

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LITERATURE**

**MA THESIS ON**

**REALISM IN SAHLE SELASSIE BERHANE MARIAM'S  
*WARRIOR KING AND THE AFERSATA***

**BY**

**BAYLEYEGN AYALEW**

**May, 2011  
Addis Ababa**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LITERATURE  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENTS OF MA IN  
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**ADVISOR: OLGA YAZBEC (PhD)**

**May, 2011  
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**APROVED BY: BOARD OF EXAMINERS**

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## **Abstract**

*The purpose of this thesis is to show how Sahle Sellassie Berhane Mariam, who has proven his worth as an Ethiopian novelist, represents the Ethiopian social and political environment in a thoroughly realistic way. Realism portrays the world as it really appears. Moreover, the study contribute to the study of Ethiopia literature in English which has not yet got due consideration so far.*

*This thesis has five major chapters. The first chapter shows that the background of Ethiopian literature in English, statement of the problem, objectives, significance, delimitation and organization of the study as well as operational definition of terms. Previous studies are reviewed under chapter two and the methodology of the study is treated under the third chapter. Chapter four is the theoretical framework that reviews the theoretical issues related to Realism and its tenets. Chapter four is the analysis of characterization in Warrior King, a realistic depiction of cultural and traditional beliefs in The Afersata and major themes in both novels. It is this part of the thesis that explores how Realism emerges through such elements. Chapter five is the last chapter that deals with conclusion and recommendations.*

*It is found that, in Warrior King, all events and episodes were realized in the novel without any fantasy and extraordinary exaggeration since it is a historical novel. The upbringing, family background, brevity, and military talent of the hero, Emperor Tewodros, are portrayed and indicated as real as in history of Ethiopia. In The Afersata novel of Sahle Sellassie, the story focused on the communal and traditional court system called the Afersata to investigate the arson which was a real experience of the Gurage people in the past. The author revealed different customs and beliefs. Besides political corruption, social insecurity and economic woes are revealed. The story evolves during Emperor Haile Sellassie's regime where Ethiopia suffered from bureaucratic government system.*

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

One among many other things by which Ethiopia is known is suggested to be her literary heritage. This priceless, rare and valuable literary heritage reflects the indigenous civilization of the country. In addition to their significance in manifesting the indigenous civilization, the manuscripts written on religion, history, language, philosophy, astrology, social, economic, political and other issues have got a valuable contribution for research. Ethiopia occupies a unique place among African countries south of the Sahara, having evolved its own literary language, Ge'ez, in very early times. A vast body of literary works in Ge'ez grew up from fifth century A.D onwards. Starting with literary works in Ge'ez language, Ethiopia is known for the emergence of literary works in Amharic and other local languages: Guragegna, Tigrigna, Oromigna, etc.

Ethiopian literature in English is a recent phenomenon. It has a brief history of only two decades. When we look at the amount of English writings produced in some other African countries, the output in Ethiopia is scanty, intermittent and not very encouraging. Yet, there are at least, two basic reasons that account for this lagged development and paucity of creative writing in English in Ethiopia.

First and foremost, Ethiopian writers have a strong literary background in Amharic that disallows them to resort to or at least give undivided attention to writing in English. Amharic literature traces its history to the first half of the fourteenth century. Since then, even if it has developed through a series of lulls and intervals until nineteenth century, it has however, established a strong, consistent tradition ever after. Further more, a foreign language has ever been the first official language in Ethiopia; and as a result the Amharic language and its literature have developed extensively to claim strongly the attention of the native writer.

Secondly, English has not been given much emphasis in Ethiopian schools. The first curriculum for the study of language was systematically designed in the late 50's. Hence lack of adequate mastery or command of the language inevitably barred those who might otherwise have aspired to write in English (Debebe Seifu, 1980).

Due to such reasons, Ethiopian authors have not produced many works of literature in English. Hence, their works are not reaching the international audience and not contributing to introducing the country to the world. In Ethiopia, very few writers like Dagnachew Worku, Sahle-Selassie Berhane Mariam, Tsegaye G. Medhin and some others have published their novels in English. This thesis, however, is concerned with Realism in Sahle Sellassie's two novels *The Afersata* and *Warrior King*.

Sahle Sellassie Berhane Mariam (born in 1936) is a gifted and mature writer. There is the fact that he is imbued with culture, proud of his origins and has never given up advocating a deep-rooted literature. Sahle Sellassie is an Ethiopian novelist, and he is one of the most-read Ethiopian authors in English literature. The researcher hypothesized that His works have primarily focused on the depiction and the intricacies of Ethiopian culture and traditions as well as Ethiopian political systems. More over, his novels give readers a realistic picture of Ethiopian cultures and experiences.

When we come to the essential belief of Realism, it is a truthful representation of reality or nature without fantasy. In line with this, George Eliot pronounces that Realism:

*The truth of infinite value is realism – the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature and not by substituting vague forms, bred by imagination on the mists of feeling, in place of definite, substantial reality (George Eliot as quoted in Levine G. 2001).*

Moreover, the novel as imitation of human life follows the procedures adopted by philosophical realism in its attempt to ascertain and report the truth. Realism in general and the novel in particular is based on the primary convention: the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its

reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the time and places of their actions, details which are presented through a more referential use of language than is common in other literary forms.

What should not be forgotten is, firstly, that the novel is not life but an artistic imitation of life; secondly, that the novel as a genre is a culturally and historically specific literary convention to which we have become immured to the point where readers are resistant to reading other forms of literature as well as other kinds of prose merely because they are unable to relate to them (Ian Watt, 1957). As Ian Watt points out in *The Rise of the Novel*, it is not for nothing that the so-called rise of the novel occurred in tandem with the rise to dominance of empiricism, as a result of which the novel has come to function as the classic paradigm of literary Realism. From this point of view, the novel verbally represents 'Life' as apprehended through the physical senses of its novelist.

Further more, when we think of Realism in fiction, we think first of mimesis—the imitation of life—a concept that at once implies the existence of something outside the writer's own mind which he or she is trying to imitate. The imitation of this supposedly external "thing" under girds the term "realism," whether applied to painting, philosophy, literature, or film. As Harry Levin reminds us, "Etymologically, realism is thing-ism. The adjective 'real' derives from the Latin *res* [meaning 'thing'] and finds an appropriate context in 'real estate'"—land, property, things. The realist novel places a special emphasis on this primary engagement with the things of this world.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Literature perhaps started with man discovering his ability to craft. When this occurred he realized that he could not only express his emotions in writing but in the process convey messages of import to society carefully hidden in beautiful words. He decided that he could play with words to entertain people who would read them.

Literature takes different forms or genres. One type of genre of literature is prose narratives: myth, short story, novel. The major kinds of novels are allegory, epistolary, feminist, gothic, ironic, realism, and romance and so on. The realistic novels are based on the truths or realities of ordinary society and their problems.. As stated by C.S. Lewis, literature not only describes reality but also adds to it. Literature is not merely a depiction of reality; it is rather a value-addition. Literary works are portrayals of the thinking patterns and social norms prevalent in society. They are a depiction of the different facets of common man's life.

Furthermore, a novel centrally includes the idea of representing the real world. Novels are seen to address themselves more closely to real life than poetry or drama does. Realism is a word that anyone studying novels can not avoid using or at least trying to come to terms with. There are three reasons for this. First of all, the history of the genre is intimately bound up with the concept of realism. Secondly, the novels major development in the nineteenth century is impossible to follow without takes in to account the family of features or conventions that the word realism allows us to isolate and distinguish from the conventions employed in other kinds of literature. Thirdly, despite recent attempts to displace or undermine the idea of realism as obsolete or infected by humanist ideology, its use persists. Most of the fictional works we read are realist in orientation (Dennis Walder, 1995:17).

According to Chris Baldick (1990), Realism is a system of conventions producing a lifelike illusion of some "real" world outside the text. It is often identified in terms of the effects on the reader, giving the impression that such characters and events might exist in real life. It is about an effect of resemblance between two heterogeneous worlds: the linguistic world of the text and that of the "beyond the text" (linguistic or nonlinguistic). In addition to this, Realism is the theory of writing in which the familiar, ordinary aspects of life are depicted in a matter of fact, straightforward manner designed to reflect life as it actually is. Realism often presents a careful description of everyday life, often concerning itself with the lives of the so-called middle or lower classes. Abrams (1971: 141) noted that the term 'realistic novel' "is more usefully applied to works which are realistic both

in subject and manner ... throughout the whole rather in parts ....” Additionally, Gray (1992: 241) has noted that Realism “is best used for writers who show explicit concern to convey an authentic impression of actuality, either in their narrative style, or by their serious approach to their subject matter”.

The main tenet of Realism is that writers must not select facts in accord with preconceived aesthetics or ethical ideals but, rather, record their observations impartially and objectively. Realism downplays plot in favor of character and concentrates on ordinary situations. It is in this perspective that the title of the study formulated as: “Realism in B.M Sahle Sellassie's two novels *The Afersata* and *Warrior King*.”

Realism in literature aimed at describing the horrors of modern civilization as seen in the lives of the poor wretches who labored in mines of factories of prostitutes, degenerates, and criminals (Ronald N. Stromberg, 1968).

Moreover, Henry James proposes that Realism finds its subjects in everyday life. Writers of realistic fiction tend to use simple, direct prose to depict ordinary men and women in everyday situations. They value the individual above plot, creating stories that explore the psychology of their characters. As a literary term, Realism has two meanings—one general, the other historical. In a general sense, Realism refers to the representation of characters, events, and settings in ways that the spectator will consider plausible, based on consistency and likeness to type. This sort of Realism does not necessarily depend on elaborate factual description or documentation but more on the author’s ability to draft plots and characters within a conventional framework of social, economic, and psychological reality. In a historic sense, Realism refers to a movement in nineteenth century European literature and theater that rejected the idealism, elitism, and romanticism of earlier drama and prose fiction. Realism began in France with Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, and Guy de Maupassant and then flourished in many parts of the world.

James, as one of the pioneers of literary realism, believed that characters should be created without idealization and settings and situations must be portrayed as faithfully to

real life as possible. Physical description underscores a character's essential personality and provides the reader with clues about his or her temperament. The reader can always expect actions and responses that are understandable in terms of that character's unique perspective.

The main purpose in selecting and conducting a study on Realism in the two novels *The Afersata* and *Warrior King* of Sahle Sellassie are the former presents the actual life of the peasants, Gurage people, and their cultures and customs realistically and the later pervades the political life of Emperor Tewodros II who was once a famous king of Ethiopian history and attempted to unite and modernize the disintegrated parts of Ethiopia during *Zemene Mesafent*.

Concerning the two novels *The Afersata* and *Warrior King* of Sahle Sellassie, they are interesting because of their substance and literary merits. More precisely, the researcher has always been fascinated by the theme of real experiences of Ethiopia. Ethiopian literature in English is an area that has not been explored. Up to the present time, there is no any study done relating to the realistic aspects of Sahle Sellassie's novels. Therefore, this research topic is chosen to fill this gap by examining the real representation of life in *The Afersata* and *Warrior King*.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

Realism has become the most important aspect of modern fiction. The reason for the existence of a novel is that it attempts to represent life. The characters, the situations which strike one as real will be those that touch and interest one most. As its topic indicates, the analysis in this thesis is to reveal the realistic elements in Sahle Sellassie's novels "*The Afersata* and *Warrior King*".

### **1.3.1 General Objective**

The realistic representations in both novels (*The Afersata* and *Warrior King*) can be seen, that is, character analysis in *Warrior King*, customs and beliefs in *The Afersata* and thematic analysis in both novels. Therefore, the general objective of the study is to critically examine the realistic representation of life in Sahle Sellasse's novels *The Afersata* and *Warrior King*.

### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

Specific objectives of the study include:

- a. identifying norms and cultures that are represented in *The Afersata*
- b. analyzing characterization (the hero and other characters) in *Warrior King*; exploring how the author portrays characters realistically
- c. showing how Realism pervades the major themes of *The Afersata* and *Warrior King*

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

As a springboard for further studies on the same text or other text on related issues, this thesis will be very important. No has been analyzed the realistic aspects of Sahle Sellasse's novels: *The Afersata* and *Warrior King*.

The study will also contribute to the study of Ethiopian literature in English which has not yet received due consideration so far. Apart from this, this thesis can serve as a reference material to enhance ones awareness in the area of Realism and its manifestations in literary works.

## **1.5 Delimitation of the Study**

Sahle Sellassie Berhane Mariam has a number of works that have been written in three languages: Guragegna, Amharic and English. His novels in English include *Shinega's village*, *The Afersata*, *Warrior King* and *Firebrands*. This thesis focuses on two works: *Afersata* and *The Warrior King*. Furthermore; the study does not intended to analyze the themes of the novels exhaustively, but rather explores how Realism manifests itself in the ways the setting, characters and themes are represented in the selected novels.

Thus, the focus of analysis is on cultural and political representation, characterization, setting, and major themes in the novels under study. However, to enrich the analysis, the researcher has used critical texts as references.

## **1.6 Organization of the Study**

The thesis is organized in four chapters. The first chapter is the introduction which focuses on the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance of the study and delimitation of the study. The second chapter is the review of related literature- the researcher tries to examine previous studies on Realism, chapter three hubs on methodology and conceptual framework of the study, chapter four focuses on analysis and interpretation of the study- characterization, major themes, and realistic representation of customs and cultural and political experiences of Ethiopia in *The Afersata* and *Warrior King* respectively. The fourth chapter has summary and conclusion based on the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

As indicated so far, Ethiopian literature in English suffers from scarcity. And this becomes even more apparent when it comes to Ethiopian novels in English. This may be because the novel is not a popular genre in Ethiopia even in Amharic. And as no foreign language ever became an official language in Ethiopia, unlike other African nations, English is rather alien to Ethiopian writers except the well –educated few. It is due to these two factors that English novels by Ethiopian authors as well as theses that are conducted on these novels are scarce.

Due to such reason, the researcher has been unable to find theses written on Realism. He could access the following theses on *Chenua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Anthills of the Savannah* by Moussa Ndiaye. The focus on Realism looking in to the similarities and differences between this thesis and the above mentioned works, the content of the theses are examined and summarized in brief as follows. Moussa Ndiaye's thesis presents *Realism in Chenua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Anthills of the Savannah*. As the thesis in the study indicates, the work is divided in to four chapters. The first chapter deals with the historical backgrounds of the novels. The second chapter deals with characterization. The third chapter focuses on narrative technique, language and narrative voice and finally chapter four is conclusion.

*Warrior King* (1974) is a historical novel about king Tewodros and how he came to power. And its major themes, according to Debebe (1980), are the personality of Kassa (Tewodros) and the rebuilding of the Ethiopian empire (Ibid: 25). Debebe criticizes Sahle Sellassie of providing a one-sided portrayal of Kassa (Tewodros) emphasizing his good/positive qualities over the negative ones (Ibid). Unlike Debebe, Taye Assefa (1980) finds the image of Kassa in the *Warrior King* (1974) realistic as it shows Kassa's claims of commitment to Ethiopia's unity through his enthusiastic speeches and his lust for power through his unceremonious deeds (33-35). Judging the portrayal of Kassa as realistic or not could depend on one's parameters of Realism but Taye is more convincing with the arguments and supportive extracts he provides to readers (Ibid: 33-35).

