her death sooner. W/ro Lekleesh, not minding this, however, was only looking forward to see her daughter’s engagement and marriage. She was only waiting to see her daughter on her big day. It remained a wish unfulfilled, however. Ethite was murdered and W/ro Lekelesh unable to bear the news gulped down a handful pills and killed herself with the over dose.

The wish w/ro Lekelesh had and wanted to see materialized before her death is disclosed in her conversation with her daughter Ehite one night:

«አየ ልጄ ካሁን በኋላ ለየትኛው ዕድሜ ብለኸው ብቻ ትዳስ ገብርኤል ለአንድ ነገር ብቻ እንዲቆየኝ ነው የምለምነው::»
«ለምን እማዩ?» አለች እሁተ::
«አዳኛሽን እስታይ እንዲቆየኝ ነፃ ልጄ» አሏት እንባቸው በአይናቸው ግጥም እንዳለ:: (21)

“You see my child, I only beg St. Gabriel to spare my life just only for one thing.”

“For what mother?” said Ehite.

“To keep me alive till your big day,” said W/r Lekelesh her eyes filled with tears. (p, 21)

The other female character who resembled W/ro Lekelesh in some aspects is w/ro Dinknesh. This similarity between them arose from the fact that w/ro Dinkenesh, just like W/rok Likelesh, was an old, sickly woman whose body was severely damaged by the respiratory failure she

was suffering from. W/ro Dinkenesh's unhealthy and thinned body is lucidly described as under:

የገረጣ ቀይ ፊታቸው ከገላቸው ጋር የማይጣጣም ባዕድ የሆነ ወዝ ይታይበታል። ዓይናቸው ትላልቅ ቢሆንም በቆየ የሳምባ ሀመማቸው ምክንያት ጉድጓድ ውስጥ የገቡ ይመስላሉ። ክሳታቸው ይበልጥ የሚጋለጠው ግን እጃቸው ላይ ነው። አረንጓዴ የደም ስሮች ደርቀው የሚታይባቸው እጃቸው ሥጋ የሚባል ያሉባቸው አይመስሉም። በቆዳ የተሸፈኑ አፅሞች ብቻ ናቸው (119)

Her pale red face had this look which is incompatible with the rest of her body. Even though her eyes were larger, they looked as though they were sunken deep in their sockets due to her ailment....It was rather on her hands that her thinness was betrayed considerably. Criss crossed with dried green veins, her hands seemed they did not have any flesh left in them. They were simply skeletons covered in skin. (p, 119)



Beside the weakened body, there are, of course other facts which shed some light on the other mage of W/ro Dinknesh. The narrative ወ/ሮ ድንቅነህ የቀድሞ መንግስት ባለስልጣን ከነበሩ ባላቸው የወረሱዎቸው ብዙ ሀብትና ንብረት ያላቸው ሴት ናቸው (50), (W/ro Dinkesh had large amount of wealth and properties which she had hierd fom her previouese husband who used to be a government offfical.), to begin with, indicates that w/ro Dinkenesh was a wealthy woman once married to her late husband who was a high government official.

Even though not officially married, W/ro Dinkensh started living with her second husband Ato Zerfu. Since w/ro Dinknesh was blindly in love with Ato Zerfu, she could not see the real motive behind Ato Zerfu's interest in her. W/ro Dinknesh was completely swept over her feet by Zerfu's sweet words as in the following passage:

«ድንቅ አሱ (አቶ ዘርፉ) ልዩ ቅላላ ባለው ድምፅ። ድንቅነሽ በርምጃቸው ካዲሱ ባለቤታቸው ጋር አስተካክለው እጃቸውን በርሳቸው ጠንካራ ክንድ ሥራ

ወሽቀው የልጃገረድ ባላቸው ከሞቱ ወዲያ እንዲህ ባለ ቅኝት የጠራቸው ወንድ
ባመኖሩ ልባቸው እውስጣቸው በደስታ ሲቀልጥ የሰሙ መሆላቸው (52)»

“Dinke” said Ato Zerfu with a voice that has special melody in it. Adjusting her steps with that of her new husband and holding his arms with her hands, W/ro Dinknesh thought she had heard her heart melt since no one had called her with this kind of tone ever since the death of her teenage husband.
(p, 52)

It is also easy to understand from w/ro Dinkenesh’s words, while having conversation with Ato Zerfu, that not only did she love him dearly but also believed that he too loved her. The clues that proved this in w/ro Dikinshe’s words are: እንዴ ዘርፉ? ብትመክረኝስ ምን ነውር አለበት የምትሰራው ሁሉ ለኔ ከማሰብ መሆኑን ሳልረዳ የቀረሁ ይመስልሃል (52) (Why Zerfu? What is wrong with it if you advice me? Do you think I will not understand why you will do this for me?) or in another place the expression ማንም ያለውን ቢል ሐሳብህ ሐሳቤ ፍላጎትህ ፍላጎቴ ነው (52) (Whoever says what ever things ... your thought is my thought and your interest is m,y interst.) also show how completely w/ro Dinknesh accepted Ato Zerfu in her life and came to trust him with all her heart.

Unfortunately, however, through the relentless investigation of Sine-work, the tricked and deceived W/ro Dinknesh eventually discovered that Ato Zerfu was nothing but a heartless swindler.

Sine-work’s mother or Ato Zerfu’s first Wife was the other female character. The physical outlook and the inner self of this woman are depicted in a few words but with clarity in the following way:

የሰነ ወርቅ እናት ዘንካታ ወ/ሮ ናቸው:: ረዘም
ብሎ ዳጎስ ያለ ሙሉ ሰውነት አላቸው:: ገዕታቸው
ላይ የሞህነትና ርህራሄ ጎልቶ ይታየቸዋል:: (231)

Sine-work mother is beautiful Woman. She has a tall and well developed body. Kindness and compassion is read dominantly on her face. (p, 231

The kindness and compassion of Sine-work's mother was actually observed in one instance where she just started living in the new house her former husband, Ato Zerfu, rented to her. When she later discovered that the rented house was obtained through illegal and dishonest ways by throwing out the poor tenant woman who previously lived in it, Sine-work's mother reacted in the following manner:

«ችግር ውስጥ ገብቼልሃለሁ ልጄ በቀረብኝ እንዲህ መሆኑን ሳለውቅ ደሀና ቤት ለቅቄ ወጥቼ። ይኼ ቤት ያንዲት ድሀ ቤት ነው። ሴትየዋን ብታያት ስታሣዘን ትላንት መጥታ እንባዋን እያገዘቀዠቀች ስታለቅስብኝ አንጅቱ ተንሰፈሰፈ. ደግሞ ሦስት ልጆች አሏት».....
(349)

"I am in a problem my son. Not knowing what was going on I left my previous home. I wish I hadn't! This house belongs to a poor woman. If you see this woman, you will feel sorry for her. When she came to see me with her tears flooding down yesterday, I couldn't bear it. Besides, she has three children (p, 349)

As Sine -work's mother was preparing to leave the new house for its previous lodger, the poor woman and Sine-work's mother agreed later on to live together sharing the house between themselves.

The other image of Sine-work's mother is also unraveled when her son and her former husband paid a visit to her one day in her previous home. No sooner all were in the house, an argument arose between Sine-work, the lawyer, and his father Ato Assefa over the case Sine-work was working on and other matters. Sine-work's mother, sensing that this heated argument could escalate into something uglier, was very worried.

The anxious mother along with her appeal is described in two places as follows:

«አረ ጭቅጭቁን ተውና ጠጡ» አሉ የሰነ እናት ጨንቋቸው።
በዚህ አባባል ድርጉስጉስ ያሉ ጠብ ይፈጠር ይሆናል ብለው እናት ሲሰጉ
(236)

“Stop arguing and drink” said Sine’s mother worried.
Because of this kind of talk, the mother was anxious that a
serious fight would break out between father and son. (p, 236)

It looked that Sine-work’s mother had a negative attitude towards argument in general and in fact she dreaded argument so much she thought a fight would necessarily come out of it as an effect. Viewing this then Sine-work’s mother could be understood as a woman who never argued vehemently with anyone, particularly her first husband Ato Zerfu over some matters in which both happened to have different opinions. There is indeed one place at the end of the same scene where it can be noted that Sine-work’s mother was not actually an opinionated women. After Sine-work left Ato Zerfu started conversing with his younger son, Solomon, about Sine-work:

«የወንድምህ ነገር ምን ይመስላል ሰሎሞን?» አሉ አቶ ዘርፉ
ወደ ትንሽ ልጃቸው ዞረው። ስለሞንም በሥነ ወርቅ አባባል
ሲበሽቅ ቆይቶ ስለነበረ «ገደል ሊገባ ይችላል!» አለ በንዴት
... ፈገግ አሉና «ምነው ካንተ ልብ ትንሽ ባካፈለው» አሉ
በዚህ አባባል እናት የተስማሙ አይመስሉም። አስነጠሳቸው። (257)

“What do you think about your brother, Solomon?” said Ato Zerfu turning towards his younger son. Infuriated by what Sine-work had talked, Solomon said angrily “he can go to hell!” ---Smiling, Ato Zerfu said” Why doesn’t God give him a bit of your heart?”. It seemed that the mother did not agree with this. She sneezed. (p, 257)

Even though Sine-work's mother always believed that her son Sine-work was a good man, she did not really step in here to defend him and to directly express her mind on this issue. She instead gave an outlet to her disagreement in an obscure way. Throughout the novel, therefore, this woman is portrayed as a good-hearted and compassionate mother and at the same time a wife who was afraid of expressing her opinions.