According to Taye (1980) the purpose of the novel, i.e. refuting the “popular myth” that there are some families blessed to rule and many others cursed to be ruled, is successfully achieved. And it is this myth and its undoing that is the theme of the novel (Ibid: 35).

The themes of *The Afersata* are the culture and life of the Gurage people. Debebe (1980) criticizes *The Afersata* of poorly built plot structure and the absence of a focalizing central theme. But Debebe appreciates its “simple and clear English” (Ibid: 17-21).

The common factor that this thesis shares with the above work is that it investigates Realism in the novel. What it makes different from the previous one is that it is quite new one in focusing on Ethiopian novels written in English. Secondly, this thesis focuses on different parameters. It covers characterization, theme, setting and culture and customs in the novels. To study Realism in the novel there is no predetermined rule and criteria. According to Henry James “The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life. The characters, the situation, which strike one as real will be those that touch and interest one most, but the measure of reality is very difficult to fix.” (p.26). Unlike the Romantic poets, realist novelists did not on the whole use treatises or manifestos as a way of explaining or justifying their methods or subject.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

### **3.1 Methodology of the Study**

To achieve the objectives of this research textual analysis has been used together with relevant conceptual tools and frameworks. In the textual analysis, linguistic evidence from the text informs all the judgments and conclusions arrived at. Thematic analysis of the two novels is identified and compared. The selection of extracts from each novel is made representative of the whole novel as much as possible.

As indicated above, and as the study is a qualitative research, it involves document analysis method and therefore it is analytical. The novels are read and examined critically. According to Abiy Zegeye et al (2009), qualitative research involves and seeks to describe various aspects of behavior and other factors studied in the social sciences and humanities. In qualitative research data are often in the form of descriptions, not numbers. Document analysis, the process of using any kinds of documents, can be used as a methodology in qualitative research as a singular method of research or as a supplementary form of inquiry.

The study employs both primary and secondary data. The primary data and the main focus of the thesis is on Sahle Sellassie's two novels-*The Afersata* and *Warrior King*. The thesis is relied on primary source material for developing an accurate results and discovering information related to the context within which the research questions are developed.

Theories are drawn from the literature on Realism through library based research. Background and characteristics of Realism, characters-people in fiction, theme, and the convention of the realist novel, intertextuality and narrative theories in the realist novel are discussed as explored from different secondary sources.

In the analysis part, the study involves the various tools which allow the understanding of Realism in *The Afersata* and *Warrior King*. The first of these processes is the analysis of the themes of social insecurity and economic woes, illiteracy of the inhabitants of the thirty villages of Wudma, and the Afersata as a bad institution in *The Afersata*. Moreover, political issues or themes such as objectives of Emperor Tewodros-unity and modernity and *Zemene Mesafent*, or, era of princes in *Warrior King* are dealt with. In addition, the thesis explores how Realism emerges through characterization in *Warrior King* and representation of customs and beliefs of Gurage people in *The Afersata* based on theories that are drawn from the literature on realism.

### **3.2 Conceptual Framework of the Study**

#### **3.2.1 Definition of Realism**

It seems, as Raymond Tallis (1998) argues, almost impossible to formulate a definition of Realism that will steer clear of epistemological, social and political controversy about the nature of “reality” and the “real world”. Robert Scholes defines Realism as ‘a mode of fiction that presents a world recognizably bound by the same laws as the world of the author.’ Defining realism positively gets one in to all sorts of messes, most centrally that of defining reality. And this leads to what is most useful about Scholes definition. Realism is bounded by external, non-literary constraints. Realism is a term which like real itself owes most of its meaning to its opposition to other terms. Even though Realism may be defined positively-it would seem, therefore, preferable to indicate its boundaries rather than to try to characterize its content.

According to Abrams, M.H. (1988), literary critics used by writers view Realism as:

1. a literary movement of the nineteenth century, especially in prose fiction beginning with Balzac in France, George Eliot in England, and William Dean Howells in America; and

2. a recurrent mode, in various eras, of representing human life and experience in literature, which was especially exemplified by the writers of this historical movement.

Realistic fiction is often opposed to Romantic fiction: the romance is said to present life as we would have it to be, more picturesque, more adventurous, and more heroic than the actual; Realism, to present an accurate imitation of life as it is. This distinction is not invalid, but it is inadequate. The typical realist sets out to write fiction which will give the illusion that it reflects life and the social world as it seems to the common reader. To achieve these effects, the author prefers as protagonist an ordinary citizen of Middletown, living on Main Street, perhaps, and engaged in the real estate business. The realist, in other words, is deliberately selective in material and prefers the average, the commonplace, and the everyday over the rarer aspects of the social scene. The characters, therefore, are usually of the middle class or (less frequently) the working class-people without highly exceptional endowments, who live through ordinary experiences of childhood, adolescence, love, marriage, parenthood, infidelity, and death; who find life rather dull and often unhappy, though it may be brightened by touches of beauty and joy; but who may, under special circumstances, display something akin to heroism.

Most prominently, thoroughgoing Realism is not only a selection of subject matter but, more importantly, a special literary manner as well: the subject is represented, or "rendered," in such a way as to give the reader the illusion of actual and ordinary experience.

### **3.2.2 Realism and Historical Fiction**

Historical fiction is stories set in the past and seeks to recreate the aura of a time past, reconstructing characters, events, movements, ways of life, and the spirit of a bygone day: The time period--and its portrayal--is at the core of the story. Historical fiction may overlap other genres, for example historical realism, historical fantasy, historical tall tales, and historical mysteries.

The historical novel arose at the beginning of the nineteenth century at about the time of Napoleon's collapse. Of course, novels with historical themes are to be found in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, too, and should one feel inclined, one can treat medieval adaptations of classical history or myth as "precursors" of the historical novel and indeed go back still further to China and India. But one will find nothing here that sheds any real light on the phenomena of the historical novel. The so-called historical novels of the seventeenth century are historical only as regards their purely external choice of theme and costume. Not only the psychology of characters, but the manner depicted are entirely those of the writer's own day. And in the most famous "historical novel" of the eighteenth century, history is likewise treated as mere costumery: it is only the curiosities and oddities of the scene that matter, not an artistically faithful image of a concrete historical epoch. What is lacking in the so-called historical novel before Sir Walter Scott is precisely the specifically historical, that is, derivation of the individuality of characters from the historical peculiarity of their age. The great critic Boileau, who judged the historical novels of his contemporaries with much skepticism, insisted only that characters should be socially and psychologically true; demanding that a ruler make love in the artistic reflection of reality still lies beyond his horizon.

Historical fiction may have characters who are either imaginary or who actually lived during the time period. Settings also may be real or imaginary. The plot events may be documented historical events or they may be fictional. If they are fictional, it means that the author created the events for the telling of the story. The fictional characters, settings, and plot events must be portrayed authentically as if they actually *could* have happened.

However, even the great realistic social novel of the eighteenth century, which in its portrayal of contemporary morals and psychology, accomplished a revolutionary breakthrough to reality for world literature is not concerned to show its characters as belonging to any concrete time the contemporary world is portrayed with unusual plasticity and true-to-life, but is accepted naively as something given: whence and how it has developed have not yet become problems for the writer. This abstractness in the

portrayal of historical time also affects the portrayal of historical place. For example, Lesage is able to transfer his highly truthful pictures of the France of his day to Spain and still quite ease. This writer, then, grasp the salient features of this world with a bold and penetrating realism. But he does not see the specific qualities of his own age historically.

This basic attitude remains essentially unchanged despite the fact that realism continues to bring out the specific features of the present with ever greater artistic power. The broad realistic portrayal of the present takes in here and there important events of contemporary history which it links with the fortunes of the characters. In this way particularity, time and space of action acquire much greater concreteness than was costumery in earlier periods of the social novel or in contemporary writing.

History is the study of change over time. Historical fiction brings history to life by placing appealing characters in accurately described historical settings. Historical fiction is realistic fiction set in a time remote enough from the present to be considered history. Although the story is imaginary, it is within the realm of possibility that such events could have occurred. In these stories, historical facts blend with imaginary characters and plot (Lynch-Brown, 1999). The historical fiction genre uses imaginative and figurative language to entice students into historical explorations. Students are exposed to a study of history on an emotional and cognitive level through the interaction of character, drama, and facts of the past. According to Nilsen and Donelson (2001), "There are standards for judging historical novels as with any literary form." They should be historically accurate and steeped in the sense of time and place. We should recognize totems and taboos, food, clothing, vocations, leisure activities, customs, smells, religions, literature, and all that goes into making one time and one place unique from another." Historical novels allow us the courage needed to face conflict as they identify with characters dealing with conflict in a historical period.

Historical fiction can create an opportunity for readers to visit the past. It can expose a reader to a part of history through the creative art of fiction. Through historical fiction,

readers can experience history through a story, rather than a fact-crammed text book. Some characteristics of historical fiction include the following.

- 1. Unobtrusive history:** Depends on a believable and reasonably accurate setting; often includes actual historical people; events in historical fiction are creations of the author's imagination; they are not history; fills gaps for the reader, such as political and social history, customs, psychological attitudes, state of science and technology during the covered time period; primary requirement of historical fiction is that it tells a good story.
- 2. Authenticity:** Conveys the flavor of the period--its sights, sounds, smells, characteristics; uses language appropriate to the setting (time and place) and faithful to the facts of the period--this means the author reads history of and documents from the period covered.
- 3. Sensitivity:** Writer's of historical fiction must be sensitive to and balance the various intellectual views of an era and ignorance and prejudice have no place in the author's telling of the story or perspective of the era.

Generally speaking, historical fiction, which is the best emblem of historical Realism, is considered to be good only on the basis of truth. Through writing fiction, the good historical novelist reaches his or her chosen period thoroughly and strives for verisimilitude. Realism is a historical product, because far from the writer's talent for writing they need to be influenced by a cause and pushed by surrounding factors that lead to their creative production. Since it is so, they base their work on a real, truthful and accurate event in addition to involving their ideologies and own comments to give the work a power and not just reduce it to a documentary act of historical recording.

### **3.2.3 Background and Characteristics of Realism**

The growth of industrialism advances in the technology of mass production and the rise of the stock-market system of investment capitalism created several conditions that helped to lead to Realism. As a result of such industrialism, cities became manufacturing centers and more people moved from rural areas into the cities to find jobs; a large urban middle class appeared, involved in manufacturing, wholesale and retail sales, banking, the legal and other professions, and the stock market.

The advancement of printing technology allowed cheaper production and mass marketing of books; the mass circulation of popular magazines both of which provided fiction that appealed to the interests of middle-class readers. The two intellectual influences operated to foster the attitudes reflected in realism: the spread of education, through the proliferation of public and private schools in the industrialized western world; the theoretical legacy of the American and French revolutions of the 18th century. These influences continued into the 19th century. In England, the chartists agitated for lowering the financial requirements for the right to vote; in France and the German and Italian states, there were the revolutions of 1848; in the U. S., the democratic ideal acquired new relevance in the civil war and the exploitation of natural resources and the frontier. The cumulative effect of these conditions was the formation of a literate middle class that saw its members as social and political protagonists; wanted a literature that reflected its social structure, manners, and ethical values. In addition, among writers there was a reaction against two exaggerations of 19th-century Romanticism: idealism--the vision of the world as polarized into good and evil, high and low, noble and ignoble; escapism—the desire to escape from the instability, conflicts, and suffering of the real world.

Realism covers a broad range of views centered on the attempt to depict life as it is usually experienced, without recourse to miraculous events, larger-than-life characters, or supernatural intervention. In a realistic text, the emphasis is on the way things are for ordinary people, whose behavior and speech mirror their social position and cultural attitudes. In this sense, Realism is opposed to romance, which represents life as we would

like it to be, or to other anti-realist approaches such as expressionism and impressionism. A key feature of realist literature is its emphasis on the author's objectivity. Another characteristic was the notion of determinism, the view that individual free will is, if not completely illusory, radically limited by cultural, environmental, and historical forces.

Realism is a 'true-to-life' approach to subject matter; also described as naturalism. More specifically, Realism refers to a movement in mid-19th-century European art and literature, that was a reaction against Romantic and classical idealization and a rejection of conventional academic themes, such as mythology, history, and sublime landscapes. Realism favored themes of everyday life and carefully observed social settings.

Another principal characteristic of realist fiction include urban settings—the homes, factories, offices, resort, and other places frequented by both the upper and lower middle class. The plots are based on the practical and ethical problems faced by members of this class, and the decisions that they must make—for example, choice of spouse conditioned by economic and ethical as well as romantic or sentimental factors; choice of profession and the choice between self-interest and integrity in business dealings or personal affairs. The protagonists are typical members of the middle class and reflect the attitudes and values as well as the customs and manners of this class. Occasionally, some characters may belong to other classes and unlike romantic heroes and villains, the characters are neither extremely good nor extremely bad, but have a mixture of both qualities.

The key facets of Realism are firstly, the world exists objectively, independently of the ways we think about it or describe it and secondly, our thoughts and claims are about that world. Wright (1992) offers an essential statement of this way of thinking about Realism. The world that we represent in our thoughts or language is an objective world. Putnam (1978:18) notes, "Whatever else realists say, they typically say that they believe in a 'correspondence theory of truth'." Any theory that provides objective relations of reference and satisfaction, and builds up a theory of truth from them, would give a form of Realism.

A significant point in relation to Realism is that any enterprise towards locating what is 'realistic' or what constitutes 'Realism' sets in motion a machinery of enquiry which seeks to discover an identifiable site of knowledge or perception shared or which could be shared as authentic within a complex geography of human experience. Thus, Gideon Rosen opines that 'we may epitomize the realist's stance by saying that to be a realist about a region of discourse is to regard it as describing a genuine domain of objective fact' (1999: 891). But what, we may ask, really defines this elusive phenomenon called 'objective fact'. Is it temporal, geo-spatial, racial, cultural, classic or gendered? Is it rather political, religious or individual? Whichever way the politics of identification extends, any question regarding Realism or the realistic immediately evokes an atmosphere carrying with it a 'righteous' air, challenging the uncritical, complacent and the taken-for-granted, and in other elaborate contexts, foregrounding the subversive. Realism thus becomes a problematic semiotic which may as well convey the 'irreal', claiming a place in the realm of notional reality.

Realist novels are characterized by the psychology of the characters in as important as the external action of the plot—the text includes a substantial amount of revelation and analysis of character and the reader is expected to be as interested in how a character deals with his or her reality as in how the story ends. Narrators avoid the overtly emotional language of romanticism: judgments may be expressed or implied; the narrator may remain neutral, leaving the reader to form his or her own judgments. The narrative tone may be neutral, mildly comic, or satiric. Generally speaking, realistic novels are distinguished by the following points.

### **1. Observation and Accurate Description of Reality**

This is the basic principle of Realism. The interest in the observation of reality is parallel to the observation methods characteristic of the experimental sciences. The writers come to scoring documented field notes about characters or settings, or consult books, of which extract accurate information.

## **2. Location Next to the Facts**

Against evasion in space and time of Romanticism, the authors write realistic about what they know. It shifts the gaze to the everyday, eliminating subjectivity and fantasy and controlling the excesses of the imagination and sentimentality.

## **3. Frequent Purpose of Social and Political Criticism**

This intention is our ideology varies for each writer. The authors describe reality conservatives to show their degradation and demand a return to traditional values. Progressives are also social evils, but these, according to them, due to the persistence of a conservative mentality that impedes progress towards the new world.

## **4. Simple and Sober Style**

Realists reject the romantic rhetoric. There is the ideal stylistic accuracy, as the writer intended to mimic the work of the scientist.

## **5. Preference for the Novel**

The literary genre par excellence was the novel, which, according to the realists, was best suited to reflect reality in its entirety. The typical features of realistic fiction are:

1. **Plausibility:** The stories are like fragments of reality. Disappear from the story improbable events, amazing facts and unusual adventures.
2. **Protagonists individual or collective:** The protagonists of the novels are either individuals or large social groups. In the first case concerned the protagonist's psychological analysis in the second, the description of environments. We distinguish therefore two types of novels: the psychological and the social atmosphere.
3. **Omniscient narrator:** The narrator completely manages the threads of the story: know what will happen, he knows the thoughts of the characters involved in the work with facts and judgments about characters and comments addressed to the reader.

### 3.2.4 The Convention of the Realist Novel

There are two principal ways of thinking about the relationship between ‘the novel’ and ‘society’. One of these has to do with the history of the novel as a developing literary genre: to what extent was the novel shaped or produced by a particular set of social conditions? The other is concerned with the critical assessment or evaluation of the novel as a literary form: how effectively or persuasively does the novel ‘reflect’ or represent’ society? In both cases the question of Realism is profoundly important.

Literary historians generally agree that the emergence of the novel as a new genre of writing was intricately connected with the emergence of a new kind of society in the eighteenth century. Ian Watt, in *The Rise of the Novel*, argues that the realist conventions of the novel coincided with the needs and interests of a society or a particular social class that was becoming more rational, secular and individualistic in its outlook. In his *Introduction to the English Novel*, Arnold Kettle ventures the opinion that romances give way to Realism at precisely that point when feudalism is becoming supplanted by capitalism. It can be seen, then, that the evolution of the novel does not take place in isolation artistic environment but is deeply affected by the shifts and stresses of the changing social order.

In addition, much of the critical commentary that has accompanied the development of the novel has been concerned with the nature of Realism and the extent to which the methods and techniques of Realism can create a sufficiently complex and comprehensive image of society. The idea of imitation or mimesis prevailed on in early theories of Realism, and the model it usually adopts is that of a mirror. The nineteenth-century French novelist Stendhal provides a memorable instance of this when he writes of the novel as ‘a mirror traveling along a highway’. However, not all novelists and critics espouse this kind of confidence in Realism. In 1890, we can find Edmund Gosse writing an essay titled ‘The Limits of Realism in Fiction’ in which he employs the familiar comparison between the mirror and the novel, only to cast doubt on its validity. Gosse

adjoins the inherent disproportion between the small flat surface of a book and the vast arch of life it undertakes to mirror (quoted in Grant, 1970: 64-65). It is not startling, therefore, a new generation of novelists (James Joyce and Virginia Woolf ) writing in the early twentieth-century dissent from the conventional methods of Realism and express a preference for a fiction of fleeting sensations and impressions, a preference for psychological intensity rather than social comprehensiveness.

Even so, traditional realist methods continued to be employed and so, too, did the persistent belief that Realism was capable of portraying society in all its complexity. The influential theories of George Lukacs rested on a deep conviction that the realist novel could provide a vivid and immediate image of 'the totality of a society' and reveal its pattern of development. While Lukacs conceded that no art could never present more than an approximate image of that totality, he nevertheless insisted that the value of a novel depended largely on the extent to which it embodied, as accurately and as completely as possible, a particular social structure or historical period.

It is here that the work of Raymond Williams *The English Novel: From Dickens to Lawrence* (1970) proves so valuable. He makes a decisive break with the usual formulation of the novel and society, and offers the much more dynamic idea of the novel in society. In Williams's estimation, the novel is not adjacent to society but deeply implicated within it. It is not a mere product of society but an active constituent, helping to shape the ideas and values by which a society comes to know itself; the value he attaches to each novel is measured not only in terms of formal structure but in terms of the lived experience that the novel embodies.

At this point, it is important to consider the principal ways of thinking about the novel in relation to society. The birth of the novel coincided with significant changes in the political, economic and intellectual values of the eighteenth-century society. What is more is that literary criticism has given prominence to the question of Realism. These ways of understanding the novel as a social artifact have given rise to the common

assumption that there is a convention of the realist novel, a shared set of concerns and procedures, which has evolved or developed over the past two centuries.

### **3.2.5 Characters: The People in Fiction**

In literature, a character can be defined as a verbal representation of a human being. Though action, speech, description and commentary, authors portray characters that are worth carrying about, rooting for, and even loving although there are also characters you may laugh at, dislike, or even hate.

In a story emphasizing a major character, the reader may expect that each action or speech, no matter how small, is part of a total presentation of that complex combination of both the inner and outer self that constitutes a human being. Whereas in life things may just happen, in stories all actions, interactions, speeches, and observations are deliberate. Thus, readers read about important actions such as long period of time of work and sacrifice, the taking of a regular journey of mercy, an act of vengeance, or a man's dream of freedom. By making such actions interesting, authors help the reader understand and appreciate their major characters and life itself (Meyer, 1994).

In his work, *Introduction to Literature*, Meyer proposes that in studying literary characters, it is important to determine the character's outstanding traits. A trait is a quality of mind or habitual mode of behavior, such as never repaying borrowed money, avoiding eye contact, or always thinking oneself the center of attention. Sometimes, of course, the traits we encounter are minor and therefore negligible, but often a trait is a person's primary distinguishing characteristic. Thus characters may be ambitious or lazy, serene or anxious, aggressive or fearful, thoughtful or inconsiderate, open or secretive, confident or self-doubting, kind or cruel, quiet or noisy, visionary or practical, careful or careless, impartial or biased, straightforward or underhanded, winner or loser and so on. With this sort of list, it is possible to analyze and develop conclusions about character.

In studying fictional persons, it is vital to distinguish between circumstances and character traits, for circumstances have value only if they demonstrate important traits.

Thus, if some one wins a lottery, the win does not say much about his character. In other words, the effort to win a lottery is a character trait, but winning or losing is not. When we read about fictional characters, it is valid to look beyond circumstances, actions, and appearances and determine what these things show about character and also it is functional to try to get from the outside to inside, for it is the internal quality that determines the external behavior.

Characters can be classified in to different categories. In his discussion of character in *Aspects of the Novel*, E.M Froster suggests that the degree to which fictional characters are realistic classifies them as round or flat. To Froster, a round character is a three-dimensional character complex enough to be able to surprise the reader without losing credibility. Because such characters exhibit many characteristics, some of which may be contradictory, they have what Froster calls the “incalculability of life”. Such characters are said to be fully or well developed. In contrast, a flat character is whom Froster deems incapable of surprising the reader. Such a two-demonstration character can often be summarized with one or two characteristics-cowardly for example, or puzzled or stubborn.

Characters can be classified as major (protagonist) and minor characters. The term protagonist refers to the main or central character in fiction. The protagonist is generally the roundest, most fully developed character in a work of fiction. The protagonist may also be the most sympathetic character. Characters other than major characters are classified as minor characters. Their degree of importance depends on their function.

Character creation is the art of characterization-what the author does to bring a character to life, to provide the reader with a sense of thst character’s personality, to make that character unique. Authors can characterize or develop a character directly or indirectly. In direct characterization, the narrator or the character summarizes or tells the reader what another character looks like or what kind of a person he or she is whereas in indirect characterization, the narrator and the character describe, without comment, a character’s appearance or dress.

### 3.2.6 Theme

Theme may be defined as, as Diyanni, R. (1998) claims, the generalization, stated or implied, that lies behind the narration of a specific situation involving specific individuals and theme exists in fiction because human beings live in the same world, share similar emotions, react similar ways to similar situations and face common problems. These generalizations tend to fall roughly in to two categories. On the one hand, the writer lives in and observes a particular, immediate world, a world of this time and this place; in some ways this world is unique, and the writer may comment on in such way that his observations apply to no other time or place. When he does so, we say that this theme is topical. On the other hand, there are many experiences or problems that man has faced from the beginning of time.

The matter of theme in fiction and the distinction between topically and universality are important, for they frequently mark the distinction between the significant and the insignificant in art. If theme is the interpretation that the story makes of a reader's life or experience or world, it follows that those stories in which theme is important are more satisfying and effective than are those stories in which theme is either incidental or nonexistent. The distinction between topically and universality in art can not be drawn quite so sharply; to some extent all stories are topical, a product and reflection of a given time and place. Though theme may occasionally be stated in fiction, it is usually handled as character is handled, by implication. Most frequently the writer handles theme as he does because he distrusts the effectiveness of generalizations a serious writer wants to convince his reader of the validity of his interpretation of experience. To accomplish this he can choose between two methods. On the one hand, he can appeal to his reader intellectually, through logic, reason, argument, that is, he can write an essay. On the other hand, he can appeal emotionally by subjecting his reader to experience-he can write the story. The first method will enable to understand a truth; the second will force him to feel that same truth.

Determining the theme of a story can be a difficult task because all the story's elements may contribute to its central idea. Indeed, finding the theme is more challenging than coming to grips with the author's values as they are revealed in the story. According to Diyanni, there is no precise formula that can take the reader to the center of a story's meaning and help the reader to articulate it but the following guidelines are important to formulate theme in fiction.

- Pay attention to the title of the story; it will often provide a lead to a major symbol or focus on the subject around which the theme develops.
- Look for details in the story that have potential for symbolic meanings. Careful consideration of names, places, objects, minor characters, and incidents can lead to the central meaning.
- Decide if the protagonist changes or develops some important insights as a result of the action. Carefully examine any generalizations that the protagonist or narrator makes about the events in the story.
- Be certain that the expression of the theme is a generalized statement rather than a specific description of a particular people, places, and incidents in the story.
- What is most valuable about articulating the theme of the work is not a brief summary statement but the process by which the theme is determined. Ultimately, the theme is expressed by the story itself and is inseparable from the experience of the story.

### **3.2.7 Intertextuality**

According to Beal (1992), intertextuality is that total and limitless fabric of text which makes up our linguistic universe and from which all extant writings are vague or conscious impressions, untraceable or duly attributed quotations. In this fashion Intertextuality reveals a text's dependence on and infiltration by prior codes, concepts, conventions, unconscious practices, and texts (Leitch, 1983:161). "A text," Barthes elaborates on intertextuality:

*is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'meaning' of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of quotations drawn from innumerable centers of culture (1977: 146).*

There are basically two "schools" of intertextuality: The first is the more practical and conventional one which delimits itself to the study of the relationship between a text and its pre-text(s). According to this view, the intertextual relationship becomes interesting only when the connection can be clearly verified and pointed out in the text, and this textual relationship usually takes the form of an allusion, quotation, annexation, etc. The dialogic interplay between a text and its pre-text may understandably create problems for interpretation, but then again this narrower view of intertextuality provides a sound, practical method of analyzing these questions.

The second view is associated with post structuralism and theorists such as Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida believes all texts are intertexts. Intertextuality is the basis and requirement of all communication, and all (communicable) texts and discourses are always built upon existing cultural codes and norms. Texts are seen as 'mosaics of citations' or 'echo chambers', wherein the question of origin loses its importance. Textuality itself controls discourses more than subjects themselves (Plett, 1991: 1-4).

The main ideas that originate with Bakhtin about intertextuality and that are then developed by Kristeva include the following assertions. First, all utterances are seen as linked to previous ones. In this sense, our words are never purely our own, and indeed, they contain traces of others since all of our words relate to previous words formed within our cultural and historically-situated interactions with language. This is not so unusual of an idea since as Roland Barthes reminds us, the etymological roots of text lie in "textile," something woven together from already existing strands (1977b). Each text thus contains a plurality of texts within, some of whose resonances are explicit and some not. This means that nothing is truly autonomous or original.

Another key proponent of the theory of intertextuality Julia Kristeva, a feminist psychoanalyst and philosopher, highly influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin, gives several illuminating definitions of intertextuality, among which are the following:

*Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. In the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another (Kristeva, 1969)*

It is, therefore, the contention of Kristeva that intertextuality is an instance whereby a text depicts a reading of the anterior literary corpus, thereby making text absorption of and a reply to another text. The intertextuality theorist believes that the only reader is the writer reading another text, a figure that becomes no more than a text re-reading itself as it re-writes itself.

For Michael Riffaterre, “literature is indeed made of texts,” and so, “literariness, therefore, must be sought at the level where texts combine, or signify by referring to other texts.” Intertextuality is important not only to literature but to non-literary works as well. In line with this, Tina Hansen delineates intertextuality as:

*Texts, whether they are literary or non-literary, are viewed by modern theorists as lacking in any kind of independent meaning. They are what theorists now call intertextual. The act of reading, theorists claim, plunges us into a network of textual relations. To interpret a text, to discover its meaning, or meanings, is to trace those relations. Reading thus becomes a process of moving between texts. Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations.*

Drawing on Gadamer’s notion of a fusion of horizons, Brawley (1995:6-8) distinguishes between the diachronic approach represented by historical criticism and the synchronic approach including intertextuality, arguing that whereas the conventional approach focuses on a diachronic relationship between the precursor (text) and the successor (text), from the perspective of intertextuality the new text and the precursor depend on each

other holistically in a synchronic relationship. The conventional approach breaks the precursor and the successor apart by insisting on the historical and literary context of each. According to the criteria of intertextuality, the related question is no longer how faithful the repetition is to the original. Rather, a reference to an old text locates the modern interpreter in a pensive ambience of echoes between the two texts, and the question is how the two texts reverberate with each other. "Because of the intertextual cross-reference", Riffaterre (1987:381) avers, "Each intertextual reading is in fact a rereading, a revised interpretation of a preceding stretch of text".

To sum up, the term intertextuality refers to the resonances that all texts have with previous texts, be they written, oral, visual, sensual, etc. These relationships are sometimes explicit, for example when other texts are quoted or alluded to directly. They can also be indirect and even unconscious because previous texts influence, establish genre conventions, and make culturally-socially sanctioned patterns of word use available to us. Intertextuality is the generally accepted term denoting the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of texts. The new text is thus viewed as part of the vast network of texts influencing one another.

### **3.2.8 Narrative Theories in the Realist Novel**

No matter how Realism is defined, the novel occupies a special place in relation to other narrative kind and our own experience. When critics characterize it as a mixture of genres, they show us not what the novel is about but what it is not. Because it can not be pinned down through verbal definition, many would argue that its essentialities are with experience and reality. That is why the novel and Realism are often treated as interchangeable terms, especially by critics. But what does it mean to say that the novel represents real life as it really is? Once again we are plunged questions of definition and, in addition, confronted with a paradox. Novels and short stories are generally distinguished from other literary kinds as "fiction," yet their distinguishing characteristic is their truth to reality.