3.2.1.2 Females as sisters, lovers, college students and professional

In this category there are five female characters whose names include Aster, Tshay, Sirgut, Ehite and Fikerte. While some of these females characters such as Aster, Tshay and Sirgut are depicted as professionals with careers, the rest, Sirgut and Fikerte, are presented as college students. In addition to this, with the exception of Aster and Sirgut, the remaining females are portrayed as lovers as well. To learn more about the image of each female character further, an analysis of each of these characters will be presented separately supported by textual evidences.

Sine-work's assistant Aster is the first female character to be considered. Aster worked as a typist for Sine-work in his double room office where he offered legal consultation to his clients. This information about Aster was provided in the following account where Sine-work's office is described:

ክፍሏ በመጠኑ ሰፋ ያለች ነበረች። ከውስጥ ሌላ ክፍል አለ።
በፋ ላይ «ሥነ ወርቅ ዘርፉ የሕግ ጠበቃ» የሚል ወረቀት
ተሰጥፎበታል። በአንዲት ማዕዘን ታይፒስቷ «ማዳም ሮሽ»
ታይፕራይተርን ተደግፋ ተቀምጧበታለች። (35)

The room was moderately large. There was also another room inside. A paper that said "Sine-work Zerfu-legal lawyer" was posted on the door. In one of the corner inside the room leaning on her type writer sat the typist "Madam Rosh". {p, 35}

The name “Madam Rosh” was given to Aster by Sine –work’s younger brother Solomon. The next description available concerning Aster deals with her physical figure. Beauty-wise, she was presented as less attractive. አጠር ያለ ቁመናና ድስም ያለ ጥብቅ ወፍራም ሰውነት አላት። ብስል ቀይ የሆነ ፊቷ ጠቃጠቆ ይበዛበታል። በልጅነቷ የያዘች ፈንጣጣ ለቋት ሲሄድ የተወላች ምልክት ነው (35) (Her height is small with fat and compact body. Her rosy face is full of freckles. It is the scar left on her face when the small pox she had in chdhood was gone.) However, her personality was considered likeable. Aster’s sense of humor as well as compassion towards people is revealed in the novel.

The friendly bantering that Solomon and Aster exchanged at the beginning of a conversation when he came to visit his brother one day shows the witty side of Aster. The humorous jokes Aster and Solomon threw at each other are stated as follows:

«ለምንድ ነው ቀርከህ የምተይኝ?» አላት በውሸት ኩርፊያ።
 «አንተ ለምን ማዳም ሮሽ ትለኛለህ?»
 «እኔማ ስንቱ ልንገርሽ ከስምሽ ይልቅ ሽቶሽ ቀድሞ ባፌ ይገባ አላልኩሽም?»
 «እኔማ ነግራሃለሁ ከስምህ ይልቅ ቀድሞ የሚያንገርብብብኝ ቁመትህ ነው» አለችው። (36)

“Why do you call me bamboo?” he said feigning as if he was annoyed.
 “Why do you call me Madam Rosh?”
 “How many times need I to tell you it is the smell of your perfume that gets into my mouth before your name?”
 “I have also told you that it is your height that hovers over me first instead of your name? (p, 36)

After the above conversation, Solomon and Aster were engaged in serious talks. Here also it is possible to detect another aspect of Aster’s image. Aster’s concern and worry for her boss Sine-work is apparently identifiable. The preoccupation of Aster with a certain thought was

expressed right from the start in a number of phrases like “ከምትተክበት ታይፕራተሯ ላይ ቀና ላትል ” (35) (without looking up from the typewriter she was gazing at gloomly.), ትካዜ የሚታይበት ፊቷን ቀና አደረገችና ... (35) (She pulled up her dismal face.) or ትክዝ እንዳለች ነበር (36) (She was pensive?) It is understood later from the discussion between Solomon and Aster that the long face or the gloomy look on Aster’s face was caused by her worry about Sine-work. Telling Solomon the surprising plan his brother Sine-work just made to quit law and take to creative writing, Aster told Solomon in retrospect how unsuccessful she was in persuading Sine-work change his mind. Now also by telling the news to Solomon so as to convince his brother to stick to his current job which paid very well, Aster was trying for the second time. However, it didn’t work. All these efforts of Aster, nevertheless, indicate how much concerned and worried she was for others in general and for Sine-work in particular.

The other professionals in this story include sister Tsehay and sister Sirgut. Both of them were senior nurses working at Tikur Anbessa Hospital along with Dr Nahom and Dr Biruk. In this novel it was her calmness and composure that was drawn as the first characteristic of sister Tsehay. The calm Tsehay always did her work silently. It was indeed because of her calm nature that sister Tsehay did not want to work with the ever and always quick Dr Biruk “... ሲስተር ፀሐይ ደግሞ ረጋ ያለች በመሆኗ የዶክተር ብሩክ ፍጥነት ያስጨንቃታል”(59) (Sister Tsehay was so sedated that the quickness of Dr. Biruk disturbed her.) Tshay’s additional characteristic is also revealed on the day she worked with Dr Nahom for the first time. Even though Dr. Nahom did attend his work, he was deeply worried about his missing fiancé. Although she knew what could be Dr. Nahom’s worry, sister Tsehay wanting to share his thought asked him a couple of times:

« አንድ የሚያሳስብኝ ነገር ያለ ይመስለኛል ዶክተር? »

« አንዴት ሊመስልሽ ቻለ?»

« ልክ እንደ ሰማንያ አመት ሽማግሌ ነው በተመስጦ የምታስበው» (97)

« ምን ነበር ጥያቄሽ» አላት ረስቶት ነበር

« እንደ ምታስብላት ነገር እንዳለ ነበር (99)»

“There is one matter which you are thinking about Doctor.”

“How do you come to think so?”

“You were meditating like an 80-year-old elderly.” (p, 97)

“You did not answer my question.”

“What was your question?” he said forgetting the question already.

“There was something you thought about---‘ (p, 99)

Despite her insistence, Dr Nahom evaded response. Dr. Nahom’s resistance to confide in her, upseted sister Teshay ናሆም ምስጢሩን ስለደበቃት ውስጡን ተናዳበት ነበር:: (102) (She was angry with Nahom for keeping her the secret.) Even though her attempt to make Dr Nahom speak to her about what bothered him became futile, sister Tsehay tried to keep his mind off of it as shown below:

ሲስተር ፀሐይ ሳትመለስ ግማሽ ሰዓት ያህል ቆየች::

ተመልሳ ስትመጣ ባዶ እጅዋን አልነበረም:: ከሆስፒታሉ

ክበብ ትኩስ ፓስታ ፋርኖና በፔርሙዝ ሻይ ይዛ ነበር

ራስዋ መሆኑን ያወቀው ምግቡን ካየ በኃላ ነው

ከበት በኃላ «ሆድ ሲሞላ ጭንቃቁ ባዶ ይሆናል

ይላሉ አረቦች:: አሁን እንደማታስብ እርግጠኛ ነኝ»(97)

Half an hour passed since sister Tsehay was gone. When she returned she was not empty handed. She had Pastal Furno and tea with her, which she had bought from the hospital’s lounge. It was after seeing the food that he knew he was hungry. [After he ate] “ ‘when the stomach is full, the mind is empty’ says Arabs. I am sure that you are not going to think for now” she said laughing. (p, 97)

This and the earlier passage characterized sister Tsehya as a woman who not only wanted to share other's thought and worries but also strived to keep their mind away from these worries. In addition to this, there was also quite a unique characteristic of Tsehya which is unraveled while she was conversing with Dr Nahom. This distinct aspect of Teshay has not been exhibited in any of the previous female characters. Sister Tsehya was at some point philosophical. She philosophized on matters like youth, religion and politics. For instance, when Dr. Nahom inquired about her religion and also demanded to know why she did not become a party member, she replied assertively as follows:

ሃይማኖቱ እውነት ብቻ ነው። ህሊናዬ ብቻ ነው የኔ እምነት።
 ስለክርስቲያንነት ወይም እስልምና የማውቀው የለኝም
 እዳልኩህ የተወሰነ እምነት የለኝም እውነት ራሷ
 አንጻራዊ ናት ብዬ አምናለሁ። ፖለቲካ ደግሞ ይብስቦታል።
 እና በድርጅታዊ ግዳጅ ወይም ዲሲፕሊን ልፈፅመው የሚገባኝ
 ነገር የለም። ሥልጣን ደግሞ የሰፊው ሕዝብ ሆኗል።
 ከሆነ በሀዘብ አባልነቴ በሚሊግራም ቢሆን ትደርሰኛለች።
 ግድ አባልነት አይጠበቅብኝም። (98)

My religion is the truth. It is only my conscious that is my faith. I do not know anything about Christianity or Islam... Like I told you I do not have one static or absolute belief. I believe truth itself is dynamic or relative. Politics is worst in this regard. There is nothing which I should like to do based on party affiliation or discipline. Power is to the people. If this is the case, I will have some of this power for myself by being part of the people. I mustn't be a party member to have it. (p, 98)