As discussed so far, critics have supposed two major notions about the meaning of Realism: "Realism" as a period concept, best exemplified in the art and literature of the nineteenth century; and as a more general term designating a true reflection of the world, regardless of when the work was created. Narratives that we consider factual and true (history, for example) are based on literary conventions. Having discovered that narratives seem true to us in fact highly conventional, some critics conclude that all representations of reality are equally arbitrary. Our sense of the real in reading depends on intuitive discriminations and attitudes. In the context of reading, "Realism" appears to be that broad area of narrative without any identifiable conventions, one in which literary artifice has disappeared and everything happens as it would in life. When we come across a well-worn situation or stock character in a detective story, we may be disappointed but usually recover our balance and keep reading. The appearance of plot cliché in a realistic work has a different effect. It shatters the credibility we had not just lent but given to the story, and we may feel that the author has not simply made a mistake but betrayed our confidence. In the best realistic narratives, we are startled in to awareness of the real: we would never have imagined the revelation that came just after we turned the page, but it appears, we realize that it was inevitable-it captures a truth of experience that we knew, however dimly, all along.

According to Martin, W. (1986), authors in the realistic tradition have been accurately aware of the importance that readers attach to credibility. The French intellectual and novelist Diderot, one of the great skeptics of the time, was overwhelmed by the seeming truth of Richardson's novel-Clarissa. He tells how he began reading it several times in order to learn something about Richardson's techniques, but never succeeds in doing so because he always became personally involved in the work, thus losing his critical consciousness. Henry James insisted that the novelist must "regard himself as an historian and his narratives as history.... As a narrator of fictitious events he is nowhere; to insert into his attempts a backbone of logic, he must relate events that assumed to be real" James and Richardson speak not just as authors but as readers. If there is a difference between the novel and other kinds of narrative, it is related on crucial ways to

the sense of actuality, or truth, or Realism that readers obtain from a story. We believe it, yet we don't believe it, in a sincere and duplicitous manner.

The sense of what is believable, in fiction and in life, differs from one person to the next and from one age to another. Yet despite this variety, which helps explain why it is difficult to find a generally acceptable definition of Realism, there is some regularity in the attitudes on which the belief is based. They can be roughly classified as credulity, credence, and skepticism. When we are credulous, we yield ourselves to a story's seeming truth without any niggling suspicion or critical consciousness of its fictionality. In a more detached mood, we may find a story deserving of credence or credible, aptly defined in dictionary as "worthy of belief or confidence": when we are inclined to test it, it rings true. As skeptical readers, we will find our tough minded attitude toward human illusions confirmed in many realistic novels. The skeptic's watchword, to friends and fictional characters, is "Be realistic!" he/she accuses the credulous reader of sentimentality; the latter replies that the skeptic knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing. All three of these readers, or attitudes, inhabit us at one time or another, even reading a single book.

To call novels realistic is not simply to say that we experience them as real; the assertion implies that they do depict life as it is, not as it is conventionally represented in other narratives. But in literature, as in other spheres, agreement about the verbal definition of abstract terms such as "Realism" and "convention" often breaks down when people apply them to concrete examples. Many critics argue that if Realism is to have many meaning, it should be defined as a literary concept that is best exemplified in the nineteenth-century novel. In the analysis of Realism as a period concept, Rene Wellek and George Becker agree that the choice of ordinary or typical subjects is the most important tenets of Realism. But as they show, the very idea of "representative" subject matter is balanced uneasily between two extremes. The real as opposed to the abstract, is concrete, individual, unique; in this sense, Realism is opposed to the use of stock characters (Wallace Martin, 1986).

Based on these theoretical frameworks of the study, the novels of Sahle Sellassie *The Afersata* and *Warrior King* are analyzed and discussed in the next chapter under the title of *Analysis and Interpretations*. In this section, characterization and major themes will be dealt with and the realistically representations of cultures, customs and beliefs of the Gurage people will also be examined and observed.

## CHAPTER FOUR: REALISM IN *WARRIOR KING* AND *THE AFERSATA*

### Introduction

As indicated in the previous chapter so far, the main objective of this thesis is to analyze and show how the author, Sahle Sellassie, permeates Realism through characters and theme in his novels.

In this chapter, the hero and other characters realistic representations are critically analyzed. Attention is also given to show cultures and finally the cultures and customs, and finally the major themes are explored by the novelist. In analyzing characterization, the thesis gives greater emphasis to Emperor Tewodros, the hero, and the antagonists, especially Woizero Menen whose motifs and actions are so prominent for the development of the story and distress for the hero.

The analysis of character pervades on *Warrior King* of Sahle Sellassie. The author represents the hero in *Warrior King* realistically. Realism appears first with the use of onomastics which is the study of names in the text. The illusion of reality is linked to the mode of designation of the character; the use of the proper name creates an impression of reality. It plays a double role: it means the fiction and the reality of the fiction. The name "Tewodros" is at the same time literary and apply to the code which sees him as real.

To show the reality between the fictional narratives of Sahle Sellassie's *Warrior King* and historical texts, the study employs and focuses on the concept of intertextuality. Since the central notion of intertextuality reveals a text's dependence on and infiltration by prior codes, concepts, conventions, unconscious practices, and texts. In the same manner, to write his novel *Warrior King*, Sahle Sellassie uses historical texts as a spur. Julia Kristeva claims that any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. In the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another. Based on such tenets and

arguments the thesis gives due attention to analyze and interpret the notion of characterization in *Warrior King*.

In *The Afersata*, cultures, customs and beliefs, which were a real practices and experiences of Gurage people, are analyzed. Gurage people, the thirty villages of Wudma, have different cultural values and beliefs. In the novel the author portrays their cultural values and old and communal institutions-*Weret, deje tinat, irbo*, bigamy and the *Afersata* itself. Finally, the thesis closes its analysis and interpretation with the analysis of major themes in both novels-social insecurities and economical woes, illiteracy of the society and *Afersata* as a bad institution in *The Afersata*; objectives of Emperor Tewodros-unity and modernity and Zemene Mesafent in *Warrior King*.

#### **4.1 Characterization in *Warrior King***

Sahle Sellassie, while painting reality, in *Warrior King*, describes the attitudes of the characters and reveals their personality. Through characterization many themes are suggested and each of them is symbolized by a character or a group of characters.

This section attempts to explore the characters and their relations with the antagonist that manifest the revelry between themselves as well as the hero to take-over power and to become the king of the country. Through such revelry, they depict different personality, brevity and cowardness for example. Therefore, this thesis unveils different confrontations among the characters and their individuality through their actions and speeches in the story.

Moreover, this part attempts to show the realistic illusion and creation of characters and the thesis intends to analyze the character of Tewodros and the other characters. The choice is based on the fact that first is the main hero in *Warrior King*, and with the latter we are establish whose hierarchy we would like to follow.

Emperor Tewodros has come to occupy high regard amongst many Ethiopians. His influence is seen in plays, literature, folk lore, songs and art works. Emperor Tewodros has come to symbolize Ethiopian unity and identity. That is why Sahle Sellassie portrays

him as a hero of his historical novel *Warrior King*. The hero of Sahle Sellassie's work is often an ordinary person who, by the interplay of social forces or political opportunism, suddenly reaches a high position of moral power

Kassa Hailu, the name of Tewodros before he was crowned, is the hero of the story whose childhood period was miserable and distressing. The most important illustration for his wretched childhood period in the narrative is because his mother's, Attitegeb's, poverty. We can observe that the job of Attitegeb is selling *Kosso*, Ethiopian powerful medicine used to expel intestinal parasites such as tapeworms. This career is degrading and disliked by the people. Throughout the story, it is evident that the emotions and nervousness of Kassa are connected with his mother's work when anyone calls or refers him as 'the Kosso seller's son'.

According to Ghelawdewos Araia (2006), the childhood of Kassa Hailu was filled with discontentment and was challenging enough. To quote:

*His father died when he was still a child and he was taken care of by his poverty-stricken mother whose only source of income was generated by the sale of Kosso (tapeworm relieving Ethiopian medicine), but later on his uncle Dejach Kinfu took Kassa to the monastery of Mahbere-Selassie for tutorial and education by the monks.*

At Mahbere-Selassie, a place where young Ethiopians learn traditional education, Kassa Hailu did very well in terms of overall traditional Ethiopian education. Meanwhile, he encountered a gloomy massacre of his schoolmate twisted by Dejach Maru who apparently massacred the children of Mahbere-Selassie in avenging his father abused by the aristocracy. Kassa managed to escape the massacre; went back to Quara and became a *Shifta* (outlaw).

In the same manner, Sahle Sellassie in *Warrior King* portrays the life at Mahber Sellassie of Kassa Hailu, the paucity of his innocent mother and the overall situation (annihilation) in deceitful manner. We can easily see the intertextuality between history and the

fictional narrative work of Sahle Sellassie. Ato Mulatu, the narrator, tells the story to his wife Aberash. Pinpoint the inter-textuality features:

*As the story goes, when Hailu died Attetegeb could not bring up the child herself because of her poverty, so she confided to him to his powerful uncle Kenfu, who soon confided him in turn to the Mahber Sellassie convent when our own Gebreye went to school. (...) Well, Kassa stayed in the Mahber Sellassie convent quite a few years. Some time after our Gebreye finished with his schooling, an unfortunate thing happened in the Mahber Sellassie convent which finally caused Kassa to quite it. As the story told, Maru, angered by numerous foes who were convincing to oust him from his governorship, sacked the Mahber Sellassie convent. (...) he massacred their innocent children by way of revenge. Kassa, however, escaped the cowardly massacre as if by miracle and fled here to Quara to stay with Dejach Kenfu (Warrior King, p. 4-5).*

During the time that Kassa Hailu became a robber or a *Shifto* had it own permissible causes. In addition to harsh massacre he faced in Mahbere Sellassie, he felt a high sense of solitude and Dejach Goshu hunted him. In *Warrior King* the hero himself speaks to Gebreye, his closest friend:

*Oh, that! I had no home, no family. After my uncle died I had to do something in order to keep on living. I couldn't stay at Quara because of Dejach Goshu, who had me chased like a criminal wherever I went. So, I had no choice but to fight for existence (Warrior King, p. 18).*

From the dialogue of the hero of the story, Kassa Hailu, we can see that he ensures to become a *Shifto* as Dejach Goshu, who is hired by Empress Menen to rule Quara, hunt him panicking that he become a ruler of the region and scrambles his position.

Through the third person omniscient narrator of the story, Mulatu, Sahle Sellasie in his novel, *Warrior King*, portrays the physical appearance, heroism, courage and his talent in the subsequent lines:

*He was agile and graceful in appearance, like the young of the cheetah. He outshined his age mates in practically everything he did, be it playing gugse, wrestling, running of horse riding. One day I saw him with my own eyes leap on to a trotting horse without a saddle or rein, with the ease grace of the cheetah (Warrior King, p. 5).*

By disclosing the physical appearance and faculty, the author indicates that Kassa Hailu was a brave. He also played gugse, running of horse riding and trotting horse without a saddle highlights us his wildness and created for war and victory. We can see that all these capabilities of Kassa Hailu helped him to defeat and punish his enemies and rivals.

From the beginning of the story the author presents us the myth that Kassa Hailu who become king of Ethiopia. The monk witched to his mother she would born a son who become powerful and influential one. We can see that this situation leads Kassa Hailu to sturdy inspiration to become a king and facilitates the unfolding the story. The author reveals this prophecy twice in the story. The first narrative appears as:

*To begin from the beginning, it is generally believed that Kassa was born after a monk had made a prophecy about him. When he was in his mother's womb-his mother's name was Attetegeb, if it interests you to know that-a holy monk wearing a skull-cap and a cow-hide appeared before the poor woman and said to her: "the fruit in your womb is a son. He shall become one of the greatest rulers that this country has ever produced, but woe to the church! Woe to the people!" and he disappeared from her sight. (...) Apparently Kassa heard of the prophecy later on life form his mother and came to believe in it (Warrior King, p. 4)*

In the same way, the prophecy of the monk and the belief of Kassa Hailu with it revealed in the story where Kassa, the hero, tells his friend Gebreye once again:

*Besides, I don't really see my self as a Shifta in isolation. It was in a way the beginning of my career. One has to start somewhere, you know. (I think I have told about the prophecy of the monk along time ago when we were at the convent.) I had to start my career somewhere, sometime; I had indeed a justifiable purpose in becoming a highway robber (Warrior King, p. 18).*

Dejach Kassa Hailu decided to become a *Shifta* to toughen his power. he started his training for his future career. In the story and from the speech of the hero himself, it is possible to say that his intrusive motif of being a highway robber is still the prophecy of the monk waits to become a king of Ethiopia. Therefore, it is too assertive that he should join with other robbers for alliance and maximize his power. During his rebel against woizero Menen's governorship of the country, Kassa Hailu was brave, agile, and graceful in appearance and unique character. The over all brevity of Kassa Hailu is perpetuated in the dialogues between Bezabeh and woizero Menen:

*It is not to oppose you for the sake of opposition that I say you are wrong in proposing a direct confrontation. Kassa is an illusive character. If a force superior to his is sent to Quara now he will not even fight. (...) He is illusive I say. He is not the clumsy bed-bug that you represent him to be. He is rather an astute flea which you can only catch on the sly, with wet fingers. We must therefore avoid a direct confrontation, and try instead to bring him over to our side in another manner (Warrior King, p. 33).*

As it can be noticed from the utterance of Bezabeh, the warrior's ability and strategy of the hero was very ambivalent and terrifying for enemies like Woizero Menen and Ras Ali, her son. Sahle Sellassie in *Warrior King* tells us metaphorically that Kassa's personal or unique character and the only means to defeat him is to propose peaceful terms. As quoted above, the author describes the subtle character of Kassa Hailu: "He is rather an astute flea which you can only catch on the sly, with wet fingers." The author portrays him as a flea to mean that his mysterious behavior is hard to determine. A difficulty of catching a flea is craftily compared with Kassa's individuality as well as his heroic mannerism. Again the phrase "wet fingers," a simple way to catch the flea, allegorically highlights that Kassa should be caught only by peace proposals and diplomacy.

When Kassa Hailu was a *Shifta*, it was far comparable between the power of him and Woizero Menen's. In *Warrior King* of Sahle Sellassie, Woizero Menen had soldiers and "she has a strong army. Her followers are as numerous as the grass of Quara and Dembia. How can a mere mouse stand against an elephant" (12). Against this reality, Kassa

confidently disproved the power of number instead courage and bravery determine. The hero, Kassa, strongly believed that in any battle number of troops does not determine the defeat or victory, which also applies to and the same to his enemy, Woizero Menen. To quote:

*...but if it is a question of numbers we are certainly no much for Menen's formidable force. But, as our folk say, it takes iron to smash fifty clay jars. That is true saying, and proved it for my self. (...) Number is not necessarily decisive factor in any battle. (...) We shall fight bravely. What I should have said we takes a ball of iron to smash fifty clay jars-no, more they a hundred or a thousand clay jars (Warrior King, p. 19).*

The hero strengthened his opinion by using his folk proverb- 'it takes iron to smash fifty clay jars' and tried to test it in his military march in advance. For this reason, both Woizero Menen and her followers' preferred not direct confrontation rather proposed other peaceful means. On the other hand, Woizero Menen and her son Ras Ali planned two major means, as Bahru Zewde (1991), in his book *a History of Modern Ethiopia*, suggests, marriage bond and gave him Quara for governance. In desire to tame him, they resorted to diplomacy. Quara, which Kassa had already come to control by dint of his military force, was formally given to him, and the daughter of Ras Ali, Tewabech was also given to him in marriage. And, therefore, for the sake of political expediency Kassa married Tewabech, daughter of Ras Ali and granddaughter of Woizero Menen. During that era, marriage was the best means to a rebel star that was suspected he will be a king or one king hoped to overtake his neighboring nation. In relevance to this, Tekletsadiq Mekuria, in his book *Emperor Tewodros and Ethiopia Unification*, proposes the function of marriage as:

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*During that era, marriage was the main political market and administration commodity in Ethiopia, including the world. When*

*one king desired to overtake the neighboring country, he asked a marriage bond of that country's king daughter to his son or your son or your brother to my daughter, to my sister (Tekletsadiq Mekuria, 1981: p. 69).*

As discussed so far, Woizero Menen whose personality is dynamic dreaded and detested the hero to become a king and overtake her position and presented him different peace terms, giving Quara to his governance and gave Tewabech's hand to him, to bring him over their side. Unfortunately, these two proposals did not work properly dispute their expectations. Even though the marriage bond did not give proper function to Woizero Menen, his love for the daughter endured and rapprochement with father and grandmother was short lived. The marriage was intended to entrap and make Kassa loyal to Woizero Menen and Ras Ali, but Kassa had ambitions to go beyond the Gonderian subterfuge, unite and rule the whole of Ethiopia. In brief, he had plans to end the Era of Princes and found a unitary modern Ethiopian state.

Woizero Menen, who treacherously intended to her enemy, looked for another scheme to eliminate the rebelled Kassa. She assigned him the task of leading an expedition against the fierce Turks. In a confident way he fought the battle with the Turks in victory. Once again the Empress was discontented and depressed due to the return of Kassa. Embittered by the humiliation and contempt, Kassa resumed his rebellion against her kingdom: "I have long suspected her hatred and contempt towards me, I vow to God I shall be revenged up on this woman" (p. 69). During his rebel life, Kassa obtained a good image and adornment in Quara district and, therefore, the supporting of the local peasants were dramatically shocking. His followers were all members of the society even women and children. In the story the narrator illustrates and portrays the members, activities and the warriors in general:

*The warriors on the horseback were at the head of a long line of foot-soldiers. Composed of about four hundred lancers and twenty musketries, followed by hundreds of shield-bearers, donkey drivers, wood cutters and grass mowers, who were followed in their turn by scores of wives and mistresses leading children by the hand or carrying babies on their backs, the marches numbered not*

*less than a thousand. So marched the Ethiopian warriors of old  
(Warrior King, p. 63).*

In describing the followers of Kassa Hailu, the author compares with Ethiopian warriors of old-cattle deriving nomads who stayed in one place to graze and water their cattle for a long period of time. Metaphorically, the followers of Kassa are compared with nomads who rested when tired, they marched and stopped at a convenient place, and again they pitched their tents and they marched to another camp. As Kassa's fame spread and his army grew ever larger, the king's camp of Woizero Menen became alarmed.

Another character in *Warrior King* is Dejazmatch Wondyerad, a distinguished general of the Empress, a man of boastful man rather than action. On one occasion, he said to Woizero Menen about the hero in boastful speech: "I shall not fail to bring the son of the Kosso seller to your feet, dead or alive" (p. 68). Instead, Wondyerad himself was captured and chained in defeat and brought before a furious Dejazmatch Kassa, who could not allow the repeated insults to his mother. Wondyerad, in contrast, was made to continuously drink the powerful Kosso until it had killed him.

Woizero Menen still as proud and arrogant as ever, refused to show even a little humility or submission even when she became a captive of Kassa. She was saved because of the begging of her innocent granddaughter. The kind and sympathetic personality of Tewabech is well revealed when she is led before her husband and plead for her grandmother's life on one hand and tortured with the idea that Kassa might decide to punish and kill her on the other hand. And she requested him to forgive Empress Menen: "Tewabech knelt down before him, pleading on behalf of her grandmother. I entreat you in the name of Christ, Our Savior". He granted his wife's wish that she not be killed: "all right Tewabech. For your sake I shall pardon your grandmother," to assure his apology.

Ras Ali, the son of Woizero Menen, is a character in the story is either a great coward or a very shrewd man. His reaction to the bad news that his mother had been captured was that of a cool-peace-seeker. In the narrative we can notice the action of Ras Ali-once he planned to campaign against Kassa, but on second thought he came out with an option of

peace and a negotiated settlement with Kassa and sent a message that is full of negotiation, a recount of past deeds and a mood of regret. He also stressed the name of Tewabech to the heartfelt effect and got mercy from Kassa and to re-inform their relationships in advance. The message runs: “As such what happened at Beleha should never happen between us. Tewabech being our daughter, your beloved wife, we are one through her; I repeat, therefore, what happened at Beleha should never have happened between us” (p. 96). Fortunately, his pathetic message works and Woizero Menen is released. Surprisingly, undefeated heart and the difficult personality of Woizero Menen continued even after her release from being captive of Kassa. She planned another scheme-create a war confrontation between Dejach Goshu and Kassa.

As discussed so far, the author exposes the astonishing endowment of the hero as a warrior in the novel as Bahru Zewde (1991), the well known historian, claims in series of battles, he demonstrated his extraordinary talent as military leader and strategist, he defeated one major leader of *Zemene Mesafent* after another.

Dejach Goshu is another man in the novel who confronts Kassa. In the story, Dejach Goshu, like other warlords, was not willing to negotiate with Kassa in a peaceful way. In addition to this, he was unaware of the secret of Woizero Menen. Dejach Goshu was fighting at the forefront. He was hit by a bullet, fell down from his horse and died instantly. Upon the defeat of Dejach Goshu, Ras Ali dispatched his forces against Kassa. The seemingly huge force of Ras Ali began to collapse in the face of brave Kassa’s fighters. Ras Ali was defeated, and according to Tekletsadiq Mekuria the Ras is believed to have said, “This stick is God’s stick; not Kassa’s.” In the story the same instance is noticed when Ras Ali himself saw heads chopped off the shoulders of his men, limbs torn from their bodies and eyes dug out of their sockets. He could witness the magic power and brevity of Kassa: “I thought I was fighting a man, but in truth I am fighting the devil incarnate” (110).

Eventually, the hero, following successive victories amassed a formidable force, felt like going to Gonder and officially observes his own coronation ceremony but he could not do

it without the blessing of the patriarch Abune Selama who was then residing with Dejach Wube of Tigre. In fact, Kassa sent a messenger to Dejach Wube so that he let the patriarch go to Gonder but Wube, who himself was aspiring to become king of Ethiopia, refused. Kassa had no choice but to campaign against Wube; hence the battle took place where huge casualty on either side was witnessed. Finally, however, Wube surrendered to Kassa. After defeating Dejach Wube, Kassa was officially crowned by the hands of Abune Sellama who was a patriarch in Ethiopian Orthodox Church that time. In describing the overall procedural ceremony and the coronation process of Kassa, Tekletsadiq Mekuria states:

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*What so ever happen, after getting the victory, on the third day, on 5 February 1887 E.C, the Echege on the left, the patriarch on the right, the Holly Bible was reading and Kassa was baptized by the hands of Abune Sellama and crowned officially as Tewodros in Derasge Mariam which was prepared by Dejach Wube thinking to crown himself and decorated and ornamented by Doctor Wilhelm (Tekletsadiq Mekuria, 137-38).*

As it is indicated in the above quotation, the coronation process was held by the bishop in the church, *Derasge Mariam*, as during that era the supremacy of the Orthodox Church in political affairs in the country prevailed. At the time of *Zemene Mesafent*, a king could not be crowned unless he could get a bishop to be blessed and baptized as Emperor Tewodros did and crowned with the hands of Abune Sellama in Ethiopian history.

#### **4.1.2 Individuality of Characters**

##### **4.1.2.1 Emperor Tewodros, the Hero**

In order to render some justice and clarity to Tewodros' personality and overall behavior, it is important to explore the social background and thinking of the Emperor. It is important to focus on both strengths and weaknesses and, therefore, should be evaluated based on merit and demerit. So, a careful examination of the Emperor's biography, for instance, helps us to understand his humane qualities as testified by many scholars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In his book *Andi LeNatu* (•••••), Abe Gubegna, the famous Ethiopian novelist, documents some aspects of the traits of Tewodros: "during his reign, Tewodros ordered the end of cruel punishment; abolished slave trade...so long his first wife Tewabech was alive Tewodros had sympathetic humane qualities and he was happy."

On the other hand, in discussing the personality of the Emperor Tewodros, an immense amusement strokes oneself when the Emperor confidently speaks of the comparison between the killing of man and birds:

*If I have killed men in the past it was always with a justifiable purpose. If I am going to kill men in the future again it will only be with a justifiable purpose. But the killing of pigeons? we had no purpose in killing them, you and I. we killed them merely out of amusement. And I regret it (Warrior King, p. 18).*

Through the voice of the hero, we are informed that killing of man with its own purpose is fair and just than killing birds without any reason even though it is controversial and lacks universal significance. To assured the kindness and sympathetic individuality of Emperor Tewodros, it is essential to examine the accounts of different scholars as quoted in Ghelawdewos Araia (2006). The Swiss traveler, Theophilus Waldemayer, testifies the following interesting account: "One day when I was traveling with the king in the rural area, we met a woman who was semi-hungry and whose cloth was falling apart. The king stepped down from his mule, took off his own *Shama* (coat) and gave it to her. He also wanted to give her money, but upon realizing that he had no money he asked me whether I could lend him some money, and I said 'yes *Janhoy*, I have five dollars and take it.' He took the money and gave it to the woman. The woman, aware that she could buy many

sheep with the money was overwhelmed with joy and began stomping and dancing. Later on, the emperor gave me 100 Birr in return.” Aleka Zeneb, the Ethiopian satirist, local historian and chronicler of Tewodros says, “the cattle are 2/3 for the king; 1/3 for the army; the king’s share is for the weak, the sickly, and for invited guests.”

Aleka Woldemariam, another Ethiopian chronicler of the times, testifies Tewodros’ kindness and cruelty: “...at Yifag they closed people in their houses and set them on fire...but in the midst of all this cruelty, Tewodros encountered a five old child and his mother crying...he began crying with them and even said ‘oh my God, why do you do this to me; please take me away and let your people get some respite from their suffering.’ Then, the Emperor ordered clemency upon all who were sentenced to be burned alive.”

The sympathy and kindness of Kassa Hailu is also measured in terms of his treatment and patience towards the imprisoned and victimized lords even though he was cruel. In the story, the author exploits the good qualities of Tewodros much. When he captured the leaders of the battle, he never killed and ill-treated rather kept them in a safe place. In *Warrior King*, the handling and over all situations of the Empress Menen after being captured by Kassa Hailu is expressed as:

*She is a woman like all other woman, Gebreye. You know that as well as I, don't you? And she shall be treated like a woman! Kassa hissed his teeth, his face dark and tense, his eyes flashing in anger. 'Take her out of my sight and give her some work to do,' he ordered. (...) at the end of the two months, when Kassa was assured that Menen's pride was crushed, he set her free... (Warrior King, p. 100).*

He was very respectful and democrat even for Europeans especially Britain travelers in Ethiopia during that time. Emperor Tewodros requested John Bell to open communication between the queen of British and Ethiopia. Unfortunately, the response of John Bell was not constructive. In *Warrior King* the reaction of King Emperor Tewodros runs:

*Kassa dismissed John Bell, giving strict orders to his followers that he was to be treated kindly as a guest and not as a captive. He also gave him permission to travel freely in the country and to hunt in the wild forest if he was so disposed (Warrior King, p. 114).*

On the other hand, Wondirad boasted in front of Woizero Menen and tried to assure her that he “will capture the son of Kosso-seller alive and bring him over to justice.” As mentioned earlier, Kassa had no mercy on anyone who humiliates him by referring to his mother’s career-Kosso-seller. For such reason, he penalized and took on revenge Wondirad in appropriate manner. The revenge and the punishment of Kassa Hailu against Wondirad are properly explained in *Warrior King*.

*The special drink was, of course, Kosso, the laxative that people drink in order to get ride of tapeworm. Kassa had had it prepared in advance, in anticipation of victory, in order to have his revenge up on Wondirad, who had insolently abused the woman who had given Kassa life, and whom he adored. ‘Gulp it down!’ Kassa shouted at Wondirad, who grimaced at the foretaste of the Kosso. He then drank it, holding his breath. ‘Pour him another one,’ Kassa ordered the soldier. (...) When Wondirad was halfway through the second refill he hiccupped. ‘Swallow it, and quickly,’ Kassa threatened him. (...) ‘Take him away, guards but make sure that he finishes that jar before the end of our feast’ (Warrior King, p. 73).*

The vicious personality of Kassa Hailu once again is revealed and illustrated well in *Warrior King*. In comparison, the author compares Kassa Hailu’s deeds as a cat and his enemies as a mouse. All the acts of the cat are portrayed to Kassa’s actions which were so miserable and wretched and all suffers and soreness of the mouse is analogous to his enemies. We can see this description in the story as follows:

*...Kassa liked playing cat and mouse with his victims. When a cat catches a mouse it does not devour it all at once. It dances around its victim, picks up between its teeth and lets it drop to the ground. Then it licks its whiskers and starts dancing again around its victim. It pounces on it with its paw, retreats a little, and swoops*

*down upon it once more. Only when the victim is dead does it start mangling its flesh between its teeth. Kassa indeed liked playing cat and mouse with his enemies...* (Warrior King, p. 124)

In magnifying the remarkable heroism and to show that the hero is a man of action and adventure Sahle Sellassie makes a comparison between two distant, opposite and conflicting powers. In the story, as quoted above, all deeds of the cat after catching the mouse are revealed and declared so as to depict the action and revenge of Kassa upon his enemies once he captured and surrendered. The revenge of Kassa is so terrifying and horrible as it is well stated in the quotation above on the behalf of the cat: “It pounces on it with its paw, retreats a little, and swoops down upon it once more. Only when the victim is dead does it start mangling its flesh between its teeth.”

#### **4.1.2.2 Woizero Menen, the Antagonist**

The first and the main antagonist character is Woizero Menen whose opposition to the hero is central and exigent enough. Woizero Menen is a female character whose individuality is dynamic and unpredictable throughout the story. A case in point in the various character representations of Woizero Menen is that of her military strategy and tacit to avoid her revelry. This character, whose moral and ideological standing contrast with that of the hero, appears as a major adversary person of Emperor Tewodros in the novel *Warrior King* of Sahle Sellassie.

In the story, Woizero Menen is the antagonist. More importantly her unique personality is deliberately betrayed in the novel. Her physical appearance is extraordinary that is far from female physical appearance. The author draws her bodily structure like a man not a female rather the personality of a queen-intellectual, patience, arrogant in spirit and gracious in talk. In contrast to all these, she is haughty in spirit, aggressive in talk, and had more of the traits of man than woman and she proud of her masculinity. In relation to her bulky body her walking is unattractive and annoying. In betraying her physical façade in the story, it states: “When she walked she trod the ground with the self-assurance of a bull with mighty horns; she walked slowly and heavily, with long strides, as if she were deliberately trying to hurt the very ground on which she stepped” (26).