The words of Tsehya presented above denote a number of things about the character of the speaker herself. These insightful thoughts prove that Tsehya had an intellect towards matters which were normally considered as male's orientation. This is one important aspect in her character and her image in the novel. She reasoned and thought through various

matter like religion and politics. Similarly, the fact that Tsehay shared her opinions with others boldly also indicates her convictions. Tsehay stated her opinions confidently. Apart from this, Tsehay is also portrayed in respect of love. In some parts of the narrative it is revealed that she was a woman who wrestled with her feelings since she had a hidden love for Dr Nahom, as this illustrated passages shows:

መዝገቡን አጠፈና ወደ በሽተኛው ክፍል ሲሄድ ከሲስተር ፀሐይ ጋር ኮሪደር መሃል ተገናኝቶ «እንደምን አደርሽ ሲስተር» አለ።
«ስርጉት የግል ስራ ስላላት ነው ፈቃድየለውጥኳት አልተስማማህበትም?» አለችው።
«ኖኖ ደስ ይለናል» አላትና እጅዋን ለቆ ወደ ፎቅ ወጣ። ያላበውን እጅዋን ፀጉሯላይ እየጠረገች ወደ ነርሶች ክፍል ሄደች። እሱን ስትጨብጥ እጅዋን ለምን እንደሚያልባት አይገባትም (91)

የሲስተር ፀሐይ ልብ ፍላጎት ይደልቃል። ለዶክተር ናሆም ነበራት ያልሞተ ውዴታና ፍላጎት እወስጧ መጨፈር ጀምሯል። (434)

Folding the document, he was going to the patient's room when he met with sister Tsehay on the Corridor. "Good Morning sister" he said.

"I have changed shift with Sirgut since she has personal matter to attend to. Don't you approve of it?" she said.

"No -No I will be happy" he said and went up stairs. Rubbing her sweaty hand on her hair, she went to the nurse's room. She did not understand why her hand became sweaty every time she shook his hand. (p, 91)

Sister Tsehay's heart also bit together. The affection and desire She had for Dr. Nahom began dancing inside her. (p, 434)

However, after Dr Nahom was acquitted from the crime he was accused of, sister Tsehay taking one moment as a good opportunity confessed her love to Nahom. The courage sister Tsehay mustered to disclose her love for Dr- Nahom at the end of the novel is delineated as follows:

«ዶክተር» አለች «..... ኦ አይዞህ በ-በግለም ላይ» አቋረጠችና ጥፍሯን ትነቃቅስ ጀመር::
 «ምንም አይደለም ፀሐይ ብቸኛነቱ ባይቻለኝም ልችለው እሞክራለሁ» አላት::
 «ልብህን ክፍት ካደረከው ብቸኛ አትሆንም ዶክተር»
 «ምን ምን ማለትሽ ነው?»
 «እሷ ብትሞትም አ- እኔ ማለቴ የምትወድህ እሷብቻ አልነበረችም» (935)

“Doctor” she said. “Do –Don’t worry. In this world...” she halted and started to bite her nails.
 “It’s ok, Tsehay. Even if it is impossible to tolerate this loneliness, I will try to endure it” he said.
 “If you open your heart, you will not be alone.”
 “What - what do you mean?”
 “Even though she died I... I... what I mean is she wasn’t the only one....” (p, 435)

The fact that Tsehay as a female made a brave attempt to express her love for Dr Nahom also indicated the strong character of this woman.

The close friend and work mate of sister Tsehay was sister Sirgut. The first characteristic delineated about sister Sirgut is her quickness. As described in the narrative “ሲስተር ስርጉት ፈጣን ናት:: ስትናገር ስተሄድ ስትሰራ ስትበላ ሁሉ ትፈጥናለች (59)” (Sister Sirgut...is quck. She is quick when she talks, walks, works and even eats.) This image of hers presents her in a sharp contrast with her friend, sister Tsehay. The next account of Sirgut is related to her bodily look. The way the description runs betrayed the fact that Sirgut was viewed as a sex object.

ሲስተር ሥርጉት ብስል ቀይ ናት እንደ ትንኝ የወረራት ብጉር ቢጠፋላት መልክኛ የምትባልም ነበረች ... ወገብ ቀጭን ከዳሌዋ ኮራ ያለች ብትሆንም አጠር ስለምትል ቅርጻ ጎልቶ አይታይም:: ያዩዋት ሁሉ የሚላቡት ግን በጠቶቿ ነው:: በየንቅናቄዋ የሚነጥሩ ሎሚ ቅርፅ ጠቶች አሏት:: (60)

Sister Sirgut is rosy red. If the freckles that have seized her face were gone, she would have been a looker. Even though she has a small waist and wider hips her figure is not

punctuated well because of her small height. It is rather by her breasts that people who see her are attracted towards her. She has small breasts that are bouncy with every movement.
(p, 60)

Along with these qualities, the helpfulness of sister Sirgut as a friend and workmate is also described. One morning Dr Nahom received through a telephone call the news about Ethie's (his fiancé's) sudden disappearance while he was at work. Ever since hearing this news, Dr Nahom had not been himself. Sister Sirgut, who was Dr Nahom's assistant for that day, noticing the change in him attempted to help him:

«እንደማይህ መስራት የምትችል አይመስለኝም ይክተር » አለችው።
« ምን ተሻለኝ?»
«..... ለአስተዳደሩ ነግረህ ሂድ»አለችው። (62)

"As I can see you, you are unable to work Doctor" she said to him.
"What can I do?"
"----- tell this to the administrator and go" she sad to him.
(p, 62)

In spite of the shocking news, Dr Nahom kept on working without asking any permission. The manager ironically called him to grant him leave. Becoming very anxious to help Dr Nahom, sister Sirgut had already told the manager about Dr Nahom's problem. And her effort worked this time.

Ehite, Dr Nahom's fiancé, was the other female character who belongs to this category. Even though she was a college student at the Addis Ababa College of Commerce, Ehite is mainly presented as Dr Nahom's love partner. She is in fact depicted as an unfaithful fiancé who was emotionally tormented. And in her desperate measure to get rid of her secret, she died tragically. Ehite's secret involved the fact she was pregnant from her previous boy friend while she was with Dr. Nahoam. What is largely magnified, during this time, was the pain Ethte went

through inside emotionally as she was concealing this secret from her fiancé Dr. Nahom:

አገጫን ከጣቶቹ ሹልክ አድርጋ እንደገና አቀረረች። የፀፀትና ቁጭት መንታ ስለት ውስጧን ይዘገግታል። የዋለችበት ለቅሶ እንደገና የሚያገረሽ ስለመሰላት ከንፈሯን ነክሳ ታገለች። እንዲወጣ የማትፈልገውን ምስጢሯን ልታጋልጠው እንደተቃረበች ስለታወቃት ራሷን አጠናክረች። በዚህ ሁኔታ ራሷን ማጋለጥ ፈይዳ አልነበረውም። መደበኛ መቻል አለባት። (19)

She released her chin out of his fingers and looked down again. The twin blades of remorse and regret torn her inside. Fearing that the cry she had the whole day would relapse, she fought it back, gripping her teeth. Since she knew that she was very close to disclosing the secret which she did not want to expose, she strengthen herself. At this moment, there was no use in exposing herself. She had to known how to hide it. (p, 19)

The emotional roller coaster Etite had gone through from deep remorse for what she did and to the fight she struggled within herself to keep the secret are all described in the above passage. The disturbance of Ethie's peace of mind due to her secret affair was also repeated in other instances. In all of these moments, Ethie's worries, anxieties are all vividly expressed:

ከአንድ ጎኗ ወደ ሌላው ያለዕረፍት ትወራጫለች። ተሳደባለች። ታቅዳለች። መውጫ ሲጠደፋባት ድምጻን ሳታሰማ ታነባለች። የደረሰባት አጋጣሚ ያሳተመችውን መጥፎ እድል አፍ አውጥታ ለምታፈቅረው እጮኛዋ ነግራ እግሩ ስር ተንበርክካ ይቅርታ ልትጠይቀው ታስባለች ወዲያ ትሰርዛለች..... (24)

She was tossing from one side to the other restlessly. She thought. She planned. When she could not find a way to get out of all this, she would weep. She thought of telling to the fiancé she loved the whole incident that happened to her and the bad luck she faced, and falling down to her knees, ask for his forgiveness. Immediately she would cancel it(p, 24)

Unable to bear it any more Ehite is described in one place yearning to scream and cry loudly as if it could be the right solution for her problem:

በዚህ ስጋት ሞሹ ነበር አሞርቷ- የሚያለቅሰውን ስሜቷን የሚያላቅስ ዋይታ ነበር ናፍቆቷ። ራስዋንና ከአካባቢዋ ጭምር የሚያተራምስ እሪታ ነበር ፍላጎቷ። እየዬ ነበር ሞኛቷ !!! (25)

At this time her desire was to cry- a loud wailing that would utter her saddened feeling was what she needed. A scream that would disturb her and the surrounding as well was the thing that she desired. Sobbing was her wish! (p, 25)

Among the female characters categorized here, Fikerte was definitely one of them. Being a student just like Ehite, Fikerte was a third year law student at the Addis Ababa University. She was also the younger sister of Dr Nahom. Fikerte, throughout the narrative is depicted as a caring and devoted sister and a woman with her own mind.