Woizero Menen's high and deep motive to seize power holds a great scale and is unfolding through out the narrative. In her life every thing is attached with political matters made her a woman of power. Such personality of the Empress is vital and functional for the development of the episodes up to her dawn fall even continued after that, till the defeat of Ras Ali, her son. Woizero Menen's shrewd individuality in the sphere of politics is revealed through her systematic and strategic attack of adversary forces. She was the main agent in scheming different veiled strategies against her enemies. Indeed, Woizero Menen is brave and bitterly hated any defeats most of the time insulting her generals badly when they narrate the brutal forces of the rivals. In one instance was happened when Ras Ali, her son, told her what was happening in Quara by the rebels, Woizero Menen was furious with him and snarled at him: "You are a coward! (...) What the hell were you doing when they were surrounding your home? (...) Why don't you fight them like a man instead of running of like a frightened rabbit?" (27-28). In relation to the enemy forces she never want to hear any exaggeration as well as terrifying words even they are so. Any of her generals is prized and appreciated when he disproves the rivals through his beautiful words. In the story, it is worth hearing the worthless words of her distinguished general Wondirad about the forces of Kassa at the meeting of the day: "they are nothing but a bunch of hooligans who indeed can be squashed like bed-bugs, one by one" (32).

Moreover, Woizero Menen has indistinct and indeterminate personality. Her plan to trap her enemy and revelry was furtive. In the story, the author frequently exploits such quality. In the dialogue between Ingida and Gelmo, Ingida stressed her mental state to his friend Gelmo stating: "She must have some other thing hidden in her mind" (42). We can notice the same expression through the comment of the narrator: "He was still suspicious that Woizero Menen had some thing else buried in her mind" (ibid). The indefinite and obscure behaviors of the Empress create hesitation as well as uncertainty in the minds of her enemies, including Tewodros, difficult to estimate what will be occurred actually. To strengthen the point, Woizero Menen proposes, as discussed so far, two schemes to bring Kassa Hailu to her side and finally to abolish him. When her first plan, creating a marriage bond, was in veil, she turns her face to another scheme, giving an assignment to march and confront him with the fierce Turks. In her second scheme, she assumed the

fierce Turks will kill him. Unfortunately both schemes could not eliminate the rebel star, Kassa Hailu, who survived all her hidden obstacles.

#### **4.1.2.3 Tewabech Ali, Wife of the Hero**

She is another female character, daughter of Ras Ali, grand daughter of Woizero Menen and later the beloved wife of the hero, Emperor Tewodros. As we have discussed so far, Empress Menen arranged to tie Kassa to them even more closely by arranging the marriage of Kassa Hailu of Quara, to Ras Ali's daughter, her granddaughter, Tewabech Ali. Kassa welcomed the imperial recognition of his right to Quara. However, the more important event as far as history is concerned probably his marriage to Tewabech Ali.

Tewabech is a small delicate woman of extraordinary beauty. Kassa is devoted to her to the point of worship, and she was equally loyal and loving towards her new husband (she had been given away to a famous personage at the early age of twelve), not a common occurrence in arranged marriages. Tewodros would refer to her often as his "Mentewab" and she is sometimes referred to by this name. Tewabech was the only person who could cool her husband's hot temper, and who moderated his more radical urges. It was also Tewabech who encouraged him to rebel against her own father and grandmother, when they repeatedly insulted him and ridiculed him as being nobody.

One such incident happened when Kassa of Quara lay recovering from a serious battle wound sustained in fighting the Egyptians. It was customary for the ruler to send a sick vassal a gift of meat to be eaten, and the quantity was determined by the sick persons rank. A person of Kassa's rank would expect to receive a whole slaughtered bull, and Emperor Yohannis III sent Kassa the meat of an entire bull. Empress Menen however sent him a single leg of beef. When a noble who saw this measly gift being sent off commented to the Empress that surely her grandson-in-law was of appropriate rank to receive a complete bull or slaughtered sheep from Her Majesty, Menen scornfully stated that no matter what, Kassa was nothing more than a mere lowlander, *Qolegna*, in Amharic, and that what she sent was enough for a lowlander. Tewabech was infuriated by this and is said to have demanded that Kassa respond like a man and rebel against her own grandmother. She declared that she could not love a weak man.

#### 4.1.2.4 Aba Selama, the Romantic Bishop

Aba Selama is an important figure in *Warrior King*. In exposing the corruption and malfunctions of the church, the author portrays Aba Selama as young and romantic. The narrator of the story makes a note about his youthfulness and the rumor of the people:

*Neither his long, abundant beard that remained one of ancient apostles, nor could his long, wide cassock hide his youthfulness, and the inner sensualism of his nature. This sensualism was particularly accentuated in his sharp sparkling eyes and his small fleshy lips. Rumor had it that the young bishop was very romantic indeed, and that he had not less than nine lovers, two of whom were nuns (Warrior King, p. 130).*

Even though Aba Selama has long and plentiful mustache on his face, he looks like a young person because of his shining eyes and fleshy lips. His physical appearance is strange. On the one hand, he seems to be elders, and on the other hand, he is portrayed as a youthful guy.

In exposing the corruption and domination of the church over political matters, the author shows that Aba Selama forgets his religious duty but rather interferes in politics. His interference in political conspiracies and the supremacy of the church are shown through the narrator's voice as follows:

*Aba Salama very often stated that he had been brought to Ethiopia to preach the words of God, and not to do anything else. By this he meant that politics was outside his domain. But in fact he spent a good amount of his time in political intrigues. He was fully aware of his key position as a kingmaker, and of the fact that all the ambitious Rasses and Djazmaches were going on all fours to bring him over to their side. He took full advantage of this situation to advance the cause of the Orthodox Church and its devoted servants (Warrior King, p. 131).*

In Ethiopian history, the bishop was a prominent person in the area of politics. The king can never be crowned officially without being baptized by the bishop. In the novel, *Warrior King*, the author presents this dominance and influence of the Orthodox Church

in politics. In the case of Aba Selama we can observe such influences of the church-“But in fact he spent a good amount of his time in political intrigues.” In the quotation above, Aba Selama was unaware of his political playing and he was sure of preaching only the words of God. His unawareness of his political participation in the story continues when the bishop himself mentioned why he came to Ethiopia: “my mission to this country is to preach the word of God, not to play politics” (p. 133).

In the course of the story, Aba Selama was needed by Emperor Tewodros for the purpose of coronation. Tewodros sent the message to the bishop when he was with Dejach Wube. The bishop asked the messenger a number of questions about the Emperor and expressed his fear and worry in the policy of the Emperor towards the church: “But just the same his attitude to the church leaves much to be desired. I have been informed that one of the major reforms he wants to introduce, if crowned Emperor, is to reorganize the church” (p. 133). It is not surprising that the bishop was worried about the policy of the Emperor towards the church because the church was his source of power.

#### **4.3 A Realistic Representation of Customs and Norms in *The Afersata***

Ethiopia is rich in different cultural practices and customs that serve as crime investigation when there were no modern court systems in the past. Some of these are *Leba Shay*, *Awchachign* or *Afersata* and some others. An *Afersata*, an Amharic word, is a traditional form of court proceeding aimed at getting at the truth of a matter. Sahle Sellassie centers his novel on *Afersata* ceremony and presents the reader with a series of sketches showing peasant life in Gurage region- an area which is, after all, affected by the modernity of bureaucratic government as these filter down to village life.

In this story, Sahle Sellassie reveals different social, economical and political affairs of Gurage people during bureaucratic government when Ethiopia was ruled by Emperor Haile Sellassie, which is the main focus of this thesis to analyze. The novel begins with the hut of villager Namaga burning down due to arson. In order to discover who the criminal is, Namaga demands an *Afersata* ceremony. In Ethiopian custom, in the past especially, the society disregarded and showed disrespect towards people who live on

wood-works, leather-works and metal-works. Sahle Sellassie criticizes the social structure of traditional village life. This situation is described in *The Afersata* as follows:

*Despite the inconveniences created by the Afersata, members of the submerged class considered it a privilege to attend the meeting. As far as they were concerned it was a new step towards the recognition of their civil status. Formerly they were outcasts who lived on the fringe of village society because of the trade they practiced. As wood-workers, leather-workers and metal-workers they were despised and pushed aside from all social and civil activities.*

*If the Ethiopian peasants could not improve their material life over the centuries it was probably because they could not enjoy fully the fruits of their labor; and if material progress stagnated it was probably because the creators of material civilization were despised. The man who carved wood, the man who tanned leather and the blacksmith who forged iron into utensils was an inferior creature by the fallacious logic of the ignorant (*The Afersata*, p. 15-16).*

Craftsmen and artisans, such as blacksmiths, are actually seen as is amongst the lowest of the low. This is also true in the Gurage village as portrayed in the novel. Another social evil and custom of the region, Gurage people, was *dedje tenat*, Amharic word which means peasants solicit the favor of the king by examining different techniques to gratify his Excellency. Sahle Sellassie puts a social criticism of both traditional Ethiopian social institutions and government policies of the ruling ethnic group, the Amhara. In criticizing the institution of *dedje tenat*:

*The age-old institution known as dedje tenat or asking for favor, an institution that has benumbed the creative spirit of the people, has always been common not only in higher circles but also in the lower echelons. The institution of dedje tenat calls for loyalty on the part of the favor-seeker and benevolence on the part of the giver. So as a result a person's sense of achievement and reward, as well as his initiative and his creative spirit are crushed (*The Afersata*, p. 11).*

Another communal and traditional institution in the region is *irbo*, Amharic word, where the local peasants or tenants cultivate and plough their landlords' land and share the product one fourth for the peasant and the remaining to the landlord. Through the comments of the narrator of the story, the harmful impact of the system represents as:

*If the irbo was too high an amount for the tenants to pay them, they could give up their plots and go away to some other places after being paid compensation for their crops. But as the standing crops like enseta, eucalyptus trees and coffee plants were estimated to cost more than the plot of land itself the absentee landlord would never chase away a tenant at the risk of paying him compensation. Instead, he exacted as much as he could short of chasing away a tenant (The Afersata, p. 31).*

The amount of the *irbo* is completely predetermined by the good will of the landlord. In *The Afersata*, Sahle Sellassie indicates the anguish and injustice consequence of this system on the local residences or tenants. It is evident that this system creates the peasants instability and economical dependency under their landlords.

The most significant aspect of the novel *The Afersata* by Sahle Sellassie is the description of the *Cheka Shum*, Amharic word, which is served as a title given to officials chosen by the higher officials from the society based on hereditary or sometimes by dynamic personality. The author unveils the overall corruptions and evil performance of the *Cheka Shum* in the illiterate society. They devoted much time to the Afersata ceremony. They were suitable to engage in every activity-a judge, an executive officer, tax collector and again crime investigator in the Afersata meetings:

*The inhabitants of the thirty villages of Wudma had no police force to investigate crimes. But they had their own method of going about the matter. When the Cheka Shum said, 'we all investigate the matter,' he meant what he said. Although his primary function was to collect tax and the tithe for the government his authority went much further than that. The Cheka Shum was all at once a judge, an executive officer, tax collector (The Afersata, p. 5).*

In indicating the social evils, Sahle Sellassie shows that the Cheka Shum was often corrupt and paid for settling cases for the villagers-by liquor: "It is rare, however, that the officials spend money from their own pockets to buy liquor. They get it free of charge from those who have some pending cases to be settled." (9) The Cheka Shum was corrupted the community in requesting a liquor, locally known as *Areke*, as a reward to perform any cases.

The customs and traditional practices are predominantly revealed in the novel from the beginning of the Afersata meeting up to the end of it. In the region, southern Ethiopia, particularly Gurage land, people believed both in traditional customs and in God. After the burning down of Namaga's hut, he was just visited by the Cheka Shum and the Cheka Shum who carried out the following local custom in the story:

*May God replace your hut with a better one, said the Cheka Shum examining the remains of the hut. The corpse of a rooster was laying in the middle of the ashes. All its feathers were gone and its open beak was filled with grey ashes. The Cheka Shum holding his nose between his forefinger and his thumb to prevent the bad smell from entering his nostrils, turned the corpse with the tip of his shoe and said again, May God replace your hut with a better one (The Afersata, p. 4).*

All the processes of the local custom are presented chronologically. The norm is opened with the exalting aspiration which is so usual blessing in the community when ones hut is burnt down - 'May God replaces your hut with a better one,' and purposefully closed in the same stance. In addition to the norm, the author indicates the petty presence of the Cheka Shum acting as the major figure and performer of the custom.

The traditional belief of the local people in the oak tree during rainy season is dreadful and terrifying. Their veneration of this tree is manifested in the narration of the story as follows: "Adults avoided the oak tree only when it was raining. Children were warned not to approach it even when the sky was cloudy, for it attracted the 'Boje' the spirit of the sky that approached in the form of golden axe and caused a blow of death" (17). The people frightened the *Boje*, as they called, spirit that may kill people and the terrifying power of the *Boje* is metaphorically compared with golden axe. Hence, both adults and

children evaded to sit under the oak tree even not come close to it when it is raining as well as the sky is cloudy.

During crime investigation of the Afersata ceremony, there are two different oaths which are pre-established by the local community. The first oath is performed by the seven elders who were elected by the villagers so that they will manage the ceremony appropriately. As the custom of the ceremony demands, each seven elders stood before the crowd and pronounce:

*If I reveal the name of the informer who saw or heard about the criminal,*

*If I don't expose the criminal indicated by the informer,*

*If I hide the truth about the crime,*

*Then may God deprive of all my offspring, and make me rootless*  
*(The Afersata, p. 22).*

As indicated in the above oath, every thing in the society is directly associated with a child that shows the sturdy perceptions and beliefs of the Gurage people towards their children, especially towards a son; their serious oaths mirror strong and well-built wish to have a child and extremely disgust and afraid of not to have a child. According to their custom, a man who has children never dies and a dead man is one who has no children. When they bless or curse someone, it is directly connected with his or her offspring. In *The Afersata*, Sahle Sellassie has renowned these beliefs and customs of the Gurage people. The comment of the narrator runs as follows:

*Why a child especially a son, has always been so desired loved is a mystery. (...) In fact when a person dislikes first question asked about him is, Does he have children? If the answer is positive then it is a great relief. If not, a sigh is followed by, they say most often, May God give you a child, or may your child grow to be somebody. If on the other hand they want to curse him, they say, May God never give you a child!, or, May you lose your children and there by suffer! (The Afersata, p. 61).*

Another oath indicated in the story is apparently similar with the above one but this one is performed by the villagers one by one. The accustomed promise performed by the

suspected person is ordered by the elders: “Then hold this leafy branch of the huretta tree and extinguish this fire saying, ‘If I don’t tell the truth, may my offspring be exterminated from the face of the earth like this fire.’ (...) Sweep away the ashes of the fire saying ‘If I don’t tell the truth, may my offspring be swept away like these ashes’ (24)”. The swearword of the custom seems so influential and crafts a frightening atmosphere in the mind of the local people and it may produce the same effect for all humans as a whole-it is true that all humans adore his offspring and never wish a dreadful circumstances. The oath is directly connected the fire and the ash with offspring of the suspected one which make it powerful and terrible.

In the midst of the *Afersata* meeting, after it is postponed by the Cheka Shum, the villagers constructed a new hut for Namaga as a return. Gurage houses are famous for their neatness and symmetry, circular structures held together without the use of nails, wooden spokes protruding from a center pole to support the thatched roof.