In order to estimate the image of Fikerte it could be a perfect example to start from the flashback scene at the beginning of the novel where Dr Nahom in retrospect thinks about the time his parents died. The conversation, the sixteen year-old Fikerte and her brother Nahom had in the past clearly shows how much Fikerte cared for her brother Nahom. The fact that Fikere persuaded Nahom to go back to Europe to finish his education and not worry about her proves without a doubt how much determined and ready Fikete was even at that teenage to take care of her self. This was how Fikerte assured her brother who was at that time thinking about dropping out from college for her sake:

... ወደ ቤልግሬድ እንደሚመለስ ነገራት። አልተስማማችሁትም። «ያንቺ ጉዳይስ?» አላት። «እኔ ምን እሆናለሁ? አገራ ላይ በወላጆቼ ቤትና ሀብት ራሴን ሰው ማድረግ አያቅተኝም» አለችው በእርግጠኛነት። «እውነትሽ ነው ሚሚ?» «አላማህ ከግቡ መድረስ አለበት! እና ስትመለስ ደግሞ እኔ ህግ ትምህርት ስከታተል አቆይሃለሁ» አለችው። (7)

--- He told her that he would not return to Belgrade. She did not agree with him. "What about you?" he said.

"What would happen to me? It is not that of a big deal for me to make myself successful in my own country living in and of my parent's house and wealth," she said certainly.

"Are you for real Mimi?" "Your goal has to be accomplished and when you return back, I will also be waiting for you studying law" she said. (p, 7)

During those years when Nahom was abroad studying, Fikirte besides sending him Ethiopia food was as well contacting him through her letters.

When Nahom returned after graduation, Fikerte was also in university studying law. It was exactly as she said that things turned out for them.

Fikerte's love and loyalty for her brother did not disappear nor falter later when he was accused of murdering his finance. She stood by him as always, hiring him a lawyer-who was a staunch believer in truth- visiting him at the station and following up his case closely.

Fikirte's frankness towards people is another aspect of her image portrayed in the novel. Due to Fikerte's straightforwardness there were several instances in the narrative where she had different opinions with other people on some issues. What is interesting about this is just because she had different things to say, Fikert never got ashamed and retracted from her grounds. She made sure that her opinion was heard too. An instance of this aspect is where she and Dr Biruk had a disagreement over the loyalty of Sine- work the lawyer:

«ስጠራጠረው ብዙ ጊዜዬ ቢሆንም ሳልጠቁም ያሳለፍኩት ጊዜ ባይኖርም... ወደድንም ጠተምን ሰውየው ሸጠናል»:: «በበኩል አሁንም ቢሆን ብሩኩ በደረሰበት ድምዳሜ አልደረስኩም»:: አለች ኮስተር ብላ:: (395)

“Even though I have doubted him many times there is not any time passed without me pointing out this,--- whether we like it or not he has dopped us.”

“As far as I am concerned, I still have not reached at the conclusion Biruk just has” he said frowning. (p, 35)

This characteristic of Fekert had actually provoked disapproval from some male characters in the novel. For instance, Ehite’s father, Colonel Assefa viewed it as an uncommon behavior «አዎ ያች ገታራ እህትህ ዋዛ ...»(24) (Yes that sister of yours who is stubborn...) and Ato Zerfu, Sine-work’s father, similarly, had referred to Fikerte as ...” አይኗን ለማትሰብር አይን አውጣ ...” (235) (a shameless girl who does put her eyes down). Since the behavior Fikerte manifested did not coincide with the traditional feminine attributes Colonel Assefa and Ato Zerfu were accustomed to they considered her as a bad girl. Rather than being submissive, silent, shy and inarticulate, Fikerte was frank and assertive. Unlike these two males, however, Fikerte’s honesty had caught Sine - work’s attention. Looking at her and talking with her he instantly recognized that she was not like other women he knew. The impression he had about her was described as follows:

በዙሉ ሴቶች ያወቃል። አጉል ፈገግቸውን አቅርበው... የሚፈታተኑ በሀፍረት እየተቅለለሱ ጉዳያቸውን እንኳን ለማስረዳት የሚቸገሩ ሴት...፤ በመሆናቸው... እንደሙሉ ባለስልጣን ሊያዙ የሚፈልጉ... ፍቅርተ ፊት ላይ ግን የሚታየው የተለየ ነገር ነው። እንግዳነት አዎስ ማንም። ተቅለስላሽ አይደለችም። ጠንክር ያለ ግልጽነት ጎልቶ ይታይባታል። (173)

He knows a lot of women. Those who forward their fake smile... to tempt himThose, feeling ashamed, who are incapable of explaining their cases. Those who like to order around as if they were some kind of authority. But what is seen in Fikerte’s face is different. She does not feel as though she is a stranger. She is not reluctant. A sense of strong frankness is seen on her predominantly. (p, 173)

It was these qualities Sine-work saw in Fikerte that compelled him to like her. The self confession of Sine-work narrates በሷ እየተሳበ መምጣቱን መረዳት ጀምሯል ሆኖም በአብዛኛው ኢትዮጵያን ሴቶች ላይ ጎልቶ የማይታየው ግልጽነቷና ጠንካራ መንፈሷ እያስደሰተው በመሆኑ አድርጎ ነበር. (372) (He came to understand that he was drawn towards her. He realized that what interested him was the frankness and strength seen in her.)

It was not only Fikerte's character that attracted Sine-work towards her, but her physical figure particularly her beautiful legs had also played some part as well. Whenever Fikerte and sine work met, his eyes were riveted to her legs:

ረዘም ለለና የሚያስብ ቅርጽና ወበት ያላት ሌላ ሴት ነበረች። እግሮቿን አያ፡ ደስ ይላሉ። (171) የአጥሩን በር አስክትወጣ በረንዳው ላይ ቆሞ በግዳነት እግሮቿን ይከታል ነበር። እግሮቿ ተክለ መልካም ናቸው። ደስ ይላሉ። ፈጨት ፈጨት እያለው ተመልሶ ገባ። (125) እግሮቿን በአይነት ሥራ ቆመው አያቸው (175) ከኃላዋ እግሮቿ እየተመለከተ ተከተላት እንደሌሎቹ ወንዶች ፍቅር የሚወድቀው በሴቶች መልክ አይደለም በተገላቢጦሽ በእግር ነው። ትክለ መልካም ከሆነች ጎራዲትም ብትሆን ታምረዋለች። (238)

It was a woman with long and attractive figure. He looked at her legs. They were pleasant. (p, 171)

Standing at the porch he watched her legs till she left the compound. Her legs were nicely built. They were pleasant. Feeling a need to whistle, he went inside. (p, 175)

He saw her legs as if they were in front of his eyes. (p, 175)

Looking at her legs he followed her from behind. Unlike most men, he does not fall in love with a woman just by looking at her face. He will be attracted towards a woman as long as she has nice beautiful legs, caring less about her face. (p, 238)

From these series of passages it was apparently noticeable to understand that Fikerte being reduced to her bodily part was depicted several times as a sex object.

3.2.1.3 Females as prostitutes

The third and the last category of female characters in this novel are represented as prostitutes in this novel. These females appeared in the narrative when Dr Nahom was wandering from one bar to another in search of his missing fiancé's best friend. This bunch of female prostitutes whom Dr Nahom met particularly in one bar is described initially as women whose beauty had faded out long ago. The following paragraph describes this fact:

አምስት ወይም ስድስት ናቸው ሴቶች ድሮ ወይም በቅርብ መቼም ይህን መች ብቻ አንድ ጊዜ ቆነጃጅት እንደነበሩ የደበዘዘ ገጽታቸው ይመስክራል አሁን ግን የቁንጅና ላህይ ያላቸውም ፀገራቸው በካውያ በንኖና ተንጨባሮ ፊታቸው ገርጥቶ አይናቸው ሰዞ ጥርሳቸው በልዞ ውበት ጥርሷቸው ሸሸልቷ (80)

The women are five or six. Their faded faces revealed that these women either till recent time or long ago --- were beautiful. Now there is no sign of beauty in them. Their hair thinned out and disheveled by ironing, their faces paled, eyes hazy, teeth stained... beauty has abandoned them. (p, 80)

As Dr Nahom sat and talked with the older woman who was the owner of the bar he learnt some interesting things about her. Not only was she very talkative, she was not only well informed about the political conspiracies involved at that time in getting things done illegally but also she was very outspoken about it. As Dr Nahom got prepared to explain to this woman about why it was difficult in those days for people to get the usual rations provided in every *kebele* she surprised him saying:

«ምን መሰለሽ?» አላት አውቀዋለሁ ባኮት የቀበሌ ካድሬ አንቆተኛል የውጥ ምንዛሬ ስለሚያመጣ ነው ሲሉኝ አይደል አይገባኝም... የቀበሌ ተመራጭ የሆነበረት ሱቅ ሰራተኛ ወይም ማታ ማታ ድራፍት የሚያቅን ኗሪ ንጹህ ቡና በኩንታል ቢሆን ይገኛል ይህ ካልሆነ ጤፍ አንደ ስኳር በቅመም ሚዛን እተሰራረ ለወር አስቤዛ መስጠቱ እንደሆነ እውነት ነው ይሙቱ እውነትን እኮ ነው (83)

“What do you think it is?” he said.

“I know it. A kebele official has enlightened me... ‘you are going to say’ it brings foreign currency right? I do not understand ...a *Kebele* official, an employee in the union shop or person who buys drinks for officials at night obtain tones of pure coffee. [If this is not so] the fact that *teff* is distributed to the people in meager quantity for monthly provision is true. I swear this is true. (p, 83)

The courage the woman had in speaking what was on her mind can also be observed in the other matters she had talked with Dr Nahom. The courage this women had of course did not go unnoticed “አትፈሪም? አላት ተገርጥሎ የልቧን የምትናገር ደፋር ሴት ቀርቶ ወንድ አጋጥሞት አያውቅም” (82) (Don’t you get scared? He said wonderd since let alone a woman who speaks her mind he did not find a man.) Beside the dirty operations, the woman also conversed with Dr. Nahom openly about the one matter that brought him there in the first place which was finding the whereabouts of Samrawit.

Ehite’s best friend Samrawit was also the other female character in this novel. This girl was also depicted as a prostitute. Since her parents were destitute, Samrawit turned to prostitution.

3.3 A Synopsis of the Novel, *Yelot Menged*

The title of the third novel *Yelot Menged* was initially used in the holy book to show the order Lot, a holy man, received as God was preparing to punish the people of *Sedom*. Similarly, this expression *Yelot Menged* was used in this novel to show the hard struggle or the continuous run Sirgut had to make to maintain her life and, most importantly, to rescue her father’s medical discovery.

Ato Mola, a traditional herbal doctor in Addis Ababa, recently discovered a medicine that could cure AIDS. No sooner this extraordinary breakthrough was announced on the electronic media, there arose a deadly scramble for this medicine among some international and domestic agents. One of the international agents attracted to this medical miracle was the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Sending its agents disguised as Central News Network (CNN) dispatches into the country, the CIA had, a mission to seize this medicine before anyone else. Murdering Ato Mola the CIA agents took what they thought was the medicine. When they realized that it was a trick, CIA officials again assigned an agent, this time an Ethiopian named Abraham to get hold of this medicine.

Meanwhile, other domestic bodies, the Ministry of Health, Federal Police Commissions, Ethiopian Traditional Medical Association, local NGOS and certain individuals, ever since the news about the discovery of a medicine for AIDS was heard on radio and FM station, joined in this race each driven by their own different agendas. Sirgut, Mr. Mola's adopted daughter, however, determined not to have her father's dream illegitimately taken by anyone, abandoned her house and was constantly on the run. The large scale police hunt and a million Birr prize tag made on Sirgut as a most wanted person turned things worst for her as a fugitive. Eventually, the whole cat and mouse game ended with none of the seekers getting what they all sought for.

3.3.1 Females' sex roles in *Yelot Menged*

In line with the novel *Senselet* which was previously discussed, female characters in *Yelot Menged* can also be associated with both household and the public life. However, the roles these characters play are very limited. In fact these narrowly, varied roles the female characters play range from a brave daughter who went against all odds, mistresses that

turned accomplices, unfaithful friends and to a couple of professionals. When these roles the female characters play in the novel, *Yolt Menged* are compared with those of the males, there are certainly some evidence indicates the prevalence of patriarchal culture in the culture milieu of the novel. In his book *the Gender Knot* which was posted on the web (www.bookgoggle.com.et) Jhonson stated that one main feature of patriarchy is male domination. Male domination according to him, refers to the holding of key positions- like educational, religious political by males entirely.

This phenomenon is obviously present in the novel, *Yelot Menged*. While most of the males are depicted as doctors, religious leaders, heads of certain organizations like CIA and NGOS, police officers, police commissioners and ministers, the females are largely presented as wives, mistresses, college students, children, doctors and maid servants. There is only one female executive in this novel. Below, the roles of some of the main female character in the novel *Yelot Menged* are discussed in some detail.

3.3.1.1 Females as Wives, Mistresses and Accomplices

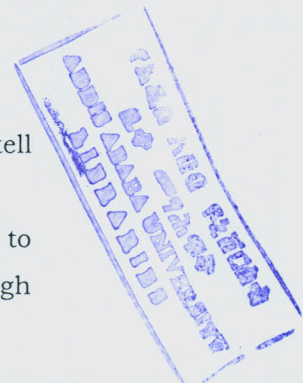
It was W/ro Menbere and Tenagne who played the roles of wives, mistresses and accomplices in this novel. W/ro Menbere was the wife of the traditional doctor, Ato Mola. From one of the flashback scenes, it is possible to note the first image of W/ro Menbere. Initially, W/ro Menbere is depicted as an angry, complaining wife whose husband denied her the love and affection she needed. This picture of W/ro Menbere could be noted from the following passage in which she had a heated dispute with Ato Mola, her husband:

" ... ከማንም ጋር አተዳራህ ለእኔ ግድ የሌለህ መሆንህን ልትነግረኝ አይገባም::"
ይላሉ እናቷ

«..... እምልህ ከሰለጥሁ ለምን አታሰናብተኝም? አንተ ለሊቱን ሁሉ ይህን ስራስርና ቅጠላ ቅጠል ስትቀነጣጥብ አያደርክ ለምን ህይወቴን መቃብር ታደርገሃለህ?»

« አሁን ምንድነው የምታየኝ?»...

« ልጅ ልወልድልህ አልቻልኩምና ብርድ ሲከካኝ ማደር አለብኝ ማለት ነው?» (27፣28) *



“... by sleeping around with everyone, you don’t have to tell me that you don’t care for me” says her mother...

“... I mean why don’t you divorce me if I am such a bore to you? Staying up all night till it becomes dawn looking through these herbs, why do you make my life a hell?”

“What are you saying to me now?”

“Just because I can’t bear you a child should I have to sleep alone?” (p, 27, 28)

The above conversation between W/ro Menbere and Ato Molla not only shows the way W/ro Menbere felt about her marriage but also exposes all the possible reasons W/ro Menbere thought and suspected of as to why Ato Molla did not care for her any more. In order to get the love, the emotional as well physical closure and comfort which she was denied in her marriage, W/ro Menbere began to look for all of these from another person. She started to have an affair with Assir Aleka, Ato Molla’s friend as reported in the narrative:

ጋሽ ሞላ ወጣ ባሉ ቁጥር ወይ ራሳቸው ጋሽ ሞላ ቤት አልያም አስር አለቃ ቤት ጎራ እዳሉ የስርቆት ፍቅር ይጣፍጣል የሚባል እውነት መሆኑን አረጋግጠው ቁጭ አሉ። (86).

Every time Atom Molla left the house, either by going to Assir Alka’s house or by having Assir Alka come to the house, W/ro Menbere proved for herself the truth about the sweetness of secret love. (p, 86)

* The page numbers given throughout this chapter refer to the text of narrative, Yelot Menged, 1998 published by Ethio Creative Arts and Communication.

Ever Since Assir Alka heard the news about a medicine that cured AIDS was discovered by Ato Molla and that Ato Molla was murdered, he plotted to have the medicine for himself. He realized that the only way he could get the medicine was through W/ro Menbere. Hence, he persuaded W/ro Menbere to steal it from the one person who actually got hold of the medicine, her step daughter Sirgut. The love-blind and unsuspecting W/ro Menbere did as she was told by her lover Assir Alka.

However, W/ro Menbere later learnt in the hard way that the only reason why Assin Alka was interested in her was to get hold of the medicine as revealed in the circumstances when W/ro Menbere, who was severely injured in the process of looking for the medicine, called to Assir Alka from hospital.

"መንበረ ነኝ መጥተህ ወደ ቤት ወሰደኝ አሁን ደህና ነኝ አሉ ወ/ሮ
መንበረ
"እዛው ፍግም በይ የማውቅልሽ ጉዳይ የለም!" ብለው ጆሯቸው ላይ
ደረገሙት:: (205)

"This is Member speaking. Come and take me home... I am fine now," said W/ro Menbere.
"You could die there for all I care!" said Assir Alka and hang up the phone on her. (p, 205)

Being extremely hurt W/ro Menbere poisoned and killed Assir Alka.

In this novel, as wife W/ro Menbere was ill-treated and later, as a mistress of Assir Alleka she was seduced, cheated and pushed away.

The other female character, beside Menbere, who played the role of a mistress and an accomplice in this novel, is Tenagene. To understand the image of Tenagne against the overall scheme of things in the novel, it is reasonable to divide the story of Tenagne into two: before and after her meeting the priest kenfe Assebu.

In the first part Tenagne, then called Roman, is portrayed as a girl and later woman who was very determined to use her pretty face and gorgeous body to get what she wanted. In fact, the only dream she envisaged for herself ever since she was a child was becoming a woman with stunning beauty. This dream of little Roman was reflected in the following passage:

የማር ሰፊፍ የመሰለ ሸንቅጥ ያለ ቅርጽ ወንዶች ማወዳት
 ስልክክ ያለ አፍንጫ ዛጎል ዓይኖች የሚነሰነስ ፀጉር የሰዎች
 ሁሉ መነጋገሪያ የሆነች ሴት ለመሆን ከልጅነቱ ጀምሮ ህልሙ ነበራት።
 (87)

Like the top part of honey--- slim body ---hips that make most men stunned ...straight pointed nose... large beautiful eyes... long straight hair ...ever since she was a child she had this dream of becoming a woman whom every body talked about.
 (p, 87)

Realising later that the dream she wished for had actually turn into reality, Tenagne (Roman) began to operate or rely heavily on her beauty to realize her dream in life. At first, she enticed with her looks a wealthy man. When this plan did not work as planned she turned to modeling.