In the novel Sahle Sellassie pictures out the shape and structure of the hut in a unique and peculiar manner to which it belongs to the Gurage people. The general structure of the hut is sketched through the narrator as follows:

*The cylindrical wall was already finished, and they were now busy with the conical roof. The unthatched structure resembled something like a giant, half open umbrella. The central pillar and the poles that fanned out from the central pillar to sustain the cobwebbed roof were like the handle, the ribs and the screen of an umbrella (The Afersata, p. 25).*

It was also a usual and common habit of Gurage people to prepare food and invite their neighbors who provide free service and co-operation for any type of occupation. As the author has noted in the story, Namaga was eventful to prepare a feast by slaughtering a zebu and billed the villagers a lunch as it was regularly carried out in the village. The story states: “Namaga killed a young zebu that day, as was the custom. His fellow villagers rendered him their labors and service free of charge, and he owed them a lunch feast in return” (25). In relation to the construction of Namaga’s hut, Sahle Sellassie mocks the absurd and nonsense activities of the supposed local official, usually referred

as the Cheka Shum. The Cheka Shum was available obligatorily during the feast which signals how the social life of the local community totally disturbed and affected by the bureaucratic government of that time. We can easily notice this burden in two lines from the story: “In view of the importance of the occasion Namaga did not forget to invite the Cheka Shum. His presence was always welcome on the feast days” (26). They are always available themselves in every aspects the society even at a place where the peasant’s hut was constructed. This ironically implies that government officials forgot their role and responsibility rather they are busy in unimportant and trivial duties.

Another social evil and cultural practice in Gurage people is the practice of polygamy and bigamy. Polygamy, having three or more wives concurrently, was practiced and existed not in extensive scale but bigamy, having two wives alongside. In such cultures that practice marital bigamy, it is the act of entering into a marriage with one person while still legally married to another. Although bigamy is a crime in most contemporary society, it is practiced in Gurage people often either the first or second spouse is aware of the other. In such context, a man married two wives at the same time. Startlingly, the wives were busy in different jealousy tricks to delight their husband and to take over him: “The rivalry between the wives is usually very tense. If they live too close to each other they may resort to fist fighting and hair plucking. If they are far enough from each other severe competition arises in pleasing the husband” (62-63).

A significant practice among the Gurage people in the story is the celebration of *Maskal*, the finding of the true cross, festival which is a very distinguished occasion in the society. *Maskal* which means “cross” in Ge’ez, the classic language of Ethiopia now used predominantly in the Ethiopian Orthodox church, is a revered symbol. Wright (1992) argues that Realism covers a broad range of views centered on the attempt to depict life as it is usually experienced, without recourse to miraculous events, larger-than-life characters, or supernatural intervention. In a realistic text, the emphasis is on the way things are for ordinary people, whose behavior and speech mirror their social position and cultural attitudes. In the southern region such as Gurage people, the feast is the most important annual event and lasts for more than a week. The carnival is celebrated in September, the beginning of the new year in Ethiopia. Not only is the Maskal festival unique but also the month, September. With September the society has positive

connotation since it is the beginning of the year and is the dawn of the bright sunny days. In contrast the villagers detest the rainy season in the reverse as it is in the story disclosed: "In the minds of the villagers the rainy season is similar to the night. As the night is associated with fear, crime and insecurity and all evil things in life, so is the rainy season" (75).

*Maskal* celebrated by killing animals like a bull. The carnage process and method is entirely local and traditional in rural Ethiopia. In the story, all processes are carefully sketched and replicated as follows:

*One dragging it forward, the other pulling it backward in such away that it would be impossible for it to run away. The two men with the help of some others felled it on the mown lawn just in front of Namaga's hut. The sub-tenant tied the two legs of the zebu together tightly, running the rope round and round the legs while Mela and the third fellow twisted the animal's neck and held it in such away that its throat was turned towards the sky while its horns were planted in the ground. The fierce animal roared and tried to rise up and run away. But Namaga approached, a long sharp knife in hand made the sign of a cross and bending down started to cut the throat with the steel knife (The Afersata, p. 77).*

In sketching the process in visual and pictorial manner, the author consigns the culture of the villagers as real and authentic as possible in the story. According to M.H Abrahams (1988), Realism is not only a selection of subject matter but, more importantly, a special literary manner as well: the subject is represented, or "rendered," in such a way as to give the reader the illusion of actual and ordinary experience. In addition to this, the process shows the reader that the absence of modernity, abattoirs, as well as the customary slaughtering of animals is annoying and diffident in the society. Moreover, Namaga made a sign of a cross in the narrative which designates the usual belief and regulation of the Christians in the region as well as in Ethiopia as a whole.

Ethiopia is a country known for its unique traditional dishes. From these traditional foodstuffs, Gurage people are well known in the preparation of *Kitfo*. For people from the Gurage a person is the biggest celebration in the year, in which a lot of meet is eaten, their famous and delicious meat dish, called *kitfo*. This is minced meat; made from the

beefsteak part, different spices will be added and then they will bake it, sometimes they will eat it raw. This *kitfo* is eaten with cheese and *kocho*, made of the false banana tree.

A social institution that prevailed among the villagers is called *Weret*, by their own local language called Guragegna. It is a traditional system where a part or a share of the slaughtered animal's organs is allocated to a respective person. After skinning process, every organs of the animal is assigned to an individual based on the established culture of the local people: "Part of the loin went to the village black smith, part of the neck to the wood splitter. The hump was stored away in the basket before dispatching it to Namaga's parents. If they had not been alive the hump would have been sent to Namaga's eldest brother" (p. 79). A cultural connotation in the community towards a tongue is negative and amusing. According to their custom, a person will be talkative when he or she eats the tip of the tongue: "The Gurage believed that a man or a woman who eats the tip of the tongue becomes talkative and restless. Therefore, the tip was always cut away." (80)

The pagans, worshiped the oak tree, which serves for the *Afersata* meeting, by decorating and smearing it with butter and pouring *Tella*, locally brewed beer. The narration goes:

*There were a few people sitting on the protruding roots of the oak tree. A red cloth was swaying from one of the branches of the oak tree, on which a rook sat busy pecking at what initially appeared to be worms, but which Namaga discovered to be greasy food-remains instead. The pagan section of the population still worshiped the oak tree and during the Maskal week they tied to its branches colored clothes and beads. They also smeared it with butter and poured a jar of locally brewed beer over it. The Christians and the Moslems of course laughed at such bygone customs and took away the clothes and beads without seeing by the pagans (The Afersata, p. 84).*

There were three major sections of the society: the Christians, Moslems and the pagans. In the above excerpt, the Christians and Moslems laughed at the pagans as they were assumed to be traditional and backward whereas the Christians and Moslems were viewed as modern. Sahle Sellassie presents conflicting situation in the story to show us that Gurage people were found in the realm of backwardness in the twentieth century not only economical and political defects but also in religious facets.

Eventually, we can see the villager's blessing customs in the final chapter, "The End of the Afersata." In their custom, Gurage people manifest their prospect wish and aspiration for their generation through blessing. The leading elder among the seven ones made a beautiful, ritual announcement before standing in the center of the crowd. In a society which, as the author has noted, includes not only Christians of various denominations, but pagans and Muslims as well, it strikes an inclusive and benevolent note in its beautiful words:

*May the tongue tell truth? May God give issue to those who have none? May the young ones grow up to be adults? May the adults live long to be elders and to be wise? May the bright day give place to a peaceful night? (The Afersata, p. 88)*

This wish may be ironized to an extent within its setting, both the novel as a whole and the *Afersata*, as it is in so many other parts of our continent and our world, but its wholesomeness and value as a humane aspiration remain valid and resonant.

#### **4.4 Major Themes in *The Afersata***

##### **4.4.1 Social Insecurities and Economical Woes**

Sahle Sellassie focuses on *the Afersata*, an ancient type of communal court, in order to help us grasp the way social life is structured in the thirty villages of Wudma (the region in southern Ethiopia which is the text's larger setting). As indicated so far, the main cause and basis for the development of the story is the burnt down of Namaga's hut when the inhabitants of the thirty villages of Wudma were sound sleep. The society were suffered by different instabilities and insecurities where the guilty was unable to catch and hiddenned himself in the village. The Cheka Shum, minor officials, whose position relieved them of the obligation to take an active participation in such unhappy occasions, assured the lack of peace and stability in the village:

*These days our villages are deprived of peace. It's not even a month since Beshir's uncle lost his goats. There are criminals and thieves in our villages and we shall dig out them wherever they are. (p. 5).*

As indicated in the above quotation, the inhabitants of the villages were disturbed by criminals and thieves. Such social volatility and violence were so overwrought because of the absence of any police force in the villages. It is true that the thirty villages of Wudma was a cave for thieves and criminals, and this social insecurity will be continued unless the villagers are willing to collaborate with the Cheka Shum who is responsible to investigate different cases in the villages. This is assured by the elder to the crowd audiences at the meeting of Afersata: “Our villages have become a hiding place for thieves, and for other criminals. More huts will be burnt, more animals and more money will be stolen in the future, if you don’t co-operate in indicating the criminals with our forefingers, without fear” (p. 89).

Similarly, the society of thirty villages of Wudma had endured by economical woes. The Cheka Shum imposed different dues and fees. In the story, after the burnt down of Namaga’s hut, he set out for the villages of the Cheka Shum to bring the matter to the attention of the governor. The report of the matter was only written by the Cheka Shum, Argaw, whom the inhabitants of Wudma always preferred him to have their reports to be written by. When Namaga was going to the hut of the Cheka Shum to write his report, he was troubled and thought about the fine and payments that the Cheka Shum demanded because the fine and payments were not fixed and permanent. Through the comments of the narrator, situation is described as follows:

*Argaw did not have any fixed price for writing reports for the villagers. The amount depended entirely on him. He sometimes accepted a bottle of intoxicating liquor produced locally, known as Areke. (...) The Cheka Shum was sometimes satisfied with a chicken or fifty cents cash to write the report. And if the tenant farmer offered his service to the Cheka Shum during planting, weeding and harvesting seasons, Cheka Shum would even to write such reports free of charge (p. 8-9).*

The societies of thirty villages of Wudma faced such economic woes of paying unpredictable costs. In the quotation above we can see that the inhabitants were also abused and exploited their labor force in planting, weeding and harvesting activities. Because of economical woes and social insecurities in the village the hut of the Cheka Shum was always full of people. It was crowded not only with people who came to write

their report but also the creditors and tenant farmers came to present their complaints to their boss and officials. The narrator of the story continues:

*Namaga heard strange and familiar voices as he approached the small hut. Only on rare occasions was the residence of the Cheka Shum empty of people. Creditors came to sue their debtors who refused to pay back what they owed. Tenant farmers whose crops had been destroyed by the cattle of their neighbors came to accuse the owners of the cattle and to receive compensation for their loss (p.11).*

Indeed, it is this point of Beshir's that leads directly to the important, central debate of the novel between Beshir's uncle and the latter's friend and colleague concerning the social and economic faults of the Ethiopian land endowment, tenure and tenancy system. First we have a fairly early passage in the anonymous narrator's voice:

*The tenants had no written contracts with their landlords. They did not even have a formal oral contract. The present tenants as well as their ancestors had lived in the villages generation after generation for the past hundred years or so. So the land was sold and resold at various times without the knowledge of the tenants and they were even ignorant of their real landlords. They knew only the agents who lived there and collected the annual irbo (30–31).*

It is a vicious circle because evicting a defaulting tenant would require the landlord to compensate the tenant farmer the standing crops, "he exacted as much as he could short of chasing the tenant away" (31).

#### **4.4.2 Illiteracy of the Society**

Despite the inconclusive closing of the Afersata meetings, the author sketches life of the villagers as tough, but relieved by occasional festivities and luxuries – goes on much as it did in ancient times. What does Sellassie's text show us about the Gurage people is their backwardness and communal life, especially lack of modern education system.

Sahle Sellassie consistently exhibits the advantages and disadvantages of rural life but this thesis focuses on the drawback of the inhabitants in which they suffered by the lack of modern education system as that time. The passage below is taken as an illustration; it describes the illiteracy level of the local people. When the Cheka Shum, Argaw, pulled out a blue ballpoint from his pocket, the narrator makes a comment upon him as well as the villagers in general:

*He had in the chest pocket of his coat three ballpoints that appeared to have been stuck in there more for prestige than for use. Ballpoints, fountain pens and pencils are symbols of literacy, and some people stick them in the most visible part of their clothes as if they were medals of honor (The Afersata, p. 12).*

In the thirty villages of Wudma, some educated persons, such as the Cheka Shum, boasted by sticking pens and pencils in the most visible part of their clothes especially on their outer pocket. The author ironically criticizes and scorns the illiteracy and the lack of education in the society.

Namaga himself was an illiterate man in the story and he could not even know how to sign on the sheet of paper. After completing his report writing by the Cheka Shum, he was inquired by the Cheka Shum to sign on it but he couldn't do it because he is illiterate one as his fellows. The signing process held in the usual and customary ways:

*Namaga was illiterate like almost all the village folks, and did not know how to sign. So instead he wetted the tip of his forefinger with his saliva and offered it to the Cheka Shum who instantly marked it with a copying pencil. Namaga then placed his finger print as the bottom of the page, and the Cheka Shum wrote Namaga's name once again round the fingerprint (The Afersata, p. 14).*

The process of such illiterate signing procedure is so common elsewhere in the country where illiteracy is the master of the land. Namaga including his folk—"Were illiterate like almost all the village folks, and did not know how to sign," suffer in the lack of modern education and civilization. In the quotation above, the Cheka Shum carries the process of

signing since he is the only figure in the community who is educated in the land of illiteracy.

#### **4.4.3 The Afersata as a Bad Institution**

Sahle Sellassie's perspective on what he evokes is rather interesting. While the narrative voice is never condescending or intrusively ironic and distancing, there is an open-eyed, balanced quality to the observations that suggests, simultaneously, a wry awareness of the methodological weaknesses of the investigative process and an implicitly distressing recognition of its vulnerable pre-modernity and communality. The inhabitants of Wudma were not interested and distressed with a repeated and series calling of the Afersata meetings:

*The inhabitants of the thirty villages of Wudma hated the Afersata. They hated it because they were under an obligation each and all of them to attend it. Whether the villager had a previous engagement or not, whether he had urgent work on hand or not, whether it was harvest time or planting season, he had to go to the Afersata. It was a rendezvous from which, in the expression of the villagers themselves, 'no one could stay away even at the cost of leaving the dead unburied' (The Afersata, p. 14-15).*

Indeed, the inhabitants detested the old institution, the Afersata because attendance was mandatory whatever they have reasons and problems they faced. In the story as quoted above, the presence of the villagers during Afersata ceremony is compared with and connected to the 'leaving of the dead unburied' to stress the degree of obligation to attend in the meeting. Due to the obligation to attend the meeting, they also spent their time unable to accomplish their regular farming activities. If anyone might face a serious problem accidentally and might absent themselves from the ceremony, they punished and forced to pay and fined fifty cents which was set the normal fine for absenteeism. The absentee also deserved and incurred the fate of suspicion of arson as the comment of the narrator assures this notion:

*That was the normal fine for absenteeism, a price that did not bother anyone much. What was worse was that when a person*

*failed to go to the Afersata he attracted people's attention. He could easily be suspected of having committed the crime for which the Afersata was held (The Afersata, p. 28).*

In addition to these side effects of the Afersata up on the inhabitants of Wudma, they were very tired and bushed after the meeting. On one occasion to happen when the day of the ceremony was distressing and the villagers were exhausted:

*By the late afternoon it got windy. The dry leaves of the oak tree started to fall. The sun was getting pale and cold. The seven elders were tired of conducting the ceremony. The villagers were tired of sitting and talking. They are also anxious to go back home and mow grass for their cows, split wood for the evening fire and then rest (The Afersata, p. 24).*

In the process of investigation, the participants, the local farmers, as well as the seven elders who were responsible to conduct it also drained. The inhabitants of the thirty villages of Wudma were anxious even to go back home and perform their usual household activities. While enjoying the drama of these assemblies, the villagers do not relish the interruptions to their work caused by these meetings.