Tenagne's self awareness of her beauty and the fact that she had an ego which assured her that if she put her beauty into effect she could just end up with every thing is best captured in the following passage where she just met for the first time the man she liked:

"ይቅርታ የኔ ጌታ..."
 "ምንም አይደል"
 "ተቀመጥ በታ አለችው ቀጠር ነበረህ"
 "የለኝም....."
 "« ርማን አባላለሁ"
 "«አብዳ....."
 "እርግጠኛ ነኝ ይቅርታ እንዳደረክልኝ" ተሰላሰሰች።
 "ቆንጆ መሆንሽ ብቻ ረድቶሻል" አላት። አዎ... ቆንጆ መሆኔ

ገና ብዙ ሲረዳኝ ይገባዋል። እነሆ አንተን በፍቅር ማንፈገገም ከተግባራቱ) ች
አንዱ ነው። (89)

“Excuse me, sir”

“Not a problem”

“Sit down anyway” she said. “Have you had an appointment?”

“No I haven’t”

“I am Roman”

“Abdi”

“I am sure you have forgiven me” she said, softening up.

“The fact that you are pretty has helped you” he said.

*Yes my being pretty should help me for many times to
come. One of it would be to make you fall in love with me.*

(p, 89)

Even though Roman’s ambition was to have things she desired using her beauty as a weapon, her looks, rather than being a means to her ends, had become nothing but a cause of misery and pain. All the boy friends whom Tenagne had in her life were drawn to her by her remarkable beauty; however, after getting a taste of this, they all dropped her like a hot potato.

This is how the abandonment of Tenagne by her first boy friend is narrated:

"እንደውጣ!" ሲል ይጠይቃታል የያዘችው የወንድ ጓደኛ ችኮላው ቅጥ አጥቶ
ነበር።..... ጭቅጨቃው ሲበዛ..... ጉዳዩን ፈፀሙት። በማግስቱ እንዴት
ሆንሽም ሳይላት የውሀ ሽታ ሆኖ ቀሩ አሰለሰ ሰነባበተ ። (87)

“Let’s do it! He asks her-the boy friend whom she is seeing, with uncontrollable impatience. When his nagging persisted they did it ... on the next day not caring to ask how she was he just vanished. It became three days. Then a forthright. (p, 87)

A similar reaction taken by her second boy friend is also recounted as follows:

«አፈቀርኩኝ» አላት ጠበቃት ፣ ጨቀጨቃት፣ በፍቅር
ከነፈላት። አመት ሲሞላት ተረታችላትና አብረው ተኙ።
አረገዘች የምስራቹን ነገረችው መርዶውን በተግባር አሳያት ጠፋ።
(90)

“I like you” he told her ... he waited for her, begged her, fell head over heels in love with her. A year later she gave in and they slept together. She became pregnant. She told him the great news. He showed her the bad news in practice. He disappeared. (p, 90)

Even after meeting the priest kenfe later to whom Tenagne confessed her sins and expected some cleansing or healing, the same maltreatment that happened to her before kept on repeating itself all over again. The priest, kenfe Assebu, after hearing Tenagne’s confession of killing her boy friend, rather than doing the regular rituals or ceremonies to cleanse or heal the sinners soul, kept her for himself and began to exploit her for his own personal gains, sexual as well as financial. Consider the following lines:

... ቀሲስ ክንፉ ... ዘመናዊ ቤት ተከራይተውለት ችግር ፈቺና
ፍቅር መጋቢ አድርገው አስቀመጧት። (91)
ለአይናቸው ማረፊያ፣ ለስሜታቸው መተንፈሻ፣ ለእርካታቸው
መድረሻ ትሆን ዘንድ አበጁት። (90)

Priest kessis ...renting a mansion for her, puts her there as a person who solves his problems as well as feeds him some love. He turns her into a sight for his eyes, an outlet for his feeling and a vent for his pleasures. (p, 90-91)

As stated in the above passages, while Tenagne was with the priest, she was depicted as both an object possessed for sexual pleasure or gratification and an accomplice who was ready to do criminal acts for the priest which included murdering people. Thus, throughout the novel the

portrayal of Tenagne is just that of a woman who was exploited of by men repeatedly for their selfish ends. That is, the image of Tenagne, a woman who was misled by her beauty, is that of a toy and an instrument that can be easily manipulated by evil men under patriarchy.

Sirgut another female character is a central character of the novel *Yelot Menged*. Sirgut's story began tragically when she was just a Toddler. Her mother was accidentally killed by her father who was sentenced to prison for committing the crime. No longer having her parents there to take care of her, Sirgut was lost in the streets of Gonder. However, things did not remain for her as they were. Fate brought her Ato Molla. After spending sometime in Gonder for business, Ato Molla was on his way to return to Addis Ababa when he saw little Sirgut on the street. He brought her with him to Addis Ababa and raised her as his own daughter. Ever since then Sirgut grew up in the hands of Ato Molla and W/ro Member. She thought that they were her biological parents and loved them dearly.

However, the argument Sirgut overheard between her father and mother one night, shattered the perception she had about her mother and made her discover the shocking truth. In this argument, w/ro Member was accusing her husband, Ato Mola, of many things and one of which was about the child Sirgut and her real mother. In her accusation, W/ro Menbere was blaming Ato Molla of having the child, Sirgut, from one of the mistresses he was seing outside the wedlock. Despite Ato Molla's insistent pleas of innocence, W/ro Menbere remained adamant.

Owing to this dispute, the impression little sirgut had about her mother changed for ever ሳሎን ውስጥ የሚያረገው እንካሳሳንቲያ በደንብ ነበር የሚሰማት። ንትርካቸውን ጨርሰው የሳሎንን መብራት አጥፍተው መኝታ ቤት ሲገቡም ... እናት እንደሌላት ... እያሰበች ነበር። (280 (She heard the altercation in the living room very well. When they went to the bedroom after finishing their argument and switching off the light, she was thinking...she had no

mother.) The effort that little Sirgut also made afterwards to know who her real mother was even unsuccessful as her adopting father failed to tell her the truth. Due to her sudden discovery and the fact that no one cared to set the record straight with her concerning her real mother, Sirgut was haunted by this obsession all her life.

The other matter Sirgut was constantly worried about all the time was safeguarding the medicine which her adopting father had discovered from reaching into the hands of those who wanted to have it for wrong causes. Sirgut's devotion and loyalty to her foster father and his dreams could be understood from the life-and-death struggle she had to make in order to evade so many plots contrived against her. Even though Sirgut went through a lot of suffering and was ready to sacrifice herself, she was depicted in the story as a daughter who was doing all of this for the sake of her father. In certain parts of the narrative it can be clearly observed how deep Ato Molla went to ensure that Sirgut followed his footsteps or grew into the kind of woman he wanted her to be.

From one of the conversations Ato Molla had with his adopted child Sirgut, this can be noticed:

«እስይ ስርጉቴ..... አንቺ በዘመናዊው እኔ በባህላዊው ባለሙያ በመሆናችን አላማችንን ለመሰወጥ የሚያስችል ድንቅ ብቃት ይኖረናል:: ህክምና እንድታጠኚ የወተወትኩሽ ለባህል ሕክምና የሚሰጠውን ውዳቂ ክብር እንድታነሳሽ ነው...» (40)

That is it, Sirgut... your being professional in the modern Science and I in the traditional will make us have the amazing ability to change our world. The reason that I nagged you to study medical science is to make you resurrect the name of traditional medicine from the despicable respect given to it. (p, 40)

In another context in the narrative we can also realize why Sirguit had only the influence of one man on her life:

አባቷ ጋሽ ሞላ የአይናቸው ብሉን ያህን ስለሚሳሱለት ያሰደንት እጅግ ጥብቅ እንክብካቤና ቁጥጥር ባለው ሁኔታ ነበር። የሆነ ሰው ልጃቸውን በድብቅ የሚሰርቃቸው ጓደኞቿ ተባብረው የሚያበላሻት እየመሰላቸው ሁሉም በስጋት ነበር የሚኖሩት የመጀመሪያ ደረጃና የሁለተኛ ደረጃ ትምህርቷን ያጠናቀቀችው ከአባቷ ጥብቅ ቁጥጥር ስር ላትወጣ ነበር። (142)

Since Ato Molla looked Sirguit as an apple of his eyes he raised her in an environment where there was strict discipline and affection. He had always lived in fear thinking that someone may kidnap his daughter or her peers may spoil her. Sirguit finished her elementary and secondary school under the firm control of her father. (p, 142)

The above excerpt besides showing the parenting skills Ato Molla displayed while raising Sirguit, explains a great deal about why Sirguit had only the influence of her father on her life, and not of any other person.

In the midst of all this, Sirguit is also portrayed as an object of sexual desire, just like some of the other female characters in this and the previous novels. Of some places in the narrative where this image of Sirguit is reflected, there is one particular instance where a pagelong elaborate description is devoted simply to describe the sexy buttock of sirguit. This passage reads partly as follows:

ወንዶች ሁሉ የሚጎመኝላት ሴቶች ሁሉ ቢኖረን ብለው የሚመኙት ድንቅ ነገር አላት ኘ ቁጥ በአንድ ድምፅ የሚያምር ቁጥ ያላት ነው የሚሏት። ከጎንና ገኗ እጅግ የመጨረሻ በሆነ ጥንቃቄ የተጠረበ የሚመስለው ሰፊ ዳሌዋ ላይ የተቀመጠው ቁጥ ላይና ወደታች ሲል ሆነ ብሎ የሚጠቀስ ነው የሚመስለው ... አቅልን አስቶ መንፈስን የዘላለም ፍስሀ ውስጥ ይከታል፣ አይንን አጥብርብሮ በፍትወት ስሜት ያጥወለወላል፣ አእምሮን እረፍት አልባ በሆነ ግዞት ውስጥ ይሞጅራል። (141)

She had a remarkable thing both men admired and women wished to have-ass. All of them in one voice call her the girl with nice ass... when the ass rested on her wide, carefully curved hips moves up and down, it looks as though it is winking...Making you lose yourself it puts your spirit in an everlasting bliss; dazzling your eyes it makes you erupt with sexual desire; it throws your mind into restless exile. (p, 141)

The above excerpt could be taken as a quintessential example for showing the identification of a woman's image with a sex object. The image or picture provided in this passage about Sirgut was not based on her character, identity or behavior. It was rather associated with the sexual pleasure her bodily figure induces upon men. The human aspects in Sirgut's character-her emotions, spirit and intelligence-are ignored and she is reduced to her body parts. This kind of representation or portraying Sirgut as an object of sexual pleasure can also be found in the other parts of the novel. This is only one such example.

To escape from all the people who were tracking her down and not to be at any risk of losing the medicine, Sirgut planned to cross the border and get out of country. To reach the border she hitch-hiked and sometimes without getting noticed hid herself in a passing-by truck and traveled some distances. However, on one occasion the driver of the truck in which she hid herself saw her. While Sirgut, by making up a story, was trying to make the driver and his assistant understand why the government was after her, the driver and the assistant were viewing Sirgut differently:

«አንቺ? አንቺ? አንቺ!» ቃላቱን እየደጋገመ ጮኸ።
«ሰነዱን አሁኑኑ ለኛ የማታስረክቢ ከሆነ ፖሊስ እንጠራለን»...
«ሰነድ ዓይደለህ? ... ማርኩሪ ነው ... »
«በጌታ ... አንቺ ራስሽ ማርኩሪ ሆነሽ የምን ማርኩሪ አመጣህ?»

«ይህን መሰለ ቅርፅኸ አንሰኝ ነው ማርኩሪ መዝረፍ ላይ የተመሰግራችው?» (146)

“You? You? You!” repeating the word, he shouted... “If you are not handing over to us the file, we will call a police”

“It is not a file... it’s mercury...”

“Lord ... you yourself being Mercury, what kind of Mercury are you bringing to us?”

“Was it because you considered the body you have not enough that you were engaged in stealing Mercury? (p, 146)

The assistant’s language referring to the bodily figure of Sirgut is another instance of the depiction of Sirgut as a sex object.

Another aspect of Sirgut’s image is revealed in the novel when Sirgut was returning home from college. Enrolled at Gonder University as a first year student, Sirgut went there for registration. As she was traveling back to Addis Ababa after being registered, she was forced to spend a night on the road since it was a long trip. It was here that Sirgut experienced a shocking blow. She was raped. One of the men named Abraham who was on the same bus she was and who stayed at the same hotel she rented a room for the night, pulled her into his room forcefully and had sexual intercourse with her against her will.

This unfortunate incident in the novel clearly presents Sirgut as physically weak and fragile. Moreover, it connotes a general message about women stating that they are vulnerable beings who could be overpowered or overwhelmed by men very easily.

What is rather interesting in a strange and surprising way is the way Sirgut felt about the rape afterwards. The reaction Sirgut later developed in her mind and the understanding she finally reached at towards the whole thing is unveiled in the following passage:

ለምን በእኔ ላይ እንዲህ ይጨክራል? የት ያወቀኛል? አትሳሳኝ ስርጉት አልጨከነብሽም። ያስ አልሸው ወደደሽና ሁሉም ነገር ተከናወነ ደግሞም ነገርየው ላይ ያንቺም ታቃውሞ ጠንካራ አልነበረም።... እና ያልነበረስ እንደሆነ?

ው ጫን የሚልሽ ወንድ ስላለነበረ እንጂ እኔ?

አዎ ስርጉት አንቺም ስሜቱ ነበረሽ ... ስለዚህ ነው እስከመርላት የደረስሽው።... ግን እውነቱን ልትሸፍኒ ካስፈለግሽ ነው። ስሜትሽን መቆጣጠር በመቻሉ እንጂ መጀመሪያ እኮ አራስ ነብር ሆነህ ንገራኝ እስቲ ለምን በዚያው ስሜሽን አልቀጠልሽም?

ታስታውሻለሽ ስርጉት አንድ ደራሲን ጠቅሳ የክፍል ጓደኛሽ የነበረችው የነገችሽ? ሌት ልጅ ተገድዳ መደፈርን ትወዳለች... ክብርን ስለሚነካ እንጂ የምትጠላው...

እሱ እንደሆነ አውቀሽ እንጂ አልደፈረሽም ኮ አዳም ሄዋንን አወቃት ይላላ መፀሐፍ እሱስ ከዚህ የተለያየ ምን አደረገ? ... (162)

How could something brutal be done on me? He does not know me? *Don't get it wrong. Sirgut, he did not hurt you. You looked pleasant to him, he liked you and everything was done accordingly. To be honest your resistance on the whole thing wasn't that strong either.*

What if it wasn't so?

Well... since there wasn't a man who forced you.

Me?

Yes Sirgut you had the feeling... that is why you reached orgasm but this is only if you cared not to hide the truth. It was because be had controlled your feeling that you did not proceed with the resistance. Tell me why this was so?

Do you remember what your classmate told you citing one author? A woman likes to be raped ... only because it hurts her dignity that she hates it. He only got to know you, he did not rape you, the book says "Adam Knew Eve" what did he do different? (p, 161-62)

The above passage demonstrates the way Sirgut reacted after she was raped. And the passage, in doing so, depicts Sirgut as a woman who, after cogitating for a while, came to believe that she somewhat liked the

fact that she was raped. The justifications Sirgut went through in her mind to convince herself and the fact that she finally approved the rape subconsciously when it happened, clearly send wrong signals about women and rape.

In addition to the above three female characters there are also a few others who make short appearances in this novel. These include the two friends of Sirgut, Alemnesh and Misrak, and a couple of other professionals. Their roles are minor and confirm the image of ordinary women in a patriarchal society. That is, their characters do not add anything significant to the image of the major women characters in the novel.

Chapter Four: A comparison of Images of Women in the three Amharic Novels

In this section of the study, a general approach is taken to identify the common and/ or different image of woman in the three Amharic novels already discussed in the previous chapters. It is believed that engaging in this kind of activity is very important in order to come up with some understanding about the image of woman in the Ethiopian literature within the last thirty years.

As could be understood from the detailed examination made in the earlier chapter, there are certain aspects of the image of woman which are apparently prevalent across all the three novels. It is, therefore, on this perspective of similar portrayal of women that this comparison is based.

The first common feature observed in the novels *Yewodiyaneh*, *Senselet* and *Yelot Menged* concerning the depiction of female characters is the way the identities of these female characters are made. Almost all of the female characters in these novels are identified based on the relationship they had with men. That is, the identities and roles of these women are established entirely with reference to men. It is due to this reason that nearly all of the female characters in the three novels are presented as daughters, sisters, wives, mothers and mistresses. To substantiate this claim, the female characters resided in the three novels are listed out and identified with their respective roles in the following three tables. Each table shows the female characters found in each of the three novels.

Table 1: Female Characters in the novel *Yewodiyanes*

Female characters	Roles identified with men	Roles not identified with men
W/ro Tekabech	Mother	-
Yewibnesh	Sister	-
Yewodiyanes	Lover, wife	-

Table 2: Female Characters in the novel *Senselet*

Female characters	Roles Identified with men	Roles not identified with men
W/ro Dinkenesh	Wife, mother	-
w/ro Lekelesh	Wife, mother	-
Sine-work's mother	Ex- Wife, mother	-
Ehite	Daughter, lover	-
Fikerte	Sister	-
Sister Tsehay	-	Nurse
Sister Sirgut	-	Nurse
Aster	-	Typist

Table 3: Female Characters in the novel *Yelot Menged*

Female characters	Roles identified with men	Roles not identified with men
Sirguta	Daughter	-
w/ro Membere	Wife, mistress	-
Tenagne	Mistress	-

Almost all of these female characters, except three of them, have their images completely determined by their relationships with men. In the novel *Yewodiyanes*, for instance, one of the female characters, w/ro Tekabech was referred to as “my mother” through out the novel and the roles she played from the entry time onwards in the narratives do not exceed from being a wife and a mother. The same image and role that is as a wife and a mother can also be noticed in the other female characters such as W/ro Dinkeneseh, W/ro Lekelesh and Sine-work’s mother in the second novel *Senselet*. W/ro Menbere was also another female character whose identity was shaped by her relation with men in the third novel. Besides this, the rest of the female characters presented as daughters, sisters and mistresses are also male-identified.

The fact that all of the female characters have their identities expressed in terms of their relationship with men implies a number of things about the nature of this kind of image formation.