Moreover, the author presents us with the cause for the burnt down of Namaga's hut to disclose the weakness and fault of the investigation process as well as the system as a whole. In the story we can perceive that one sensible woman pointed out that arson has not been proved and that the fire might well have started accidentally however complicating factors are numerous. In the story, the sub-tenant's wife tells us the cause of the fire and the probability of the accident through the dialogue between her and Aga, her husband:

*Perhaps the master's hut burnt down by itself, she added. (...) You know that occasionally hot ashes scraped from the fire-place are dumped at the back of the hut. The wind could have blown the hot ashes in to the straw of the roof, thus causing it to burn (The Afersata, p. 82).*

The sub-tenant's wife articulates the probability and the source of the catastrophe in adequate manner. It is common and habitual practice in rural area of Ethiopia to dump

hot ashes at the back of their hut. The author presents this information through the voice of the sub-tenant's wife to the reader so as to disprove the worthiness and reveal the defect of the investigation process in advance.

Another awful and evilness of the investigation process, the Afersata, is also vested on illogical condemnation by someone who resents and detests. The author has noted this unexpected condemnation during the investigation processes through the narrator's remark:

*But the Afersata was still to come. There was still fear in the heart of the bad men as well as in the heart of the innocent. Anyone could give wrong information at the expense of the person one disliked, and have him condemned for a crime he had never committed (The Afersata, p. 82).*

We learn that the villagers fear condemnation by a green-eyed neighbor which might unjustly pronounce them as guilty of the crime under investigation; on the other hand, since all the locals form one large social web, there is a kind of safety net in the process of checking the testimony of witnesses who are heard singly and separately against that of others.

Finally, the series of Afersata gatherings depicted in Sellassie's text ends inconclusively which shows the reader that such traditional and communal court system was inefficient and bad institution. The total failure of this communal court system is well stated in the story when the elder announces to the villagers: "In this particular case that is in the affair of Namaga's hut I regret to inform you that we have totally failed" (p. 89). Throughout the series of the investigation processes, it is impossible to examine the performer of the crime and incapable of deciding who is responsible for the burnt down of Namaga's hut. The judgment of the Afersata, after it has heard all available evidence and the compilation of a report by the seven elders, voluntarily agreed to by the gathered villagers, is that since no arsonist or thief has been identified, and finally the ceremony was closed with the agreement that all the men in the assembly will be required to

contribute a small sum each to compensate Namaga for his losses. The elder with the longest beard went on:

*Fellow villagers, we are all responsible for the burning of Namaga's hut, and we are all condemned collectively to compensate him for his loss, because we have failed to find out the criminal. There could, of course, be another Afersata, and another, and still another on this same affair. But of what use will that be? (...) in the circumstances we have only one course of action to take. And that is to condemn ourselves to pay the expenses of Namaga (The Afersata, p. 89).*

This is described as the villagers' shared penalty for their failure to track down the performer, but is willingly accepted by them as a communal responsibility and as a practical way of avoiding obligatory attendance at an endless series of inconclusive Afersata gatherings.

#### **4.5 Major Themes in *Warrior King***

##### **4.5.1 The Objectives of Emperor Tewodros: Unite and Modernize Ethiopia**

At the very beginning of the rebel of Emperor Tewodros, he and his followers had their own cause. Under the magic and outstanding leader of Emperor Tewodros, the followers were happy to fight and joined the rebels force enthusiastically. The Emperor as the head of the military force advocated and convinced his followers for the justice and significance of their fighting against dejazmathes, Rases and princes, especially against Woizero Menen and Ras Ali. Emperor Tewodros himself bestowed an oath to his followers on behalf of the Holly Bible:

*The core of the rebels swore on the Holly Bible to face the common cause, and to bring down the regime of Menen and Ras Ali, her son. Whatever personal grand had had initially towards Woizero Menen and her son. Kassa soon convinced them that they were fighting for and a more positive cause. Subsequently they too thereby establishing a precedent for all future members would be admitted in to the inner circle (Warrior King, p. 23).*

Besides presiding over a reunited Ethiopia, the Emperor attempted to implement a number of reforms including land reform, the introduction of a standing army, the collection of books in the form of a library, tax codes, church rules, and above all a centralized political system with respective administrative districts. In the course of the story, we can notice and realize the rebel's rational and sufficient causes and objectives through the comments of the narrator:

*The rebels major objectives were: to pull down the government of Woizero Menen and Ras Ali; to reunite the dismembered provinces of the country; to re-annex the lost territories on the Sudan border and the red sea coast, now both under the hands of the Turks; to rebuild, in short, the Ethiopian empire that was, and to lead it to fame and glory as in the days of Atse Fasil. This was in brief their cause, their ideology (Warrior King, p. 41).*

Despite his reform attempts and his relatively strong centralized form of governance, however, the Ethiopian Church opposed Tewodros that he confronted early on, and the mushrooming of revolts all over his nascent empire clearly undermined his legitimacy to power. Tewodros was not opposed to the Ethiopian Orthodox Religion as such, but he despised the conservative clergy. To be sure, he was anti-Catholic and during his early reign he declared that there should be only one Christian Orthodox Tewahdo religion and monogamy for all Ethiopians. Thus, he himself fostered enemies that include not only the conservative orthodox clergy but also Catholic and Moslem Ethiopians as well. Adding insult to injury, as mentioned above, rebel leaders emerged all over Ethiopia.

Furthermore, Kassa Hailu had great desire to bring civilization and modernity to his country Ethiopia. In the story, the request and objective of Tewodros is illustrated clearly when he communicates with John Bell. John Bell was one of British citizen and had close relation to the Emperor Tewodros. The hero speaks:

*I will certainly allow you to stay, on two conditions. First of all, you will try to open up communication between your queen and my*

*self; secondly, since you are a soldier, you will train my men in the art of European warfare (Warrior King, p. 113).*

Through the speech of the Emperor, we can see his desire of to bring about modernity and civilization in Ethiopia. Unfortunately, Tewodros the great unifier and visionary laid dead after thirteen years in power (1855-1868) before his dream of founding a strong and united Ethiopia beyond what he already presided over was accomplished. Nevertheless, he set forth the reunification of Ethiopia and laid the cornerstone of its modernization.

The Emperor Tewodros maintained a good relation with the Church until he initiated certain innovations in Church organization. In order to carry out his far-reaching policies of modernization and reform, Tewodros desperately planned to raise money by taking control of the Church. His idea was to restrict the number of Priests, Deacons, and other ranks of Clergy allowed to serve in each Church to two Priests and three Deacons. The remaining Clergy would have to work and pay taxes like other people and some Church lands would be given to ordinary farmers, who would pay taxes on them. This proposal was unacceptable to the Clergy and these and other actions exposed Tewodros II to harsh criticism, so much so that the people in general supported the Church against him.

Long after Tewodros is gone, however, he remained a legend and popular hero among Ethiopian youth in particular and patriotic Ethiopians in general. But because he was radically different from his predecessors, uncompromising in his principles, and at times cruel and lunatic, he became controversial in Ethiopian history.

#### **4.5.2 Zemene Mesafent or Era of Princes**

The Zemene Mesafent sometimes called "Era of Judges," "Era of the Princes," "Age of Princes," etc. was a period in Ethiopian history when the country was rent by conflicts between warlords; the Emperor was reduced to little more than a figurehead confined to the capital city of Gondar, and both society and culture stagnated. Religious conflicts both within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and with Ethiopian Muslims were often used as the pretext for the powerful to battle each other.

*Era of the Princes* is the period of Ethiopian history when strong central government had broken down and the Emperors were puppets in the hands of ambitious nobles vying for power. During this difficult time, the various provinces of the Empire were ruled by different local lords.

In the story of Sahle Sellassie's *Warrior King*, it is evident to realize different conflicts between Rasses, Dejazmaches, and warlords. In Ethiopia, there were different regional and local governorship-Empress Menen of Gonder, Ras Ali of Debre Tabor, Goshu of Gojjam, Dejach Wube of Tigre and the like. During this time that Emperor Tewodros was fighting to become the king of the country. To accomplish his goal, he confronted with different warlords as we will discuss these confrontations in the following section in brief manner since the battles and deeds of Emperor Tewodros were discussed in characterization section.

During Zemene Messafent, Woizero Menen, with her husband Atse Yohannes who was a puppet, was in power and governed Gonder and her residence or palace was the castle of Atse Fasil. Atse Yohannes had a nominal power and he was motivated by her envy for power. She married him because he had the highest title which legalized her son's and as well as her own power. As illustrated so far, Woizero Menen sturdily loved power and connected everything with it. The Empress and her son Ras Ali were the joint ruler of the country and she was the sole ruler of the country. Her son, Ras Ali, was confident and had obsessive reliance in leading capacity of her mother though she was old enough to rule the country. In the novel of Sahle Sellassie, Woizero Menen resents anyone who suggests that she would retire from her power which in turn discloses her extreme and limitless love of power. We can see this fear of resentment of the Empress in the heart of Ras Ali in the narrative:

*Ras Ali had a fanatical faith in his mother's intelligence and in her rich experience as a notorious political intriguer. He not only never dreamt of suggesting to her that she should retire from politics, which she would have resented from the bottom of her heart, but on the contrary he let himself be led by her (Warrior King, p. 27).*

Due to her sensual, immeasurable and intense political interest and love make her dynamic and her mind is unvested to other Rasses, Dejazmaches and rebels in the country whom she fear that they may overtake her power. She makes surreptitious and hidden strategy and proposal to confront her enemies in meandering way. Her indirect straggle began against Emperor Tewodros starting from his *Shifta* time and continued up to his coronation. Some of her discreet strategies towards Emperor Tewodros to abolish or to bring to the side of her position were proposing a marriage bond between Tewabech and the Emperor, giving an assignment to march against Turk, marching her general Dejach Wondirad, and finally facilitated the battle between Dejach Wube of Tigre and Emperor Tewodros.

The major war was wrought between Ras Ali and Emperor Tewodros at the battle of Aisha. At the battle, the seemingly huge force of Ras Ali began to crumble in the face of brave Kassa's fighters and Ras Ali was defeated. As the period was a political rivalry between warlords, Emperor Tewodros again confronted the next warlord of Dejazmach Goshu of Gojjam at the battle of Gur Amba. Initially, Dejach Goshu's troops had the upper hand, but because the Dejach was fighting at the forefront he was hit by a bullet, fell down from his horse and died instantly. Finally the hero of the period, the Emperor had no choice to avoid the battle with Dejach Wube of Tigre. Hence the battle of Deresghe took place where huge casualty on either side was witnessed. Finally, however, following the death of his son in the midst of fierce fighting and the demoralization of his forces, Wube surrendered to Kassa.

Having defeated in battle all of his rivals, the end of the Zemene Mesafent came with the rise of Kassa Hailu—better known by his later throne name of Tewodros II of Ethiopia. Originally little more than a bandit surviving in the Ethiopian marches against the Sudan, Kassa won his way to control of first one province of Ethiopia, Dembiya, then following a series of battles beginning with Gur Amba (27 September 1852) and ending with Battle of Derasge (1855), came to control all of Ethiopia. With imperial power once again in the hands of a single man, the Zemene Mesafent is considered to have ended, and the history of Modern Ethiopia to have begun.



## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this thesis, an attempt has been made to discuss the representations of reality in Sahle Sellassie's two novels-*The Afersata* and *Warrior King*. The main focus has been on analyzing characterization-the hero and other characters, customs and beliefs of Gurage people as well as major themes. It has been found out that Sahle Sellassie's novels, *The Afersata* and *Warrior King*, portray and employ the real events of Ethiopian history (*Warrior King*) and the actual practices and customs of Gurage people (*The Afersata*) are examined in advance. In addition to this, it has been found out that, in writing his novels, the author employs and portrays real accounts, experiences and situations and also based on prior historical evidence and the notion of intertextuality.

As discussed so far in the subsequent sections, Realistic fiction is often opposed to Romantic fiction: the romance is said to present life as we would have it to be, more picturesque, more adventurous, and more heroic than the actual; Realism, to present an accurate imitation of life as it is. The typical realist sets out to write fiction which will give the illusion that it reflects life and the social world as it seems to the common reader. To achieve these effects, the author prefers as protagonist an ordinary citizen. The realist, in other words, is deliberately selective in material and prefers the average, the commonplace, and the everyday over the rarer aspects of the social scene. The characters, therefore, are usually of the middle class or (less frequently) the working class-people without highly exceptional endowments. In Sahle Sellassie's novel *The Afersata*, we can recognize that the characters are ordinary persons including Namaga himself. In realist fiction characters find life rather dull and are often unhappy as in the case of *The Afersata*. Characters are unhappy with a repeated and scheme like gatherings of the investigation processes. Moreover, they were distressed by different social evils and corruptions of the officials, the Cheka Shum, as well as the *Afersata* itself. Sometimes, the life of the character may be brightened by touches of beauty and joy; but who may, under special circumstances, display something akin to heroism as in the *Warrior King* where the hero, Emperor Tewodros, after he passes through different battle fields, obstacles and challenges, get himself as a king of the country.

In *Warrior King*, all events and episodes are realized in the novel without any fantasy and extraordinary exaggeration since it is a historical novel. The upbringing, family background, brevity, and military talent of the hero, Emperor Tewodros, are portrayed and indicated as real as in history of Ethiopia. The novel discloses the myth that the prophecy of the monk preaches Kassa will be king of kings of Ethiopia. This myth was told before the born of Tewodros hearing from his family and he developed a strong motive to be a king from the beginning of the story up to the end.

In *The Afersata* novel of Sahle Sellassie, the story focused on the communal and traditional court system called the *Afersata* to investigate the arson which was a real experience of the Gurage people in the past. After the burnt down of Namaga's hut, a series of Afersata ceremony were held. Through such a scheme like meeting and life of the innocent peasants in the thirty villages of Wudma, the author discloses different customs and beliefs. Besides political corruption, social insecurity and economic woes are revealed. The story evolves during Emperor Haile Sellassie's regime where Ethiopia suffered from bureaucratic government system. There were landlord-tenant, tenant-sub-tenant relationships and different old and evil social institutions such as *irbo*-one fourth principle and *deje tenat*-in favor of the landlord.

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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my work and it has not been presented before in any University. Moreover, I declare that all the sources of materials used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university advisor.

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