Due to the male-identification criterion adopted to portray the image of woman, the individuality of these female characters as persons has been overlooked or lost. This means instead of having the female characters as free individual persons each with her own distinct qualities, they are all defined by their relations with men or rather these female characters have their relations with men define who they are. This kind of woman portrayal automatically proves to be incomplete since at least it ignores what a person really is.

The association of a female’s image with the private or domestic life is also the other feature commonly shared among all the three novels. This means that the roles of most of the female characters in these novels are restricted or confined to the household chores. In the novel *Yewodiyanes*, for instance, the three major female characters W/ro

Tekabech, Yewibhesh and Yewodiyaneh are entirely engaged in domestic life and the house chores. When we look at the men characters in this novel itself the picture is different. The major men characters in this novel- Ato Yayeh Yirad, Getahun and Gulelat- are presented as educated and skilled professionals who were identified with the public life. In addition to this, there was not a single place in this novel where these male characters were observed performing house hold activities. All these facts are then self-evident in proving the prevalence of sex biased roles and the domination of patriarchy.

The same kind of female characterization has also been adopted in the other two novels, *Senselet* and *Yelot Menged*. While a number of female characters such as Beletu, W/ro Lekelesh, Sine-work's mother and W/ro Dinkenesh are depicted in association with the private sphere of life in the novel *Senselet*, so are W/ro Menbere and other female characters in the novel *Yelot Menged*. However, the men characters in these two novels, like the men in the previous novel *Yewodiyaneh*, were delineated as mangers, doctors, police offices, lawyers, judges, ministers, police commissioners, heads of different organizations, agents and so forth all of whom are subsequently related with the public sphere of life.

Unlike *Yewodiyaneh*, however, there are some female characters in the novel *Senselet* and *Yelot menged* whose roles, instead of being limited only to the household, extends to the public life. These characters include the two nurses sister Tsehay and sister Sirgut and the typist Aster from the novel *Senselet*. Sirgut the college student and Tenagne the model could also be taken as some of the female characters with this similar role from the novel *Yelot Menged*.

In comparison with the roles of women in the novel *Yewodiyaneh*, it is important to note that there is a certain progress made in the two novels

Senselet and *Yelot Menged* in terms of associating women with both domestic as well as public affairs.

The third common element among these three novels concerning the image of woman is the way some of the female characters are portrayed as sex objects. There are certain female characters in each of the three novels that are described, at some moments in the novels, as objects of sexual desires. Yewodiyaneh in the novel *Yewodiyaneh*, Sirgut and Fikerte in the novel *Senselet* and Sirgut and Tenagne in the third novel *Yelot Menged* are these female characters portrayed as objects of sexual fantasies. Reducing them to their bodily parts particularly their hips, ass, breasts and legs, all these women characters are presented as things that stir or ignite sexual pleasure in men. For instance, Sirgut in *Senselet* is depicted as having nice bouncy breasts and voluptuous hips. Fikerte in the same novel is identified with nice bodily figure and long sexy legs. Sirgut in *Yelot Menged*, on the other hand, is reduced to her beautiful buttocks.

In the comparison made above it can be understood that most of the female characters in the three novels were commonly depicted in terms of their relationships with men, confined to the household chores and as sex objects. Along with the common image of woman, there are also different kinds of female portrayals in these three novels. Some of this different image of woman will be discussed below.

From the broad analysis made in the previous chapter on image of woman taking the main female characters, it is possible to identify two women with almost similar images with regard to some aspects. These female characters are Yewodiyaneh and Sine-work's mother. Both of these female characters were submissive and inarticulate. They did not tend to step up and express what they thought or felt at the right

moment. However, characters such as Tsehay and Fikerte are quite different. Both of these female characters were so assertive and articulate that they expressed their opinions boldly right on the spot. The courage they had could also be recognized in the first step, usually uncommon for women, which both of them took in revealing their love to the men they loved. On top of this, both Tsehay and Fikerte are also depicted as being philosophical on some matters like youth, religion, politics and personal relationship. It seems that it is only these two female characters out of the rest who were presented as taking part in serious intelligent talks which is generally the domain of men.

In the novel *Yewodiyanes*, for instance, there are several scenes in the narrative where Getahun and his father Ato Yayehi Yirad talked and argued about law, the social system, man/woman and what he/she needs in life, and happiness and man/ women. On other instances, we also find the heated dispute between Gulelat and Getahun over changing one's destiny despite the rotten cultural or social system. Similarly, in the novel *Senselet* and *Yelot Menged* the men characters were preoccupied with earnest discussion about law, politics, success and luck, females and so forth. All these intelligent discussions carried out primarily among the men characters signaled the identification of mental exercise or activity with men.

In the midst of all this, there exist some female characters presented as victims of men in these Amharic novels. In the novel *Senselet*, Ehte was blackmailed by her former boyfriend into going to bed and W/ro Dinkenesh was also tricked by her new husband, Ato Zerfu, who married her only for her money. Similarly, in the novel *Yelot Menged* Sirgut was raped by her own brother, not knowing that she was his lost younger sister. Another female character in the same novel Tenage and Menbere were also exploited by men characters.

Equally important with all these facts is the way these women reacted or responded to their misfortunes. Very interestingly, almost all of them reacted differently. When Tenagne and Menbere killed the men who exploited them, W/ro Dinkensh, despite advice, failed to notice the real intention of Ato Zerfu. Sirgute, on the other hand, developed romantic feelings towards the man who raped her. Unfortunately for EHITE, she was murdered.

In conclusion, along with a common image of woman in the three novels, different qualities of women such as submissiveness, assertiveness, intellectualization and victimization are also found.

Conclusion

This research study has been devoted to examining the image of woman in three Amharic novels. In this endeavor, the study concentrated exclusively on three Ethiopian Amharic novels produced within the last thirty years. Those literary works published prior to 1970's were excluded from the research since there are a number of studies carried out so far on these artistic creations. By completely focusing on Amharic novels that belong to the last three decades historically, this thesis aimed to discover the portrayal of woman in these three decades, from 1970 to 2000.

To set out this feminist reading, sample novels were selected from all those works published during this time. These novels included in the study are three in number and they are entitled *Yewodiyaneh*, *Senselet* and *Yelot Menged*. Each of these selected literary works belong to each of the three decades that constitute the entire literary period this study intended to cover: *Yewodiyaneh* in 1970's, *Senselet* in 1980's and *Yelot Menged* in 1990's. It is believed that having three novels that represent the three decades will clearly assist in arriving at a more continuous and comprehensive understanding of the image of woman reflected in the selected fiction.

Upon critical reading these three Amharic novels, it was proved possible to identify some common as well as different image of woman in these literary works.

One of the common image of woman which is found profoundly in all the three novels is the fact that almost all of the female characters were depicted as wives, mothers, daughters, sisters and mistresses. The female characters presented as wives and mothers in all the three

Amharic novels include W/ro Tekabech, W/ro Lekelesh, W/ro Dinkenesh, Sine-work's mother and w/ro Menbere. Yewibnesh, Fikerte, Ehite and Sirgut, on the other hand, are depicted as sisters and daughters. Both Tenagne and w/ro Menbere are mistresses in the novel *Yelot Menged*. This kind of portrayal of the female characters connotes the fact that throughout these novels the identities of the female characters were established primarily in terms of their relation with men. The only few female characters not identified with men in their lives are Sirgut and Aster in the novel *Senselet*.

The second image of woman characters shared in all the three novels is the association of women with the domestic or private life. While the female characters-wives, mothers, daughters, maid servants-were all linked with the house and its chores, the men characters, on the other hand, were engaged completely in the public affairs. These men characters were delineated as doctors, lawyers, judges, police officers and, in general, as professionals. However, there has been some progress made in the last two novels, *Senselet* and *Yelot Menged* both which were published in 1980's and 1990's respectively, by incorporating female characters who were also involved in the public matters. The two nurses Sister Tsehay and Sister Sirgut, Aster the typist, Sirgut the college student and Tenagne the model are some of these female characters who were not only restricted to the household chores.

In this aspect, that is creating female characters that were preoccupied in the public life, the two novels *Senselet* and *Yelot Menged*, are quite different from the novel *Yewodiyanes*. This is because all the female characters in *Yewodiyanes*, w/ro Tekabech, Yewibnesh and Yewodiyanes, were confined to the house and the house-chores. This fact itself indicates that there has begun a gradual shift in Amharic literature to depict female characters not only as servants, mothers and

daughters who were restricted to private life but also as skilled professionals who participated in the public affairs.

Depicting women as sex objects is also the other common feature found in these three Amharic novels. Female characters particularly Yewodiyaneh, Sirgut, Fikerte and Tehagne have fallen prey to masculine gaze and rape. In addition to these patriarchal images prevailing, women characters are also attributed with a number of other qualities such as submissiveness, compassion, concern for others and inarticulateness. Contrary to these images, however, there are a few female characters like Tsehay and Fikerte who are articulate, assertive, frank and courageous.

In conclusion, it may be noted that the overall image of woman in the Amharic fiction produced within the last thirty years are filled largely with negative images interspersed only with a few positive ones. Nevertheless, to reach a more conclusive generalization about the most recent image of woman in Amharic literary works, the researcher believes that further additional research has to be undertaken covering a larger range of latest fiction not only in Amharic, but also in the other languages of Ethiopia because Ethiopia is a multilingual and multicultural nation. The present study is only a modest attempt in this respect.

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